



ASSESSMENT OF THE ECONOMIC INCLUSIVENESS OF THE UGANDA WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAMME (UWEP)

THE CASE OF
LUWERO, WAKISO, MPIGI,
MUKONO AND KAMPALA
DISTRICTS

ACODE Policy Research Paper Series No.116

DECEMBER 2023



ASSESSMENT OF THE ECONOMIC INCLUSIVENESS OF THE UGANDA WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAMME (UWEP)

THE CASE OF LUWERO, WAKISO,
MPIGI, MUKONO AND KAMPALA
DISTRICTS

ACODE Policy Research Paper Series 116

DECEMBER 2023



Published by ACODE
P.O. BOX 29836, Kampala,
Email: library@acode-u.org; acode@acode-u.org
Website: <http://www.acode-u.org>

Copyright © 2023, Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE)

Citation:

ACODE (2023). *Assessment of the economic inclusiveness of the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP): The case of Luwero, Wakiso, Mpigi, Mukono and Kampala districts*. ACODE Policy Research Paper Series 116.

Printed 2024

This book may not be reproduced in whole or in part, or transmitted in any form, without written permission from the publisher, except by a reviewer who may quote brief passages in a review; nor may any part of this book be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or other, without written permission from the publisher.

ISBN: 9 789 970 567 140



TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	iv
LIST OF TABLES	v
LIST OF ACRONYMS	vi
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	viii
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Background and Context	1
1.2 Rationale for Assessing the Economic Inclusiveness of UWEP	3
1.3 Objectives of the Study	3
2.0 OVERVIEW OF THE UGANDA WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAMME	4
2.1 Goal and Objectives	4
2.2 Legal, Policy and Institutional Frameworks	5
2.3 The Concept of Economic Inclusiveness	6
2.4 Key Elements of Economic Inclusiveness	7
2.5 Conceptual Framework for Assessing the Economic Inclusiveness of UWEP	8
3.0 ASSESSMENT APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY	10
3.1 Scope	10
3.2 Data Collection and Methods	10
3.3 Ethical Consideration	11
3.4 Data Management and Analysis	11
4.0 KEY FINDINGS	12
4.1 Inclusiveness Assessment of UWEP Design	12
4.2 Inclusiveness Assessment of the Efficacy of UWEP	24
4.3 Assessment of the Economic Inclusiveness of the Quality of the M&E of UWEP	29
4.4 Economic Inclusiveness Assessment of the Efficiency of UWEP	33

4.5	Economic Inclusiveness Assessment of the Compliance of UWEP	36
4.6	Economic Inclusiveness Assessment of Risk Management	42
5.0	DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS	46
5.1	Emerging Issues and challenges	47
5.2	Lessons Learnt	48
5.3	Policy implications	49
5.4	Practical implications	49
5.5	Research Implications	50
5.6	Training Implications	50
6.0	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	52
	ANNEXES	55
	Annex 1: Summary of economic inclusiveness performance assessment of UWEP and scores	55

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1:	Economic Inclusion assessment framework	9
Figure 2:	Beneficiary Women Groups	16
Figure 3:	Approved Budget, Releases and Actual Expenditure	34

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1:	UWEP Activities and related Outputs	13
Table 2:	Women Group Projects in Makindye Ssabagabo Municipality	17
Table 3:	UWEP 5-Year Performance Targets	21
Table 4:	Inclusiveness Assessment of the Programme Design	23
Table 5:	Disbursements per District/Municipality as at 30th June 2022	25
Table 6:	Inclusiveness Performance of the Efficacy of UWEP	29
Table 7:	Programme Results Indicators	30
Table 8:	Inclusiveness Performance of the Quality of the M&E of UWEP	33
Table 9:	Disbursements by Programme Components to 30th June 2022	34
Table 10:	Economic Inclusiveness Performance of the Efficiency of UWEP	36
Table 11:	Economic Inclusiveness performance of the Compliance of UWEP	41
Table 12:	Levels of Risk to the Attainment and Sustainability of Programme Outcomes	42
Table 13:	Inclusiveness Performance of UWEP on Risk Management	45
Table 14:	Summary of Performance on Key Economic Inclusiveness Assessment Areas	46
Table 14:	A Summary of key findings, emerging issues and Inclusive Performance Scores	55

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACODE	Advocates Coalition on Development and Environment
BOU	Bank of Uganda
CAOs	Chief Administrative Officers
CDOs	Community Development Officers
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DAOs	District Agricultural Officers
DVOs	District Veterinary Officers
EIP	Economic Inclusiveness Programmes
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
KCCA	Kampala Capital City Authority
KIIs	Key Informants Interviews
LCs	Local Councils
LGs	Local Governments
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MAAIF	Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries
MDAs	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
MFIs	Micro Finance Institutions
MFPED	Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development
MGLSD	Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development

MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
MoLG	Ministry of Local Government
MPS	Ministerial Policy Statement
NAADS	National Agricultural Advisory Services
NDP III	Third National Development Plan
NUSAF	Northern Uganda Social Action Fund
OAG	Office of the Auditor General
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
OWC	Operation Wealth Creation
PDM	Parish Development Model
PMA	Programme for the Modernisation of Agriculture
SACCO	Savings and Credit Cooperative Organisations
SAGE	Social Assistance Grant for Empowerment
TSUs	Technical Support Unit
UBOS	Uganda Bureau of Statistics
UIRI	Uganda Industrial Research Institute
UMA	Uganda Moslem Association
UN	United Nations
UNHS	Uganda National Household Survey
UWEAL	Uganda Women Entrepreneur Association Limited
UWEP	Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme
WEF	Women Empowerment Fund
YLP	Youth Livelihood Programme

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.0 Introduction and Background

Uganda has implemented several Economic Inclusion Programmes (EIPs), such as the Entandikwa Scheme, Programme for the Modernisation of Agriculture (PMA), Prosperity for All, NUSAF 1, 2, and 3, “Emyooga,” the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP), and currently, the Parish Development Model (PDM). These programmes aim to ensure economic empowerment and integrate all people, especially marginalized groups, into the development mainstream. This aligns with the commitment made by United Nations (UN) Member States to eradicate poverty, reduce inequalities, and end discrimination, leaving no one behind.

In all EIPs, there is a special emphasis on inclusion, particularly focusing on the economic empowerment of women and other marginalized groups. Despite these well-intentioned government efforts, issues such as income poverty, regional inequalities, gender disparities, and the rural-urban divide persist. These challenges persist even though these programmes consume a substantial share of public resources.

UWEP focuses on several key aspects, including strengthening the capacity of women for entrepreneurship development, providing affordable credit, and supporting access to other financial services to enable women to establish and grow their business enterprises. Additionally, the program aims to facilitate women's access to markets for their products and services, promote access to appropriate technologies for production and value addition, and strengthen program management and coordination. While the program targets all women, its specific focus is on including vulnerable women who are considered unbankable and alienated from the mainstream development.

