

Uganda needs to increase domestic resources to finance gender equality and women's empowerment interventions

Summary Statement

This brief examines both domestic and donor spending on interventions intended to promote Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) in Uganda. We note that GEWE interventions are largely financed using domestic resources. Nonetheless, domestic financing for GEWE is augmented by donor funding; however, donor funding is very unpredictable and may not be relied upon for sustainable funding for GEWE interventions. To ensure sustainable financing for GEWE, the Government of Uganda should accelerate the implementation of strategies for increasing domestic resource mobilisation, increase budget allocations to sectors, and set a minimum standard for the share of sectoral allocations that should be earmarked for GEWE interventions.

- Gender inequality remains a huge development challenge for Uganda. For example, the female **unemployment rate (13.1%)** is more than double that of their **male counterparts (5.8%)**.
- About **66% financing** for gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) is sourced domestically.
- In **2018 Uganda received only 42%** of the total financial resources that DAC members had committed to provide for activities targeting GEWE.

Introduction

Achieving gender equality requires women's empowerment to ensure that decision-making at personal and public levels and access to resources are no longer prejudiced in men's favour so that both women and men can fully participate as equal partners in productive and reproductive life (UNFPA, 2005). Gender equality reduces social, economic and political power inequalities between women and men, girls and boys, ensures that women benefit equally with men from government activities, and compensates for past discrimination (OECD, 2019). Cognizant of this fundamental human right, achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls is one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations in 2015.

Although Uganda has enacted several laws and policies aimed empowering women to effectively participate in the political, economic and social

spheres of life, gender inequality remains a challenge. Examples to demonstrate this inequality include 2019 study by Ahaibwe (2019), where the author reports "Females continue to be disadvantaged in the labour market; female unemployment is more than double that of their male counterparts (13.1 % against 5.8 % for males). The median earnings among females in paid employment is half that of their male counterparts – UGX 110,000 among women and UGX 220,000 for men".

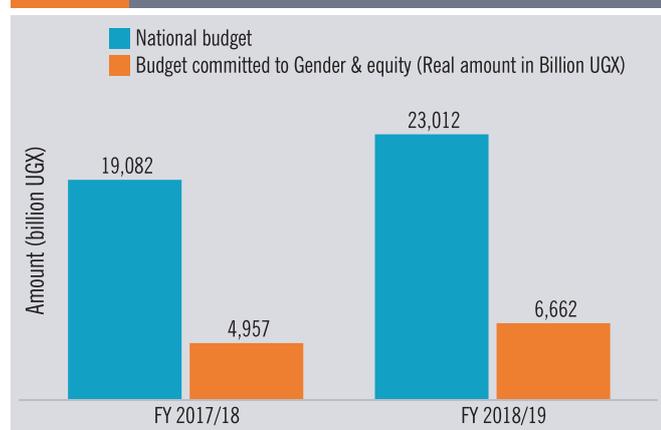
Achieving SDG 5, i.e. "gender equality and empowerment", requires funding directed to public services which are critical for women and girls. Governments can play a decisive role in accelerating progress towards gender equality in several ways, including legislation, fiscal measures, programmatic change, and Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs). This brief examines the Government of Uganda's spending on interventions promoting Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE). The brief mainly draws upon findings from the most current status report on budget outturns for gender equality and women's empowerment in Uganda (EOC, 2020), and data on aid projects targeting gender equality and women's empowerment, extracted from the OECD statistical database.

Key Findings & Observations

Budget allocations to gender and equity interventions have increased remarkably:

Overtime budget allocations for GEWE have increased in Uganda. Figure 1 indicates that budget allocations to gender and equity interventions increased by over 34 % from UGX 4,957 Billion in FY 2017/18 to UGX 6,662 Billion in FY 2018/19. In terms of shares, the proportion of national budget allocated to gender and equity interventions increased by about three percentage points from 26.0% in FY 2017/18 to 28.9% in FY 2018/19.

Figure 1 Budget allocations to gender and equity interventions; FY 2017/18 and 2018/19



Source: The Equal Opportunities Commission, May 2020

The increased budget allocations to gender-focused interventions are not uniform across all sectors. Although most sectors report an increase in the absolute amount of funds allocated to GEWE, in a few instances, a decrease is observed. Specifically, four sectors allocated fewer funds to GEWE in FY 2018/19 compared to FY 2017/18—notably agriculture, education, trade and tourism, as well as the Lands, Housing and Urban Development (Table 1). For some sectors, the decreased allocations for GEWE are preceded by a reduction in the total sectoral distribution.

