Uganda's Poverty Reduction strategy: rural bias and the politics of exclusion

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Abstract:
Uganda's Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) launched in 1997 with a policy goal of reducing absolute poverty to less than 10% of the population by 2017. In 2010 the government acknowledged that this goal would not be met and moved to anchor its national development around economic growth and wealth creation instead. This paper assesses Uganda's PEAP by examining how policy gets prioritized by the governmental and non-governmental actors involved and Uganda's capacity (capability and willingness) as demonstrated in prior policy reforms. It highlights the role external funding and pressures play, but concentrates on the national variables that influence policy design and implementation. Poverty reduction requires comprehensive multi-level government coordination. Uganda is a regional leader with policy initiatives (HIV/AIDS, and to a lesser degree education, economic reforms, and women's representation). But PEAP's progress suffers from major limitations related to the policy process in Uganda, which is poorly suited for addressing needs of marginalized populations as it prioritizes policies supported by wealthy or powerful constituencies, national and international, which often undermine or contradict necessary steps for poverty reduction. Further, PEAP's focus is almost exclusively on rural poverty and it guided by short-term political expediency marked by a desire to capture donor resources for poverty alleviation by competing agencies and ministries. But 14% of Uganda's urban population lives in poverty, and the urban population is expected to rise from 15% to 30% over the next twenty years. Poor urban women are especially vulnerable and excluded from the existing policy focus.

I. Introduction

This paper is concerned with poverty in Uganda, in particular urban poverty among women, and how national policy has understood and responded to poverty concerns since the mid-1990s. Although women in urban Uganda are not the poorest group in the nation, and although Uganda is not the poorest country in East Africa, this focus has important implications for understanding the problems with poverty policy as it exists and is developing in the region.

Urbanization is growing rapidly and women are being excluded from urban development in ways that parallel their earlier exclusion from rural development. While policy attention towards poverty is catching up in rural areas, and some measures of poverty are improving, little attention is being focused on long-term solutions or trends. Further, Uganda is a policy leader in the region; it has a strong record of initiating policy trends that are then picked up as models regionally and supported internationally. These policy models have been characterized as innovative and comprehensive and accordingly adopted as clear 'best practices', for example with Uganda's HIV/AIDS response. Uganda's 1997 national poverty policy had a similar kind of momentum, coming as it did before the Millennium Development Goals made a national poverty reduction strategy essential to adopt for all African nations seeking international support and debt forgiveness.

Last year's absorption of Uganda's national poverty reduction strategy policy (PRSP) into a broader plan of national economic growth, the National Development Plan (NDP), even while poverty itself has never been more popular as a target of international attention, is worrying, given the persistence of widespread poverty in Uganda, the direction of policy attention, and what this might portend regionally. Uganda's focus on poverty has always existed in an uneasy relationship with its longstanding prioritization of market driven export led economic growth. This balance has tipped further in the direction of neoliberal assumptions, at the same time as political accountability and other measures of governance are deteriorating.

II. Uganda's Policy Capacity and Limitations

Public policy in Uganda is comparatively more effective than in most other Sub-Saharan African nations. While its effectiveness has been overstated, and most observers offer a more cautious and tempered assessment than a decade ago, it remains that there is demonstrated capacity, both in terms of ability and political will, to develop and implement innovative national policy. There have been notable achievements in four areas in particular: HIV/AIDS, education, economic reforms, and women's political representation. Attention to the factors contributing to the successful implementation of these policies, as well as to those which limit their success, provide some clues as to why addressing poverty generally and urban poverty in particular, has been so weak.

In developing countries generally, and African countries in particular, there has been considerable attention given to policy capacity in term of *ability*. The experience, institutions, skills and resources necessary for effective policy are weak in nations like Uganda whose political past has been marked by conflict, authoritarianism and single-party rule. In addition there are external sources for weak policy capacity, for example the increased involvement of foreign aid actors in formulating policy for developing countries weakens mechanisms for ensuring accountability (Okuonzi 1995). This focus dominates discussions of 'good governance' and directs increasing amounts of international aid towards 'capacity building'.