1.1 Objective of the Study

This study aims to assess the economic inclusiveness of the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP). UWEP, a flagship program initiated by the government in the fiscal year 2015/2016, is specifically dedicated to women's economic empowerment and enhancing their contribution to economic development.

1.2 Methodology

Utilizing ACODE's Framework for assessing Economic Inclusion Programs (EIPs) in Uganda, this study examines the extent of economic inclusiveness of

UWEP. The focus is on evaluating the design, efficacy, efficiency, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), compliance, and risk management of UWEP. The assessment was limited to two parishes in each of the five central region districts—Mpigi, Luweero, Mukono, Kampala, and Wakiso—where ACODE operates and UWEP is being implemented.

2.0 KEY FINDINGS

The assessment of the economic inclusiveness of UWEP is based on the six areas of ACODE's framework for EIP assessments, which include Program design, Efficacy, Quality of M&E, Efficiency, Compliance, and Risk management.

Summary of Performance on Key Economic Inclusiveness Assessment Areas

S/N	Programme Inclusiveness Assessment Areas	Average performance Score out of 4	Percentage inclusiveness score (%)
	Programme design	3	73
	Efficacy	2	45
	Quality of M&E	2	42
	Efficiency	2	38
	Compliance	3	71
	Risk Management	2	57
	Average Inclusiveness score of UWEP	2	54

3.0 EVALUATION RESULTS

The average performance scores, calculated based on interviews, provided a summary of common responses, and were converted into percentages for better comparative analysis across various assessment areas. The average inclusiveness score stood at a significant 2, equivalent to 54%.

3.1 Key Observations and Emerging Policy Issues

The study highlights several emerging policy issues and observations. Notably, it emphasizes the pivotal role of women as pillars in inclusiveness and socioeconomic transformation, positioning them as a key development strategy. Regarding UWEP's design, the program was implemented without leveraging lessons learned, displayed marginalization of skills development and training in resource allocation, and exhibited limited involvement of beneficiaries in the program's design. Monitoring and evaluation, crucial for ensuring efficiency

and alignment with planned targets, goals, and objectives, faced challenges such as poor planning, inadequate budgeting, and a focus on funds recovery rather than overall project/enterprise performance. Areas such as capacity building, technologies for production and value addition, and market access were marginalized in terms of funds allocation.

3.2 Implementation Gaps and Challenges

While UWEP's design and compliance were deemed satisfactory, they alone were insufficient to guarantee economic inclusiveness. Implementation gaps in efficacy, quality of M&E, and efficiency significantly impacted the realization of economic inclusiveness outcomes and impacts. The program exhibited weaknesses in efficacy, quality of M&E, and efficiency, with these areas being interconnected, influencing overall performance and progress towards program outcomes and impacts.

3.3 Efficiency Concerns

UWEP faced efficiency challenges, with key performance gaps identified. Issues included lower budget releases compared to approved allocations, concerns regarding allocative efficiency among program components, and the marginalization of capacity building, technology, and market-related aspects in resource allocation. These areas, if adequately funded, could substantially contribute to the achievement of program outcomes and impacts. Additionally, concerns were raised about resource utilization efficiency, with lower per unit inputs and outputs indicating inefficiency.

3.4 Discrepancies Between Design and Implementation Realities

The findings underscore the significant disparities between program design, often theoretical in nature, and the practical realities of implementation. This discrepancy is evident in efficacy, quality of M&E, efficiency, compliance enforcement, and risk management aspects, highlighting the need for a comprehensive and integrated approach to bridge these gaps for successful program outcomes.

3.5 Emerging Issues and Challenges

1. **Data Constraints:** Data limitations on the various identities and characteristics of women hinder inclusive planning and measuring the economic inclusiveness impacts of interventions.

2. **Stakeholder Coordination:** Limited coordination among stakeholders in implementation is evident, as UWEP is predominantly public sector-driven, with a restricted role for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), Religious and Cultural Institutions, and the private sector. Despite their community-based nature, these entities are not fully engaged in addressing inclusiveness issues.
3. **Recognition of Complementary Role of Men:** The lack of recognition of the complementary role of men is noted, despite their involvement having the potential to enhance program benefits, particularly at the household level.
4. **Impact of External Shocks:** The program's low resilience to external shocks, such as those induced by events like COVID-19 and climate change, adversely affected program performance and its intended inclusive effects.
5. **Budget Releases Discrepancy:** Smaller budget releases in comparison to the approved budgets have been identified as a challenge, potentially impeding the program's effective implementation.
6. **Politicization of UWEP:** UWEP has been politicized, promoting the self-interests of politicians seeking to advance their agendas. Instances of misinformation and contradictions between technical and political actors, leading to poor recovery of the revolving fund in some areas, exemplify this challenge.
7. **Free Riders in Groups:** The prevalence of free riders within groups is noted. While loans are intended for groups, individual projects could significantly benefit women, enhancing their practical capacities in project management, financial stewardship, and strategic decision-making.
8. **Integration with Parish Development Model (PDM):** UWEP is being subsumed into the Parish Development Model (PDM), despite differences in goals and structures. Ideally, these programs should have remained separate and complementary. Concerns arise about the integration process, with reports indicating limited absorption of key personnel from UWEP into the PDM Secretariat, potentially impacting program continuity.

3.7 Lessons Learned

1. **Family Collaboration:** Women working with their husbands has proven beneficial, fostering better appreciation of the program's advantages among husbands. Reports suggest that married women, alongside widows, emerged as the primary beneficiaries.
2. **Viability of Small Women Enterprises:** UWEP has showcased the viability of small women enterprises as a sustainable model, capable of supporting

the growth of a resilient Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) sector in the country.

3. **Significance of Leadership:** The impact of UWEP's inclusiveness is optimized by good and dedicated leadership, emphasizing the pivotal role of leadership in achieving program goals.
4. **Building on Existing Structures:** Leveraging existing structures enhances program effectiveness. UWEP demonstrated better performance where organized women groups, such as "Muno mu Kabi" (a friend in need is a friend indeed), and the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS), were already engaged in specific economic empowerment activities.
5. **Importance of Partnerships:** Partnerships with other stakeholders are crucial, as UWEP alone may not fully realize expected inclusiveness outcomes. For instance, Telcan Innovations Ltd in Mukono supported a Women's Group in Kyampisi Sub-County, facilitating the procurement of sewing machines for clothes and shoes. Additionally, they provided business and entrepreneurial skills, contributing to the initiation of small businesses and effective record-keeping.