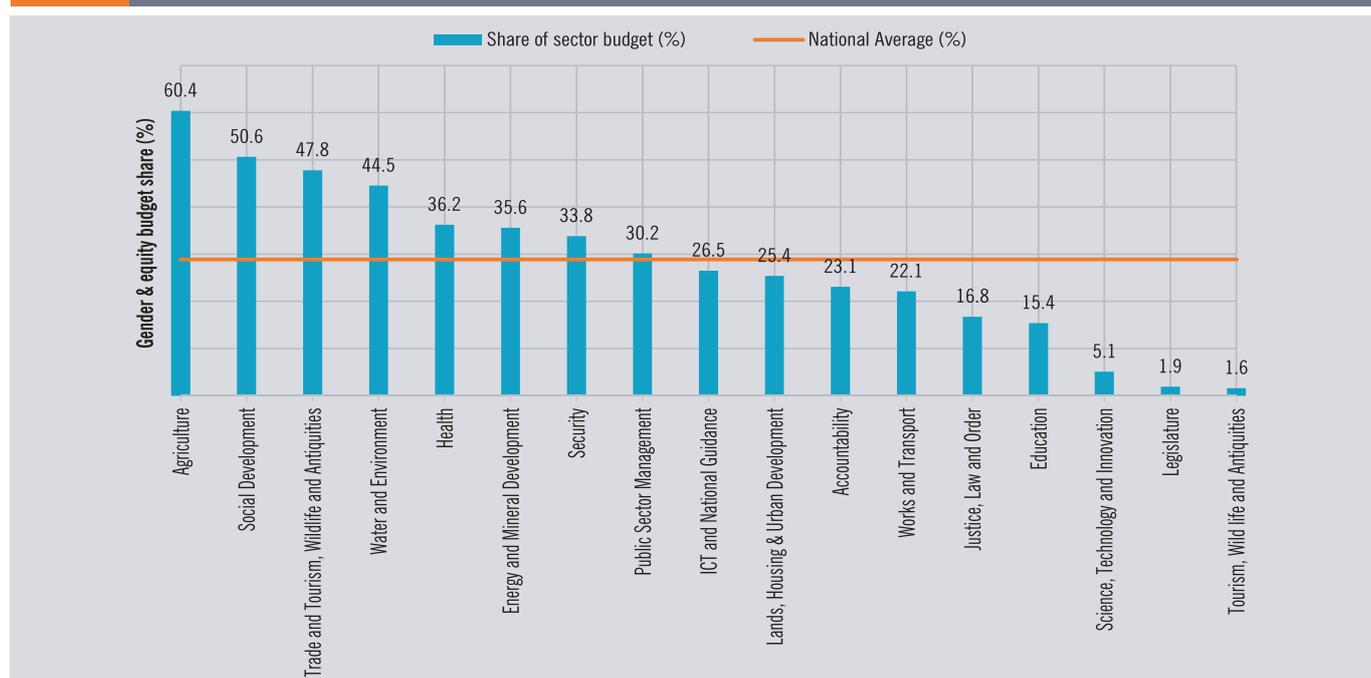
Table 1 Sectorial budget (UGX billion) allocated to gender and equity interventions

SECTOR	2017/18	2018/19
Works and Transport	590.1	1,058.4
Energy and Mineral Development	492.8	884.4
Health	763.7	856.6
Security	451.9	700.1
Water and Environment	28.4	587.2
Agriculture	625.1	567.0
Public Sector Management	552.3	553.4
Education	542.6	483.8
Accountability	256.6	261.0
Justice, Law and Order	230.8	232.5
Public Administration	133.0	171.9
Social Development	100.8	109.9
Trade and Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities	87.1	77.3
Lands, Housing and Urban Development	59.2	52.9
ICT and National Guidance	42.2	44.8
Legislature	0.7	9.5
Science, Technology and Innovation	-	9.4
Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities	-	1.9

Source: The Equal Opportunities Commission, May 2020

There is variation across sectors in the extent of prioritising financing for GEWE interventions. The GEWE share of sectoral budgets partly reflects the weight attached to GEWE interventions. In Figure 2, we observe that some sectors surpass the national average for the percentage of the budget allocated to gender-specific interventions (i.e. 28.9%). These are the sectors of agriculture, social development, trade, water and environment, energy and mineral development, security; and public sector management. On the other hand, several sectors report committing less than 10% of their budgets to GEWE interventions—notably tourism, wildlife and antiquities; legislature as well as the science, technology and innovations sector.