Capacity more broadly understood also includes the dimension of political will, something much more difficult to identify and remedy, although also clearly linked to governance concerns. When reforms of policy initiatives may undermine perceived political interests, determining whether weak performance relates to ability or will is difficult. Uganda has outperformed many African nations in implementing successful policy initiatives which draw upon and respond to different communities and are able to adapt over time using a "whole systems perspective (Wallace 2007), one which relies on different branches and levels of government as well as community groups and other non-state actors to design and implement them. This suggests, that under certain conditions Uganda has the capacity to create and implement effective policy. When policy initiatives have failed or been weak, there are a combination of factors at play, many relating to the ability aspects of capacity. Perhaps more fundamental however, when a policy, even with widespread international funding, receives low political priority from the centre, from President Museveni, it will not go far. This observation moves the discussion of capacity away from the need for training and resource support to the stickier issues of political opportunism, patronage, and rentier state behaviour. As such policy documents are an important, but very much insufficient, indicator of actual political priorities and interests.

Uganda is an interesting case for the study of public policy because it has an established record in an environment with many challenges common elsewhere in the developing world. Uganda faces serious limitations, which have become increasingly pronounced in the past decade. The last three rounds of national elections were marred by widespread violence and intimidation; there is widespread patronage-based corruption, which has combined with an increasing ruthless use of state power to keep the ruling elite in place. The media is also subject to intimidation and harassment (Tabaire 2007). Political corruption is a serious concern, with "widespread venality at all levels of government and administration" (Kannyo 2004: 136). Transparency International gives Uganda a score of 2.5 on its corruption scale of 0 (most corrupt) to 10 (clean), ranking the nation 130th out of 180 (Transparency International 2009). The civil war in northern Uganda, which dragged on for over two decades, devastated that area socially and economically. This region understandably absorbs a significant portion of the national budget and international donor support. Regional economic inequalities between the north and south are widening, linked to conflict and drought but also to a lack of integrated development planning.

A brief overview of Uganda's most successful government initiatives, highlighting the factors contributing to their success as well as their limitations, provides a context for assessing the nation's poor performance in the area of poverty alleviation. Uganda's approach to HIV/AIDS, economic reforms, universal education and women's representation will all be looked at with attention to four variables linked to capacity: external financial and political pressures and incentives; widespread popular national support; degree of necessary collaboration among different branches and levels of government, indicating complexity; and political commitment from Museveni himself.

Uganda's early and comprehensive policy on HIV/AIDS has been widely acknowledged as a model for African responses to the crisis. The government recognized and addressed the crisis early on and embarked on a nation-wide campaign, with coordination from a variety of non-state actors such as churches and community groups to get the information out in ways that varied in order to respond to different communities across the country. Programs were also open to modification over time. This policy had enormous priority from international donors, and the national government took on a major role in promoting it with Museveni and his wife both very visible in their support and involvement with the comprehensive policy. Over time however the HIV/AIDS policy has faced challenges. It was sustained largely by the international support which has both dropped off and become undermined by an increase (US and domestic) in socially conservative approaches which emphasize abstinence and monogamy over education and access to condoms at the same time as the population, as elsewhere, has become more complacent about the disease.