3.8 Conclusions and Recommendations

The primary aim of this study was to evaluate the economic inclusiveness of the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP). The concept of inclusiveness is still in its early stages, with limited frameworks available for assessment. The assessment, therefore, relied on the ACODE EIP Assessment framework, which leans more towards economic empowerment than economic inclusiveness. Despite this bias, the EIP framework provides valuable insights into inclusion gaps, as discussed above. However, as the understanding of inclusion continues to evolve, it is essential to assess programs like UWEP using well-established frameworks specifically designed for inclusion as a fundamental aspect of development.

The study underscores the widely acknowledged observation that women play indispensable roles in economic empowerment, social inclusiveness, and socioeconomic transformation. This recognition positions targeting women as a crucial strategy for development. Arising from the findings discussed above, general and specific recommendations to address the emerging issues and gaps identified are highlighted as hereunder:

3.8.1 General Recommendations:

- i. **Framework Enhancement:** Develop and adopt well-tested frameworks specifically tailored for assessing economic inclusiveness, ensuring a more accurate and comprehensive evaluation of programs like UWEP.
- ii. **Comprehensive Inclusion Strategies:** Strengthen strategies to address inclusion gaps identified in the study, with a focus on promoting economic inclusiveness.
- iii. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Enhance coordination and involvement of diverse stakeholders, including Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), Religious and Cultural Institutions, and the private sector, in UWEP implementation to foster a more inclusive approach.
- iv. **Recognition of Complementary Roles:** Acknowledge and actively involve men in UWEP to maximize program benefits, particularly at the household level.
- v. **Resilience Building:** Incorporate measures to enhance the resilience of UWEP against external shocks, such as those induced by events like COVID-19 and climate change.
- vi. **Efficiency Improvements:** Address identified efficiency gaps, including discrepancies in budget releases, to ensure optimal resource utilization for program success.
- vii. **Political Neutrality:** Mitigate the politicisation of UWEP to ensure that the program remains focused on its objectives, free from external influences that may compromise its effectiveness.
- viii. **Continuity in Transition:** Ensure a seamless transition as UWEP integrates into the Parish Development Model (PDM) by integrating key personnel and aligning goals and structures effectively.

3.8.2 Specific Recommendations

i) Programme Design Recommendations

- a. **Phased Implementation Approach:** The Ministry of Local Government (MoLG) should collaborate with the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development (MoGLSD) to integrate lessons learned from UWEP into the implementation of the Parish Development Model. Following a phased approach, initial implementation should commence in a limited number of local governments before expanding nationwide. This strategy aims to facilitate better learning, accumulate experiences, and align with budgetary resources effectively.

- b. Incentives for Local and Community Staff:* MoLG and MoGLSD should institute incentives, particularly at the local and community levels, to ensure that UWEP activities are not treated as peripheral but rather integrated into the core mandates of staff. This measure will enhance the commitment and engagement of personnel at various levels.
- c. Diversity Consideration in Group Formation:* To promote effective group formation and enterprise selection, officers in local governments should consciously include a wide range of social, economic, cultural, and religious diversities among program beneficiaries. It is essential to consider factors such as interest rates on loans in alignment with different faiths, as exemplified by the case of the Muslim community.
- d. Decentralized Service Delivery:* MoGLSD should decentralize UWEP service delivery from the Secretariat (centre) to smaller sub-regional levels. This shift aims to establish quicker feedback loops, ensuring greater effectiveness and efficiency in program implementation. Decentralization will foster more localized responsiveness and adaptability to unique community needs.

ii) Efficacy Recommendations

The following recommendations are proposed to enhance the efficacy of the program:

Local government focal persons and the MoGLSD secretariat should ensure that borrowed funds are utilized according to the planned objectives. This can be achieved through effective monitoring, involvement of community leadership, self-regulation, and compliance enforcement.

3.8.3 Quality of M&E Recommendations

- a. Government Program Planning and M&E:* NPA, MFPED, OPM, and other relevant MDAs should ensure comprehensive program design, incorporating robust M&E planning. This includes adequate budget allocation, active participation of key program actors at all implementation levels, and regular assessments to ensure efficiency and alignment with planned targets, goals, and objectives.
- b. Balanced M&E Focus:* MGLSD's M&E activities should strike a balance between funds recovery and project/enterprise performance. Additionally, MGLSD should strengthen the M&E framework to allow for tracking and addressing risks. The integration of environmental and social safeguards into routine M&E processes is crucial.

- c. *Disaggregated Reporting:* The OAG, MGLSD, and all entities involved in UWEP's M&E should ensure disaggregated reporting. This involves capturing performance based on the diverse characteristics and identities of women beneficiaries. It is crucial to assess how the program impacts disabled groups, widows, minority groups, and others.

iii) Efficiency Recommendations

- a. *Budget Implementation:* MoFPED should work towards minimizing the gap between the approved budget and the actual budget released. This step is essential to ensure the full implementation of planned activities.
- b. *Timely Funding Disbursement:* MoGLSD should advocate and lobby for reduced time between approval and disbursement, ensuring timely access to funding for groups and fostering increased economic inclusiveness effects.
- c. *Priority Attention to Key Areas:* MoFPED and MoGLSD should prioritize budget allocation to skills development, market access, technology, and value addition. Recognizing these as foundational elements of sustainable women's economic empowerment, this emphasis will contribute significantly to program success.

iv) Compliance Recommendations

The following recommendations are suggested to enhance compliance within the program:

- a. *Balanced Compliance Approach:* MoGLSD should establish a balanced combination of punitive and reward systems to ensure compliance with obligations by various stakeholders involved in the program.
- b. *Strengthening Environment and Social Safeguards:* The district Natural Resource Department, in collaboration with the district project focal person, should enhance the implementation of environmental and social safeguards. These safeguards should be strengthened to align with, or surpass, the standards set for accountability and audit safeguards.
- c. *Sustainability Planning:* MoGLSD should engage in sustainability planning, ensuring the seamless translation of activities into outputs, outcomes, and impacts. This holistic approach should guarantee the long-term survival and benefits to the targeted population.
- d. *Equitable Benefits Sharing:* District focal persons should ensure the equitable sharing of benefits within and among groups, considering the

diverse characteristics, interests, and abilities of women involved in the program.