Figure 2 Share of sector budget (%) allocated to gender and equity interventions; FY 2018/19



Source: The Equal Opportunities Commission, May 2020

There are minimal variations between budgets and released funds, suggesting that GEWE interventions are minimally affected by budgets and reallocations. Table 2 shows that for FY 2018/19, the budget outturn for gender and equity interventions was 94.6 %. Even the few sectors whose budget releases were below the national average (6 in number), they received the largest share of budgeted resources. These are: Social development (93.3%); works and transport (93.2%); public sector management (89.6%); trade, tourism, wildlife and antiquities (88.5%); energy and mineral development (87.0%); and education (80.4%). Overall, the table demonstrates the Government's commitment to supporting the implementation of gender equality promoting interventions. It also means that in most cases, sectors receive all budgeted funds to implement planned GEWE activities.

The absorption capacity of released funds for implementation of GEWE interventions is also correspondingly very high. Column 3 in Table 2 shows that budget execution rates are appreciably high in most sectors—nearly 100%. Only a handful of sectors fail to utilise the released funds for gender focused interventions. Even for the worst-performing sectors in terms of budget absorption for gender and equity interventions, the percentages of funds not utilised are low—9.7% for energy and Mineral Development, 5.7% for the works and transport, and 5.1 % for public sector management.

At the same time, since the adoption of SDGs in 2015, Uganda has increasingly received aid for projects targeting GEWE; however, donor commitments remain uncertain. Uganda receives Official Development Assistance (ODA) from the Development Assistance Committee (DAC)¹ to support the implementation of activities targeting gender equality and women's empowerment. Statistics presented in Figure 3 show that within four years, financial resources received by Uganda from DAC (gross disbursements) increased by over 14% from about USD 503 million in 2015 to slightly over USD 575 million in 2018. However, statistics, also seem to suggest unpredictable donor commitment to support the implementation of GEWE projects. This is demonstrated by the fact that except for the year 2015, in the rest of the years, disbursed funds are much less than the amounts DAC members committed to providing to Uganda as ODA

Table 2 Budget releases and utilisation for GEWE activities; FY 2018/19

SECTOR	% allocations released for GEWE activities	% Releases spent on GEWE activities
National	94.6	97.4
Trade and Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities	88.5	105.1
Legislature	99.9	100.1
Accountability	100.0	100.0
Agriculture	100.0	100.0
Water and Environment	99.6	100.0
Science, Technology and Innovation	100.0	100.0
Security	100.0	100.0
ICT and National Guidance	99.8	100.0
Social Development	93.3	100.0
Justice, Law and Order	100.0	99.9
Public Administration	100.0	99.9
Lands, Housing and Urban Development	100.0	99.8
Education	80.4	99.6
Health	100.0	99.5
Tourism, Wildlife and Antiquities	100.5	98.9
Public Sector Management	89.6	94.9
Works and Transport	93.2	94.3
Energy and Mineral Development	87.0	89.3

Source: The Equal Opportunities Commission, May 2020

Figure 3 Aid flows (USD, millions) targeting gender equality and women's empowerment in Uganda; 2015 - 2018



Source: OECD, Stat, 2020

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for GEWE projects. The disparity is even more pronounced in 2018 when Uganda received only 42 % of the total financial resources that DAC members had committed to providing for activities targeting GEWE. Precisely, out of the USD 1,385 million that DAC members had committed, only USD 575 million was transferred to Uganda.

Government of Uganda heavily depends on its own resources to finance gender equality and women’s empowerment projects/programmes. Based on the FY 2018/19 budget outturns and the 2018 aid data on financing for gender equality and women’s empowerment, we note that about 66 % financing for GEWE is from domestic resources. This is good because the Government can ensure that GEWE interventions are prioritised and sustainably financed. Indeed, this financing pattern has for long been the case based on the report of the Expert Group Meeting in 2007², where it was reported that for most countries, government budgets are the largest single source of financing for GEWE.

Emerging Issues for policy consideration

- Although donor funding for activities targeting gender equality and women’s empowerment is increasing over time, donor commitment to continually fund GEWE is quite uncertain. Therefore, Uganda needs to continue allocating a larger share for GEWE activities through domestic resource mobilisation and subsequently increased budget allocations to sectors.
- Financing for gender equality and women’s empowerment is likely to be reduced in cases where sectoral budget allocations fall. Hence, there is need for the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development to ensure that sectoral allocations are sustained or better still increased annually. In the same vein, the Uganda Revenue Authority should expedite strategies for increasing domestic resource mobilisation.
- There are significant variations across sectors in terms of budget shares allocated and spent on GEWE interventions. Some sectors appear to prioritise financing GEWE than others. Therefore, the Government should establish a standard proportion of sector allocations that should be earmarked for gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Reference

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Endnotes

- There are 30 members of the DAC: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United

States and the European Union.

- Financing for gender equality and women’s empowerment. Report of the Expert Group Meeting organised by the Division of the Advancement of Women in Oslo, Norway; 4-7 September 2007.

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