Uganda's program of political reconciliation and economic reconstruction, which began following the end of the civil war in 1986, is widely praised. While democracy remains weak, Uganda's economic policies led to sustained growth rates of six and seven percent (though these have dropped somewhat), contributing to political support for Museveni, domestically and internationally. Over the 1990s economic growth, fueled by coffee exports, helped to reduce levels of poverty. However, prioritization of economic reforms has also had negative effects. With the fall in coffee prices, economic growth continued at a slower pace with a greater proportion of this growth in the service sector, for example construction, with fewer employed in rural areas and a subsequent rise in both national food insecurity and income inequalities. While economic growth rates have indeed been impressive, the regional disparities in the country are huge, and this growth is not experienced in the northeast, a region of the country currently suffering from famine. In fact, the economic growth of Uganda is in large part fuelled by the export of food outside the country, which has raised food prices inside the nation, contributing to food insecurity for lower income Ugandans. Those rural areas, which do not have high agricultural yields, are particularly vulnerable. Privatization and decades of adjustment have had their toll in urban settings as well: with the formal sector shrinking more people, particularly women, are relying on the informal sector at the same time that the costs of food and basic services have risen. So when economic policies are examined through the lens of distribution, assessments need to be tempered.

Uganda's policy for universal primary education (UPE) is also seen by many as one to emulate. Here we see that there is a large disconnect between policy documentation and the reality on the ground. The plans and achievements presented by the government, importantly including the supporting documentation for international donors, do not match the reality as measured by non-governmental groups and international assessors. Further, the real investment that has taken place in primary education has had a number of consequences that are not being adequately addressed. Much of the expansion of education has been undertaken by the private sector, but the quality of education provided by private schools is uneven and poorly monitored. Further, the increase in primary graduates has placed pressures on the secondary school system that cannot be met. The presence of schools staffed by unpaid volunteers providing education for children who fall between the cracks of the education system is telling: in urban and rural areas many children cannot afford to attend local schools (even without 'fees' public schools still have costs associated with books, uniforms, registration, and meals, which many families cannot afford). Further, up to 90% of this policy is supported by donors (Muhumuza 2007: 96); when this support drops there is no plan in place to maintain or expand access to education.

Central to research on poverty alleviation is an interest in how marginalized groups interests are responded to by social policy. Uganda's implementation of affirmative action, at national and local political levels is impressive. Uganda introduced quotas in 1989 (reserving 17% of parliamentary seats for women), much earlier than any country outside of Scandinavia (Dahlerup 2005: 33). Further, Scandinavian quotas are largely voluntary and reflect and protect gains made in the 1970s in the absence of quotas, whereas in Uganda they are legally binding. Today more than forty countries, most in the developing world, have quotas to ensure significant levels of women's political representation.

In Africa, similar to the HIV/AIDS policy, the Ugandan approach provides an influential model. Quotas in Uganda did not emerge as a response to high regard for women's leadership or to a strong tradition of women's rights, but instead as a top-down decision to grant women access to political office. Because those in the reserved women's seats are voted in by an electoral collage rather than as district representatives, some feel they cannot support women's issues because their positions are enmeshed in the patronage politics of Museveni (Tripp 2003: 7). Instead, they represent a voting block loyal to the government, at times called up on to vote in opposition to demands raised by the women's movement (Tripp 2003: 8). Similarly, women's participation at local levels of government, where there is a minimum 30% representation of women, has increased women's public presence in politics, but women in the positions have less popular legitimacy then men and critics argue the quota system helps reinforce their secondary status (Ahikire 200: 179, 183). "These advances have made only a marginal dent on the overarching dominance of patriarchal forms of doing politics; women are still considered intruders in a preserve that was previously almost exclusively male. The door has certainly been opened, but there is a force pushing it closed from the inside that women have to get past" (Tamale 1999: 194).

However, as a first step, this numerical participation of women in Ugandan politics is impressive. Given that women's broader social and political power is not greater than elsewhere in Africa, and by some measures (fertility, violence, land tenure, and cultural attitudes) is lower, what accounts for this move, which today is well established and unchallenged? Women's groups promoted it to be sure, and the practice was established at the local level during the war. The central force driving this policy however was President Museveni (Goetz 1998: 245). And unlike the three policy areas discussed above, this enactment was simply legislative, not dependent on significant levels of technical or financial capacity to implement. Women's quotas are illustrative however as they clearly reflect the centrality of political will from the national leader, in this case in the absence from significant pressures from civil society or international actors. The gains to Museveni's administration of these quotas are clear: they can be presented as an indicator of inclusive democratic governance domestically and to donors, they have the potential to increase electoral support among Ugandan women, and as critics have pointed out they operate to increase loyalty within the NRM. There is no indication that they bear costs to the government, financial or politically.