- e. *Mechanisms for Accountability:* MoLGSD should establish mechanisms to ensure that program implementers meet their obligations. Additionally, beneficiaries should be empowered to hold implementers accountable in case of any failures or deviations from program goals. This emphasizes transparency and accountability at all levels of program implementation.

v) Risk Management Recommendations

The following recommendations are proposed to enhance risk management within the program:

- a. *Mechanisms for Future Shocks:* The government should establish mechanisms for the identification, mitigation, and building resilience against unpredictable future shocks that might impact the smooth implementation of its programs. This proactive approach will contribute to program continuity and effectiveness.
- b. *Political Economy Considerations:* During program design, there is a need for a clear understanding of the political economy. Aligning the program with changing government priorities helps minimize risks associated with shifting political landscapes and ensures continued relevance and support.
- c. *Building Partnerships for Sustainability:* MoGLSD should actively build and strengthen partnerships with MDAs, CSOs, the private sector, and development partners. Collaborating with ongoing programs such as Operation Wealth Creation (OWC) will contribute to the long-term sustainability of the program.
- d. *Diversifying Funding Sources:* MoFPED should address the recurrent problem of inadequate funding by diversifying sources of funding. Identifying innovative funding mechanisms to implement planned activities will enhance financial stability and reduce dependency on a single funding stream.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Context

While Uganda has experienced decades of macroeconomic stability and sustained GDP growth rates averaging 4.6% over the last 10 years, the prevailing poverty situation remains a significant concern. The headcount poverty level, currently estimated at 20.3%, has decreased from 21.4% in 2016/17, yet it remains high. Approximately 12.3 million people, constituting 30.1% of the population, still live below the poverty line of US\$1.77 per person per day.¹

The Multidimensional Poverty Index Report for 2022, which gauges human capital deprivation and access to basic services, further underscores the challenges. It reveals that 27% of Ugandans are multi-dimensionally poor, reflecting the complexity of poverty beyond income measures. Additionally, income inequalities, measured by the Gini coefficient at 0.41², remain high. In this context, where 0 signifies perfect equality and 1 indicates perfect inequality, the persisting disparities are evident.

Moreover, regional and gender disparities, along with the rural-urban divide, continue to persist. These findings highlight the need for targeted efforts and comprehensive strategies to address not only income poverty but also the multidimensional aspects of poverty, inequalities, and regional disparities for sustained and inclusive development.

The observed downward trend in poverty and inequality in Uganda coincides with the global principles of inclusive growth and leaving no one behind. These principles are not only embraced globally but are also integral elements of Uganda's development agenda, evident in various policies and national strategic plans. For instance, the macroeconomic strategy outlined in the National Development Plan III (NDPIII) aims to accelerate and sustain inclusive economic growth while maintaining macroeconomic stability and debt sustainability. However, it's notable that none of the objectives underpinning this strategy explicitly addresses inequality and inclusion.³

1 UBOS, Statistical Abstract, 2021

2 UBOS, UNHS 2019/20

3 A beginner's guide to inclusive monitoring and evaluation: from talking to doing

In spite of being a frequently used term and an ideal to which many organizations express their will and commitment, the concept of inclusion remains poorly defined and understood. This highlights the need for a more nuanced understanding of inclusion and the explicit integration of measures to address inequality in the strategic objectives of development plans. Addressing these challenges would not only align with global and national aspirations but also contribute to more effective and equitable development outcomes in Uganda.

To tackle the challenges of inclusion and inequality, various well-intentioned Economic Inclusion Programmes (EIPs), led by both the government and development partners, have been implemented, with some still ongoing. EIPs encompass a coordinated set of multidimensional interventions designed to support individuals, households, and communities in enhancing incomes and assets. Globally, these programs are increasingly recognized as vehicles for promoting inclusive growth, aiming to ensure that the benefits of economic development reach all segments of society.⁴

Several notable Economic Inclusion Programmes (EIPs) have been implemented, aiming to address inclusion and inequality. Some of these programs include: Entandikwa Scheme; Programme for the Modernisation of Agriculture (PMA); Prosperity for All (“Bonna Bagaggawale”); Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP); Social Assistance Grant for Empowerment (SAGE); Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF-1, 2, 3, and 4); Uganda Women Entrepreneur Association Limited (UWEAL); Operation Wealth Creation (OWC); “Emyooga”; Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Program (UWEP); and Parish Development Model (PDM). These initiatives represent diverse efforts to promote economic inclusion and uplifting, each targeting specific aspects of empowerment for individuals, communities, and various demographic groups.

Across all these programs, there is a consistent emphasis on inclusion, particularly with regard to the economic empowerment of women and other marginalized groups. This assessment, however, narrows its focus to the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP). UWEP, initiated by the government in the fiscal year 2015/2016, stands out as a flagship program dedicated specifically to the economic empowerment of women.

⁴ ACODE (2022). [A Framework for Assessing Implementation of Economic Inclusion Programmes in Uganda](#). ACODE Policy Research Paper No. 109, 2022. Kampala.

1.2 Rationale for Assessing the Economic Inclusiveness of UWEP

The assessment of the economic inclusiveness of the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP) is motivated by several factors. It is often observed that the design of many Economic Inclusion Programmes (EIPs) is ad-hoc and lacks informed evaluations and lessons learned from previous program implementations. These programs often do not adequately consider the unique identities, characteristics, needs, and vulnerabilities of the targeted groups, leading to a cycle of repeated mistakes and failures despite significant public resource allocations.

According to the Ministerial Policy Statement (MPS) for the Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) in 2021/22, substantial funds were disbursed to women groups under UWEP. Additionally, other programs, such as Emyooga and Parish Development Model (PDM), received significant financial allocations.⁵ However, there is a need to critically examine the inclusiveness dimension of these programs, specifically UWEP, to assess how well they advance the economic empowerment of women.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

ACODE, as a leading policy research and advocacy think tank with support from the Hewlett Foundation, undertook this study to address the apparent gap in most assessments regarding the inclusion dimension of empowerment. The focus was on UWEP, one of the key women economic empowerment programs in Uganda. ACODE's mission of making public policies work for people is a driving force behind this study. Specifically, the study aimed to:

- a) Identify key inclusion interventions and policy areas in the UWEP program;
- b) Assess the inclusivity of the design and implementation of UWEP;
- c) Ascertain the level of inclusivity of the targeted beneficiaries under the program;
- d) Examine the level of awareness of UWEP services among the targeted beneficiaries.

⁵ UGX.9.156 billion was disbursed to 1,248 women groups benefiting 10,562 women under UWEP. By March 2023, seed capital worth UGX.249 billion had been disbursed to 6,721 constituency-based Emyooga SACCOs which also benefit women, while in the FY 2024/25, UGX.100 billion has been allocated to the Emyooga initiative. NUSAF 1, 2 and 3 took US\$ 363 million, while PDM is estimated at UGX.1,060 billion annually.