In Uganda there is a clear pattern where governance reforms have an immediate degree of success, followed by a subsequent downturn or unravelling (Robinson 2007: 452). This has been the case with policies addressing HIV/AIDS, education, and to a lesser degree economic reforms. This pattern has been observed in other areas as well, including civil service reform and anti-corruption measures. There are explanations specific to each policy or reform area that account for why they lost momentum or failed, but common to all are competition between agencies and industries responsible for them, pervasive neo-patrimonial politics in Uganda, and a lack of accountability and follow up after the initial funding has been secured and the process initiated (Robinson 2007).

We can also understand the drop in quality of Uganda's policy programming as part of a parallel drop in quality of overall governance in Uganda. Even though multiparty elections were introduced in 2006, replacing Museveni's 'no party' rule, a broad range of democratic or 'good governance' indicators have worsened steadily over the past two decades of his tenure, including: freedoms of the media, levels of corruption, and political accountability. Museveni is now the longest serving leader in East Africa. If we link explanations of program deterioration within a discussion of capacity we can view it as part of a larger problem of weak institutions, accountability and insufficient resources. From a more critical perspective this pattern of deterioration can also be viewed as one reflecting instrumentalist and neo-patrimonial practices where priorities lie with securing funds rather than developing effective and sustainable policy, pointing to a lack of political commitment or will to implement social policy that does not contribute to short term political gain for the NRM. These two components of capacity – capability and commitment – reinforce one another in practice, and overlap most clearly with political patronage and associated corruption.

Uganda is a leader in innovative policy initiatives. While the nation was slow on the mark to introduce multiparty elections and its commitment to democracy is deeply qualified, Uganda led the way with HIV/AIDS policy and economic reforms resulting in dramatic economic growth. These policies, particularly on the economic front, went a long way to securing Uganda's favour with international donors, particularly the World Bank. Its universal education program predates both the Millennium Development Goals and UNESCO's Education for All, and was also very successful in attracting international donor support.

So what can we say about the policy process in Uganda? Firstly they are a leader. They were the first nation in Africa to address the HIV/AIDS crisis seriously, to introduce gender quotas, and to create a Poverty Reduction Strategy. Largely because of its relative economic success Uganda has also had more leeway than other nations in following through with policies associated with 'good governance', being ahead of the pack too in embracing neoliberal structural reform measures. Much of the rationale behind governance conditionality was the argument that it was a necessary prerequisite for economic growth and neoliberal reforms. As Uganda was already embracing these reforms, with robust economic growth to show for it, there has been far less attention on governance. Although much of the shine is off Museveni now, after more than 20 years in office, donors still support Uganda and there is no pressure to pay more than lip service to plans of inclusion or accountability in governance. Further, it has been argued that,

> The international donor community has made Uganda's case even worse than it might otherwise be. By pouring in huge sums to pay for state spending on infrastructure as well as free and universal primary schooling and basic health care, international donors have been helping Museveni's government to win legitimacy and popularity while undermining the opposition (Mwenda 2007. 34).

So secondly, Uganda is very dependent on foreign support, with a history of attracting considerable funding for issues in the global spotlight, but less adept at finding ways to take on the burdens of supporting these policies in the long run, or indeed sustaining a focus on them in the long run.

Finally, a central variable necessary for successful policy follow-through is political will from Museveni himself. Donor support is important for policies involving comprehensive coordination and planning among different ministries and levels of government and community stakeholder, but the step from securing funds and using them accordingly needs the discipline from the top. Accountability in the policy process is very much driven from the top down in Uganda's policy practice.