2.0 OVERVIEW OF THE UGANDA WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAMME

2.1 Goal and Objectives

UWEP is an initiative of the Government of Uganda that is aimed at improving access to financial services for women and equipping them with skills for enterprise growth, value addition and marketing of their products and services.⁶ The overall goal of the Programme is to empower Ugandan women to improve their income levels and their contribution to economic development. Specifically, the programme aims to:

1. strengthen the capacity of women for entrepreneurship development;
2. provide affordable credit and support access and other financial services to enable women to establish and grow their business enterprises;
3. facilitate women's access to markets for their products and services;
4. promote access to appropriate technologies for production and value addition;
5. strengthen Programme management and coordination

UWEP, an initiative of the Government of Uganda, aims to enhance access to financial services for women while equipping them with skills for enterprise growth, value addition, and marketing of their products and services. The overarching goal of the Programme is to empower Ugandan women to enhance their income levels and contribute to economic development. Specifically, the program aims to:

1. Strengthen the capacity of women for entrepreneurship development;
2. Provide affordable credit and support access to other financial services to enable women to establish and grow their business enterprises;
3. Facilitate women's access to markets for their products and services;
4. Promote access to appropriate technologies for production and value addition;
5. Strengthen program management and coordination.

⁶ <https://mgjisd.go.ug/uwep/>

Whereas UWEP targets all women, it specifically seeks to include vulnerable women who are considered un-bankable and neglected into the development mainstream. The Programme was initiated in 19 District Local Governments and Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) in the Financial Year 2015/2016. The districts then included; Moroto, Katakwi, Kaliro, Mayuge, Kamuli, Kalangala, Kayunga, Wakiso, Kibaale, Bundibugyo, Kiruhura, Koboko, Nebbi, Kitgum, Ntungamo, Otuke, Kole, Nakasongola and Kisoro. In the FY 2016/2017, the Programme was rolled out to the entire country with separate budgets for each district and municipality.

While UWEP targets all women, it specifically aims to include vulnerable women who are considered unbankable and neglected into the development mainstream. The Programme was initiated in 19 District Local Governments and Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) in the Financial Year 2015/2016. These districts included Moroto, Katakwi, Kaliro, Mayuge, Kamuli, Kalangala, Kayunga, Wakiso, Kibaale, Bundibugyo, Kiruhura, Koboko, Nebbi, Kitgum, Ntungamo, Otuke, Kole, Nakasongola, and Kisoro. In the FY 2016/2017, the Programme was rolled out to the entire country with separate budgets allocated to each district and municipality.

2.2 Legal, Policy and Institutional Frameworks

UWEP is anchored in Uganda's robust policy, legal and regulatory frameworks for advancing women's rights. Article 3 of the 1995 Constitution that emphasises equality between women and men and the right to equal opportunity sets the stage for more gender responsive legislations.

The Gender Policy (2007) provides an overarching framework for identifying, implementing, and coordinating interventions designed to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment. The National Employment Policy, seeks to promote productive and decent employment for all women and men by increasing productivity, competitiveness and employability of the labour force; ensuring the availability of reliable and timely labour market information; and promoting affirmative action, adequate safety nets, and social protection for poor and vulnerable groups, all of which are fundamental in promoting women's participation in the labour market.⁷

The MGLSD which is the custodian of UWEP Secretariat has several policies and programs to advance gender equality. In addition, several other institutions have mainstreamed gender considerations in their activities. For example, the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MFPED) require a certificate of compliance with gender and equity before disbursing funds to any entity and on the other hand, the Uganda Police introduced Gender Desks to handle gender related matters among others.⁸

UWEP is firmly rooted in Uganda's comprehensive policy, legal, and regulatory frameworks aimed at advancing women's rights. Article 3 of the 1995 Constitution underscores the principle of equality between women and men, ensuring equal opportunities and paving the way for gender-responsive legislations.

The Gender Policy of 2007 serves as a comprehensive framework for identifying, implementing, and coordinating interventions geared towards achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. Additionally, the National Employment Policy aims to promote productive and decent employment for both women and men by enhancing productivity, competitiveness, and employability of the labor force. It emphasizes the importance of affirmative action, reliable labor market information, and social protection for vulnerable groups, all of which play vital roles in fostering women's participation in the labor market.

The Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development (MGLSD), which oversees the UWEP Secretariat, spearheads numerous policies and programs dedicated to advancing gender equality. Moreover, various institutions have integrated gender considerations into their activities. For instance, the Ministry of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development (MFPED) require a certificate of compliance with gender and equity standards before disbursing funds to any entity. Similarly, the Uganda Police have established Gender Desks to address gender-related matters, among other initiatives. These efforts collectively contribute to creating an enabling environment for the empowerment and advancement of women in Uganda.

2.3 The Concept of Economic Inclusiveness

Inclusion is the practice or policy of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized in the current development mainstream, such as those who have physical or intellectual disabilities and members of other minority groups.

8

A Matrix and Analysis of Gender Equality Laws And Policies In Uganda

It is often viewed as a policy goal, objective and process, focusing on creating conditions for equal opportunities and equal access for all and is pivotal in promoting social integration.⁹

Economic inclusion in particular, is a process which ensures that those at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social, political and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living that is considered normal in the society in which they live.

Inclusion refers to the practice or policy of ensuring equal access to opportunities and resources for individuals who may otherwise face exclusion or marginalization in the prevailing development mainstream. This encompasses various groups, including those with physical or intellectual disabilities and members of other minority communities. Inclusion is commonly regarded as both a policy goal and a process, aiming to create conditions for equal opportunities and access for all individuals. It plays a crucial role in fostering social integration.

Economic inclusion, in particular, is a process that aims to ensure individuals at risk of poverty and social exclusion have the necessary opportunities and resources to fully participate in economic, social, political, and cultural life. It seeks to enable individuals to enjoy a standard of living considered normal within their society. Economic inclusion is pivotal in promoting societal well-being and reducing disparities among various segments of the population.

2.4 Key Elements of Economic Inclusiveness

- **Sustainability:** This refers to the ability of interventions to continue independently even after external support ends. Sustainable economic inclusion programs are designed to create lasting impacts that endure beyond the duration of external funding.
- **Ensuring Free, Active, and Meaningful Participation:** Economic inclusiveness necessitates the active involvement and engagement of all stakeholders, particularly those who are often marginalized or left behind. It emphasizes the importance of enabling individuals to participate freely in decision-making processes that affect their economic well-being.
- **Accountability and Transparency:** Economic inclusion initiatives should prioritize accountability and transparency in their operations. This involves clear communication of goals, transparent allocation of resources, and mechanisms for stakeholders to hold program implementers accountable for their actions and outcomes.

- **Equality and Equity:** Economic inclusiveness requires both equality and equity. While equality ensures that everyone has access to the same opportunities and resources, equity recognizes that different individuals may require different levels of support to achieve the same outcomes due to varying circumstances or disadvantages.
- **Empowerment:** Economic inclusiveness aims to empower individuals and communities by providing them with the tools, skills, and resources they need to participate fully in economic activities and decision-making processes. This empowerment fosters self-reliance and enables individuals to improve their own economic circumstances and those of their communities.

2.5 Conceptual Framework for Assessing the Economic Inclusiveness of UWEP

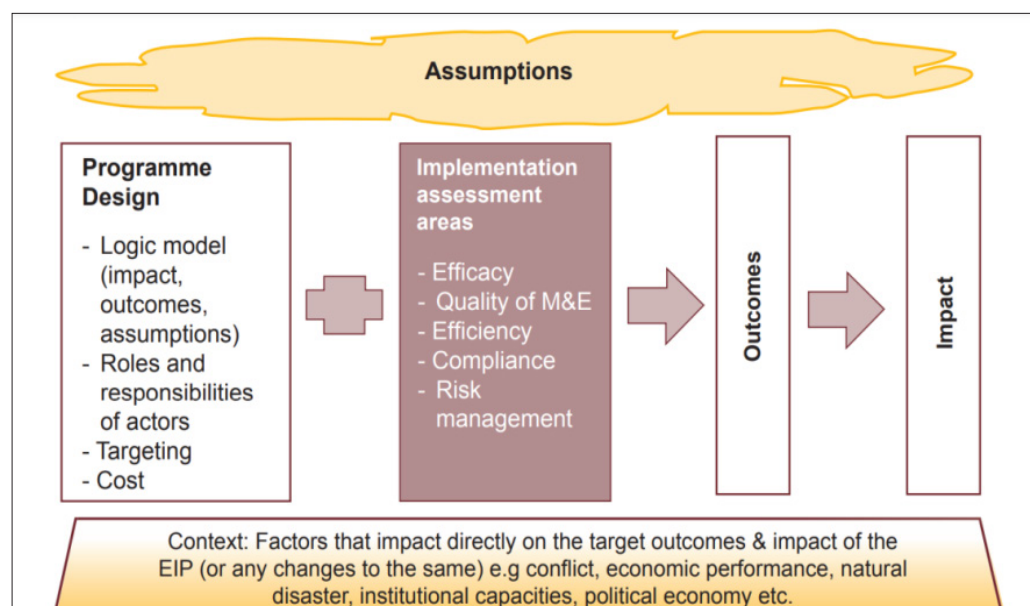
The assessment of the extent of economic inclusiveness of UWEP is based on ACODE's Framework for assessing the implementation of Economic Inclusion Programs (EIPs) in Uganda. This framework evaluates six key areas, namely:

- a. Programme Design:** This focuses on the appropriateness of the program's design, the validity of assumptions made, and consideration of the contextual factors. It assesses whether the design aligns with the program's objectives and targets.
- b. Efficacy:** This area evaluates the execution of the program in comparison to its design and plans. It involves comparing the actual performance of the program against its work plans and targets to determine its effectiveness.
- c. Quality of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E):** The assessment of M&E focuses on the existence and functionality of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms within the program. It also evaluates the use of M&E outputs to inform the implementation of the program and make necessary adjustments.
- d. Efficiency:** Efficiency assessment primarily focuses on the effective utilization of financial resources allocated to the program. It examines the pattern of expenditure in relation to important cost drivers to ensure optimal resource allocation.
- e. Compliance:** This area assesses the program's adherence to compliance obligations, including audits and environmental and social safeguards where applicable. It covers internal and external audits, as well as measures taken to mitigate safeguarding risks and impacts.

f. Risk Management: Risk management involves identifying program outcomes at different levels of risk and determining the sources of these risks. It evaluates the likelihood of occurrence of these risks and their implications for the attainment and sustainability of program outcomes and impacts. Interventions are then made to mitigate the impact of identified risks.

The assessment framework is guided by the principles of social accountability, participation, empowerment for engagement, learning, and optimization. These principles ensure that the assessment process considers the perspectives and needs of all stakeholders involved in the UWEP program, ultimately aiming to enhance its economic inclusiveness and effectiveness.

Figure 1: Economic Inclusion Assessment Framework



Source: ACODE, 2022. *A Framework for Assessing Economic Inclusion Programmes in Uganda*. ACODE Policy Research Paper No. 109, 2022

The ACODE assessment framework also illustrates the theory of change, shedding light on whether inclusiveness was a desired outcome in the design of UWEP.

3.0 ASSESSMENT APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Scope

The geographical scope of the assessment was limited to at least 2 parishes in each of the five focus districts in the central region: Mpigi, Luweero, Mukono, Kampala, and Wakiso, where ACODE operates and UWEP is being implemented. To enhance the empirical findings, Kayunga district was also included. Additionally, reference was made to secondary data from other districts, and telephone interviews were conducted with key informants, including local-level actors.

3.2 Data Collection and Methods

The assessment utilized a combination of primary and secondary data sources, employing mixed and participatory methods in line with the requirements of the ACODE framework. The mixed data collection methods included:

- a) Document review:** This involved analyzing documents such as UWEP performance monitoring data from its Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) frameworks, Policy Statements (e.g., MPS) from relevant government ministries including MGLSD, MFPED, MOLG, NPA, as well as relevant documents from the districts.
- b) Key Informant Interviews (KIIs):** KIIs were conducted with key program implementers at both national (2) and sub-national levels (5). Semi-structured and unstructured questionnaires were administered to relevant government officials to gather their insights and perspectives on the program.
- c) Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** FGDs were held with beneficiaries to elicit their insights, perceptions, and experiences regarding the successes and failures of the program. A total of 50 women groups were visited for this purpose.

These methods allowed for a comprehensive assessment of the economic inclusiveness of UWEP, capturing perspectives from various stakeholders involved in the program's design, implementation, and beneficiaries.

3.3 Ethical Consideration

The assessment prioritized the rights and dignity of all participants involved in the study. Careful consideration was given to treating all participants fairly and respectfully, without bias based on socioeconomic status or other characteristics. To ensure transparency and respect for participants:

The study objectives were clearly explained to district officials, including the Chief Administrative Officer or Town Clerk, Community Development Officers, UWEP focal persons, and individual women beneficiaries in the study parishes and villages across Luweero, Mukono, Kayunga, Mpigi, and Wakiso districts.

Initial consent was sought in the local language (Luganda), and administrative clearances were obtained from the respective heads of community development officers in each district.

These measures were implemented to uphold ethical standards and ensure the integrity of the assessment process while safeguarding the rights and dignity of all participants involved.

3.4 Data Management and Analysis

The collected data underwent coding and cleaning procedures using Excel 2013 and was subsequently analyzed using advanced Excel techniques. Themes were derived from numerical data utilizing an ordinal rating scale, also known as a Likert scale, ranging from 1 to 4. The scale ratings were interpreted as follows: 4 for highly satisfactory, 3 for satisfactory, 2 for substantial, and 1 for moderate.

Analysis involved computing frequencies, percentages, and means of the sampled population, providing a comprehensive overview of the findings. Additionally, comparisons were made between data obtained from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) to ensure consistency and concordance in the results. This rigorous analytical approach allowed for a thorough examination of the data, facilitating accurate interpretation and presentation of the assessment outcomes.