III. Uganda's PEAP: from Poverty Eradiation to Poverty Reduction to National Development

The following quote is from President Museveni's introduction to Uganda's 2010/11 *National Development Plan*, which is presented by the IMF as its current Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper:

> The development approach of the NDP [National Development Plan] intertwines economic growth and poverty eradication. This will be pursued in a quasi-market environment where the private sector will remain the engine of growth and development. The Government, in addition to undertaking the facilitating role through the provision of conducive policy, institutional and regulatory frameworks will also actively promote and encourage public-private partnerships in a rational manner. Furthermore, the Government will continue to pursue outward-oriented policies by encouraging foreign investments and exports with high value addition, as well as pursuing sound macroeconomic policy and management. A "Business Approach" will be pursued to improve public

> service delivery. In addition, synergies and inter-intra sectoral linkages will be harnessed during the implementation of the NDP (Republic of Uganda, 2010, i).

This new National Development Policy is the latest in a series of policy plans beginning in 1997 with the PEAP (Poverty Eradication Action Plan) then moving to the 2000 Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), which has been reviewed (like PRSPs elsewhere) every three years. Uganda's PEAP, now NDP, is the central policy-planning framework in Uganda, developed with the World Bank and IMF with some degree of consultation with selected NGOs in order to determine priorities. From its inception it was intended as a framework that would undergo continuous revision, in light of its performance, its challenges, and the input from groups in and outside of Uganda.

The starting point of PEAP was a stated recognition that poverty is multidimensional, could not be captured by income measures alone, and that participation of the poor in the process was necessary for their empowerment, and public institutions needed to be accountable to the poor. Throughout its revisions Uganda has emphasized the importance of consultation with civil society in order to ensure this is not simply a policy imposed from above. This all sounds very promising and echoes the direction taken more widely by anti-poverty advocates globally.

However, the strategy of this plan has always been one of 'modernizing' Uganda's economy to create more employment opportunities, particularly in the rural agricultural sector, in order to stimulate economic growth more widely, keep food prices down, and set Uganda on the path to industrialization through the "demand for manufactured goods arising from increased incomes" (NDP, 2010). If there was any sense that development thinking has moved beyond the straightforward optimism and simplicity of 1960s Modernization thinking, a review of Uganda's development plans, carefully worked out with the involvement of the IMF and WB, would dispel this. While there is a detailed process of consultation with Ugandan civil society at regular intervals, this is for setting priorities, for monitoring results and for refining measures of poverty – not for actually designing policy, which is done by the government in tandem with the IMF and WB. In the context of Museveni's deteriorating legitimacy it is difficult to characterize the nation's central policy focus as 'locally owned' as Museveni does. While one could argue this is more 'Ugandan' owned than other nations' PRSPs, this may involve more a coincidence of interests with the NRM and the IFIs than a reflection of national autonomy.

The PEAP and subsequent revisions explicitly discuss the necessity of modernization through a series of subsequent stages and have a very short-term lens to realize results. Modernizing the agricultural sector will provide the basis for increasing incomes, which in turn will stimulate wider economic growth and industrialization. Scientific knowledge is critical, as are macroeconomic stability, good governance, investments in infrastructure, and investments in health and education (Republic of Uganda. 1997, PEAP).

Nonetheless, it would be an error to consider these national policy frameworks as nothing more than the same old strategy for expanding exports with only lip service to the poor. This is part of the global focus on poverty reflecting not only the limited IMF/WB attention to poverty found in the 'post-Washington consensus' but also the hope of campaigns like Make Poverty History. Further, a focus on poverty has strong resonance within Uganda, and Museveni's personal backing for a national poverty initiative may be read in part as an attempt to tap into this. On a micro-scale the same tension that exists at the level of global governance between those like Jeffry Sachs who believe concentrated investments in the poor will get them out of poverty traps and those in the Bank who argue that expanding credit and employment opportunities will draw an innate entrepreneurial talent from the poor and raise incomes, exists in Uganda. This is complicated of course by political rhetoric and established patterns of patronage and rent-seeking, increasingly targeting donor funds to support them. At the theoretical level Uganda's poverty policies express both these viewpoints. However at the level of actual policy strategy, the focus on neoliberal economic growth dominates. This can be seen most starkly in urban areas, where the urban poor are largely absent from the plans, even as their numbers grow. Just as it is difficult to see how the PRSP reflects the priorities and input of civil society – of Uganda's poor – given the political environment, it is also difficult to accept this input is pushing the more explicit adoption of addressing poverty almost exclusively through economic growth, using the same approach as structural adjustment.

What is new about the drift from a national policy on poverty eradication to one of reduction to one of national development is recognition that economic growth can be managed and directed in ways where measurable improvements can be seen. Although there are problems, many related to the global economy, Uganda has proven its capacity in strong economic performance guided by a market driven emphasis where the state is very willing to allow the private sector to dominate many areas. In meeting its poverty goals however, the evidence is not as bright. The national assessment of its poverty strategy is that it is working well. "The government insists that the anti-poverty strategies have been successful. It argues that its continued pursuance of growth-enhancing policies and anti-poverty strategies have substantially reduced poverty to 31 percent [from 45%]" (Muhumuza 2007: 92). However, when poverty is measured by more than income, the picture is not so clear cut. "Recent analyses of poverty … with respect to the Case of Uganda … [show poverty] is on the increase despite what has been described as spectacular levels of growth" (Oloka-Onyango 2007: 80). Further, poverty reduction to date has relied heavily on support from donors and the HIPC initiative (Oloka-Onyango 2007: 81); past experience in Uganda has shown that when donor funding drops, so too do the policies and programs they supported. Forty-seven percent of government expenditure comes from donor funding (Muhumuza 2007: 92), which is not sustainable in the long term. As will be discussed, poverty in urban areas is steadily increasing, with urban women among the most marginalized populations.

III. Poverty in Uganda: Women and the Urban Poor

There is severe poverty concentrated in Uganda's rural communities, particularly in the north. These poverty rates, as measured by income and health indicators improved with economic growth led by the export of agricultural goods in the 1990s where economic growth and improvements in poverty rates coincided. However, by the end of this decade coffee prices had fallen, economic growth had shifted to service sectors, and poverty levels were rising along with growing inequality, which became and remains very stark between rural and urban communities. Further, as is frequently pointed out, on many different measures, rural women are the poorest of the poor and represent the group most in need of "pro-poor" policy – not only in terms of employment opportunities and credit but also in terms of access to land, education, health care, and rights.

Understandably there has been considerable focus on the rural poor in Uganda, including women, on the part of policy makers, national and international NGOs and researchers, and the donor community. There is important debate on why ongoing policies related to health, agriculture and food security are not resulting in the kind of robust empirical improvements in poverty anticipated over the last decade. The central problem, several critics of Poverty Reduction Strategies like Uganda's have argued, is the fundamental incompatibility of seriously addressing the root causes of poverty within a neo liberal economic growth model.

Another small part of the puzzle, I would argue, has to do with the time frame of the plans put forward. Just as elections in more democratic countries push short-term thinking and planning, so does the cycle of foreign aid. Long term gains that come from increases in education and women's empowerment are slower, generational even. They are certainly difficult to measure in their impacts, although newer ways to measure poverty are better at capturing some of this. A short-term focus leads to two key problems. Goals which can be achieved more quickly, along with those more likely to attract further financial support due to a proven track record, are prioritized, but may be of the band aid variety or, in the case where economic growth is the central objective, with poverty reduction a by-product, many of those who experience poverty outside of the growth – left out by the limited understanding of 'pro-poor' growth policy – will remain excluded. In addition, as urban areas are much more affluent than rural areas, the poverty there is less visible. The urban poor are also not touched by kind of rural-focused food security and agricultural policies introduced and expanded in Uganda over the past two decades. Immediate attention needs to be directed towards Uganda's urban poor; this group is increasing rapidly.