4.0 KEY FINDINGS

The findings of the assessment of the economic inclusiveness of UWEP are organized based on the 6 areas of ACODE's framework for EIP assessments: Programme design, Efficacy, Quality of M&E, Efficiency, Compliance, and Risk management.

4.1 Inclusiveness Assessment of UWEP Design

The assessment focused on evaluating the appropriateness of the design, validity of assumptions, and consideration of context. The findings are presented in alignment with the following questions from the assessment framework:

(i) What are the goals of the UWEP?

The overall goal of the Programme is to empower Ugandan women to improve their income levels and contribute to economic development. This goal inherently reflects the inclusiveness of the programme.

(ii) What are the activities and their related outputs?

The activities of UWEP primarily involve mobilization, capacity building, and awareness creation among selected women enterprise groups to enable them to generate income from their chosen enterprises. Supporting activities include monitoring of these enterprise groups by both local and central governments. Specific activities and their related outputs are summarized in Table 1.

However, while outputs were clearly defined, the activities for achieving them lacked clarity and were more focused on awareness creation and capacity building. Furthermore, some activities demonstrated low ambition. Inclusiveness aspects such as engagement, participation, sustainability, accountability, and empowerment were less evident in the program's design.

The collected data underwent coding and cleaning procedures using Excel 2013 and was subsequently analyzed using advanced Excel techniques.

Table 1: UWEP Activities and related Outputs

S/N	Activities	Outputs
1.	Mobilize and sensitize 100,000 women about UWEP	100,000 women mobilized and sensitized about UWEP
2.	Develop and distribute 20,000 IEC materials	20,000 IEC UWEP materials developed and distributed
3.	Train women 10,000 women in book keeping, financial management and groups dynamics	10,000 women trained in book keeping, financial management and groups dynamics
4.	Support 5,000 women to access markets for their products and services	5000 women supported to access markets for their products and services
5.	Sensitize 20,000 women on the utilization of appropriate technology for increased production	20,000 women sensitized on the utilization of appropriate technology for increased production.
6.	Develop Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation and Management Information System for data collection, analysis and reporting.	Comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation and Management Information System in place and functional for data collection, analysis and reporting.
7.	Implement UWEP Programme effectively	UWEP Programme effectively implemented

Source: MGLSD, 2019. UWEP Programme Document

(iii) How are the activities and outputs expected to translate into outcomes and ultimately impact (appropriateness of the design)?

The UWEP design included pathways to ensure that activities and outputs are translated into outcomes and ultimately impact, as elaborated below:

- a. *Awareness creation and training:* Beneficiaries were provided with training to acquire knowledge and technical skills in enterprise creation, record-keeping, financial management, and business management. Partnerships were established with skills training institutions such as the Uganda Industrial Research Institute (UIRI), banks, and micro finance institutions.
- b. *Clear guidelines for group formations:* Women groups were formed based on clear guidelines and guidance, with each group having designated roles such as Chairperson, Secretary, and Treasurer.
- c. *Institutional frameworks:* Mechanisms for activity implementation and coordination were established at national, sub-national, and community levels (municipalities, parishes, and villages) with specified roles and

responsibilities. However, the capacity of institutions to deliver was assumed and not assessed.

- d. *Clear credit recovery strategy:* A revolving fund facility was established to provide loans to programme beneficiaries, with a clear recovery strategy allowing for a grace period before repayment begins. Women groups acted as security and received unsecured loans from the Secretariat, with repayment expected within three years.
- e. *Monitoring and Evaluation:* Frameworks for monitoring and evaluation were developed, clearly indicating activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts with performance indicators.

Although there are evident gaps, such as uncertainties in how partnerships operate, the UWEP design generally outlined how activities and outputs are expected to translate into outcomes and impacts. Effective pursuit of these means may lead to inclusive outcomes and impacts.

(iv) What assumptions are considered in the UWEP design/what conditions are required for the activities and outputs to translate into outcomes and impact?

The design of UWEP was based on the following assumptions:

- a) *Political will:* Continued government prioritization and support for the programme, including adequate and sustainable funding for effective implementation.
- b) *Supportive institutional frameworks:* Effective and efficient government structures and staff, particularly at the local and community levels, dedicated to UWEP implementation and objective attainment. Additionally, it was assumed that the UWEP Secretariat at the center (MGLSD) was sufficient to effectively monitor programme implementation nationwide.
- c) *Beneficiary participation:* Active involvement and commitment of organized beneficiaries in prioritizing and implementing programme activities.
- d) *Absence/limited shocks:* The assumption of minimal internal and external shocks that could disrupt programme implementation.
- e) *Effective partnerships:* Collaborative efforts with government entities, local governments, and non-state actors to deliver the programme effectively.

It was anticipated that by supporting women in group and enterprise selection, providing training in business management, fostering innovation and group cohesion, offering credit for selected enterprises, and linking them to markets, they would be better able to run their enterprises, earn more profit, and repay the funds received. While most of these assumptions were inclusive, implementation revealed that some were not valid. For instance, field visits showed that COVID-19 significantly affected marketing and input acquisition for agricultural enterprises. For example, poultry egg prices plummeted to as low as UGX 5,000 per tray from UGX 12,000, while input acquisition became more expensive due to movement restrictions.

Despite the existence of good political will, it was observed that in some cases, this interfered with beneficiary selection criteria, and the introduction of other economic empowerment programs like the Parish Development Model (PDM) shifted the government's priority focus away from UWEP.

(v) Who are the target beneficiaries of the UWEP and how were they identified?

The targeted beneficiaries of UWEP included unemployed women, vulnerable groups such as single young mothers, widows, survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), women with disabilities, women living with HIV/AIDS, women heading households, women living in slums, women in hard-to-reach areas, ethnic minorities, and widows. However, the program excluded the homeless poor, inactive poor, and employed poor, such as housemaids and street vendors, who may not fit into the defined categories.

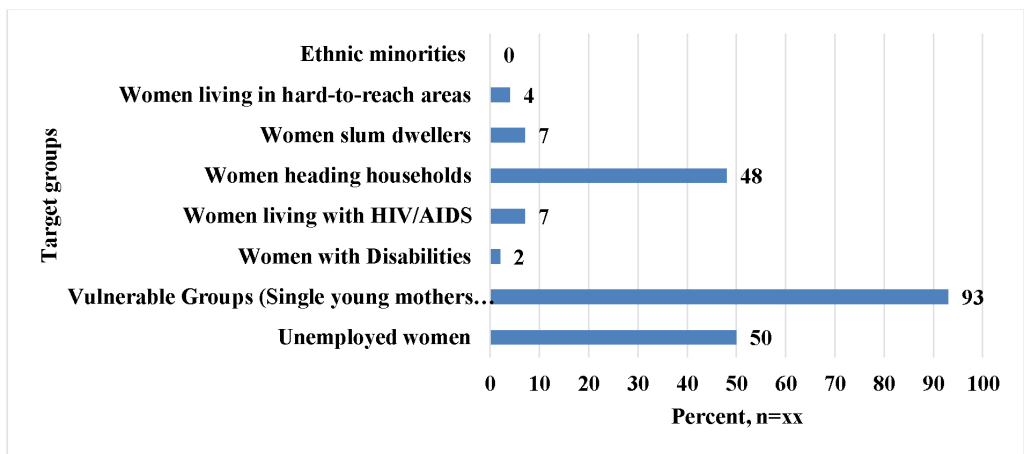
Beneficiary selection was conducted by committees chaired by Sub-County Chiefs, which included Chairpersons of Sub-County Women Councils and Community Development Officers. The LC 1 Chairpersons confirmed the selected women group members' residency and vulnerability status.