From its inception Uganda's policy has explicitly stated its awareness of the multidimensional nature of poverty and that household income is not an adequate measure. It has also pointed out the necessity of widespread popular participation in the process and the need for it to adapt across time and place. For all of these reasons it is not surprising this policy is attractive not only to donors but for export to other regions as well. In practice though poverty has been measured in terms of income, and as a rural problem. There has been attention to how rural women need to be better addressed, and this has been through microcredit and some limited attention to land tenure laws.

Although there have been consistent references in all policy documents to the multifaceted character of poverty and the need to look at factors, for example of capability or asset vulnerability to identify areas of need, this has not translated into specific strategies, which remain geared towards "pro-poor" growth, which largely involves expanding employment opportunities, microcredit and increasing (primarily donor supported) investments in health and education. As the UN in now introducing a new index for measuring poverty into its measures, this may change. The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), which was used in the most recent Un Human Development Report, builds a more nuanced picture of poverty looking at a variety of indicators related to access, entitlements and security and considers a household as poor if it is on over 30% of the ten indicators used. With this index too, it is possible to see which areas need the most attention, whether it is malnutrition or education for example, where the improvements in investments might not be so visible by income measures of poverty alone. Improvements in measuring poverty are a first step in addressing it.

PEAP's focus is almost exclusively on rural poverty and is guided by short-term political expediency marked by a desire to capture donor resources for poverty alleviation by competing agencies and ministries. But 14% of Uganda's urban population lives in poverty, and the urban population is inspected to rise from 15% to 30% over the next 20 years. Poor urban women are especially vulnerable and excluded from existing policy focus. There is an assumption that the urban poor have advantages of service proximity that serve to offset their poverty, even though they face greater challenges of food security in the absence of household agriculture. However, in the context of privatization, many services, such as adequate sanitation, water, electricity, health care and education are not accessible to the urban poor. Uganda is one of the least urbanized countries in Africa (13 percent) but has one of the highest rates of urbanization in the world (5.1 percent per year). In absolute terms there have been no marked improvements for the urban population over the last 50 years (Mukwaya, Sengendo and Lwasa, 2010, 267). It is projected that in the next fifteen years Uganda's urban population will triple.

As part of its National Development Plan Uganda has launched a National Urban Campaign to address the unplanned growth of Kampala and a number of smaller urban centres, which have resulted in serious problems related to the housing, health, and access to services by the poor. There is the beginning of an awareness of the problem but thus far little attention to urban poverty beyond some donor funded pilot projects. Prices for staple foods have been increasing since 2006, and very rapidly over the past two years. The urban poor have felt this most strongly, and as price increases have been across a range of stable foods the incidence and depth of poverty have both increased (2.6% and 2.2%) (Simler, 2010. 1). *The Globe and Mail* reported May 5 on urban protest in Kampala in response to rising food and gasoline prices; these were met with repression from the state, which has been escalating since the lead up to the national elections this past February.

V. Conclusions

Rather than a radical departure from the spirit of earlier national plans, Uganda's new National Development Plan represents a further drift along the same trajectory its poverty policies have been headed since 1997 – further away from a tackling poverty as it is experienced by the most economically excluded populations and alongside an even more overt support for growth led development, which Uganda has long excelled at. However, while economic growth in the 1990s did support modest reductions in poverty levels, it remains that expanding exports and increasing employment in the agricultural sector are not sufficient to address poverty. A serious effort requires identifying the varied pockets of poor throughout the nation, including new and growing populations in urban areas, particularly women, and a commitment to meaningful engagement with the in order to target necessary services and opportunities in their direction so that the poor can expand their capabilities. It will require attention to distribution, real engagement with NGO and communities, and much better governance. There are positive signs related to how poverty is being measured and a limited recognition that the urban landscape needs addressing. However the political climate is deteriorating rather than improving, and the overt turn to a focus on growth, rather than poverty eradication, is a bad sign for the region as a whole.

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