Although the inclusion criteria were followed, they were more inclined toward vulnerable groups, with 44% of the beneficiaries being from vulnerable backgrounds, especially widows, unemployed women (24%), and women-headed households (23%). However, there was no representation from ethnic minorities.

Despite the diversity of targeted beneficiaries, inclusiveness goes beyond mere diversity to include key outcomes such as empowerment, sustainability, engagement, involvement, and participation. Observations and interviews revealed that emphasis on the ability to repay compromised selection, favoring

individuals with prior participation in programs like NAADS and familiarity with administrative processes, while excluding many new eligible women. Additionally, selection prioritized single mothers and widows based on their perceived ability to repay funds, rather than the performance of their projects. Women's groups in Mpigi and Wakiso districts reported that Community Development Officers focused more on repayment ability than project performance.

Figure 2: Beneficiary Women Groups



(vi) Formation of Women groups

Following the selection of targeted beneficiaries, women groups were formed based on various factors such as age, religion, nature of enterprise, production costs, markets, and profitability. For example, older women preferred forming their groups due to perceptions of younger women being lazy. Additionally, factors like religious obligations also influenced group formation, as seen with Seventh-day Adventists in Luwero Town Council who faced scheduling conflicts with their worship day.

Group formation also involved the creation of sub-committees, such as the enterprise management committee, procurement committee, and social and accountability committee, to ensure shared responsibility among group members. However, not all groups formed these sub-committees, allowing free-riders to benefit with minimal contribution.

After group formation, the groups were guided on enterprise selection. The majority of funds were allocated to wholesale and retail trade (40.3%), agriculture (33.4%), services (13.6%), industry (10.9%), value addition (1.1%), agro-forestry (0.6%), and ICT (0.1%). However, it's important to note that most

enterprises/projects in Makindye Ssabagabo were off-farm based, despite agriculture being dominated by women. On-farm enterprises typically have more inclusive economic outcomes, as they employ a majority of the poor and marginalized groups.

Table 2: Women Group Projects in Makindye Ssabagabo Municipality

Enterprise/Project	Number of Projects
Poultry	11
Book binding / Production	07
Hair dressing	06
Catering services	06
Handcraft making	04
Tents and Chairs	03
Events management	03
Bakery / Confectionery	03
Tailoring	03
Piggery	03
Mushroom growing	02
Liquid soap making	02
Metal Fabrication	01
Nursery bed	01
Ginger growing	01

Source: Interviews and review of records by the researchers

The rigidity in choice of projects:

The rigidity in the choice of projects within women groups can lead to challenges when some members are not well-suited to the enterprise chosen by the majority. This mismatch may be due to various factors, including individual interests and capabilities, but most critically, differences in asset or capital endowment.

*“Flexibility of projects leads to diversification
and helps ensure repayment and minimizes
the risk of losses”*

— A Respondent from Wobulenzi Town Council.

For example, some members may lack access to land for agricultural enterprises, limiting their ability to participate in such projects.

Flexibility in project selection is crucial as it allows for diversification and helps ensure repayment while minimizing the risk of losses. When groups have the flexibility to choose projects that align with the interests, skills, and resources of all members, it enhances the likelihood of success and sustainability. This flexibility enables each member to contribute meaningfully to the group's activities and increases the overall inclusiveness of the program.

(i) How are the costs allocated across different cost drivers?

The allocation of costs across different cost drivers within the UWEP program was initially projected to distribute the total budget of UGX 585 billion over its 5-year period into three main components: Capacity and Skills Development, Women Enterprise Fund (WEF), and Institutional Support. However, adjustments were made during the course of program implementation, with changes in allocations to these components.

Initially, Capacity and Skills Development was allocated 15% of the budget, but this was later reduced to 10%. The WEF received the largest allocation of 70%, while Institutional Support initially received 15% but was later increased to 20%.

Despite these allocations, it was observed that the distribution of funds across the different program components lacked clarity and coherence. During field visits, it became evident that there was under-budgeting for institutional support and skills development, which were identified as crucial components for the success of other program activities.

In practice, many women groups reported a lack of targeted training and skill enhancement before funds were disbursed. For example, in Luweero District, only one out of four sampled groups received training in poultry keeping and management, attributed to the initiative of their leader (locally known as "Chicken City", Sector Expert). Others, such as those engaged in catering, decoration, and agriculture, did not receive specific training related to their enterprises before any disbursements. The CDO, Makindye Ssabagabo said, *"We have never received funds for this component"*

Overall, limited training and skills acquisition emerged as a significant barrier to economic inclusiveness within UWEP. Without adequate support in developing the necessary skills and capacities for their chosen enterprises, women beneficiaries faced challenges in effectively managing their businesses and

maximizing their potential for success. Addressing this gap in training and skill enhancement is essential for promoting economic inclusiveness and empowering women entrepreneurs within the program.

(ii) How much of the expenditure is intended to reach beneficiaries or excluded categories of people?

The analysis of UWEP expenditure reveals that while the revolving fund, which constitutes 70% of the total program budget (UGX 410 billion), is intended to reach the program beneficiaries, the actual disbursement falls short of the planned budget. According to reports from the Auditor General's Office and MGLSD, only UGX 107 billion was disbursed in the first phase (2015/16-2019/20), representing just 26% of the required funds. In the second phase (FY2020/21-2021/2022), UGX 168 billion was disbursed.

These figures indicate that the annual budget allocations consistently fall below the planned budgets, resulting in a shortfall in funds reaching the intended beneficiaries. This shortfall hampers the program's ability to achieve its objectives of economic inclusiveness, as some target beneficiary groups may not receive the necessary support.

Furthermore, there is evidence of multiple beneficiaries, where a single beneficiary may belong to different categories under the program. This phenomenon undermines equity, a key principle of economic inclusiveness, as it may lead to unequal distribution of resources among beneficiaries. Addressing these issues of budget allocation and beneficiary identification is essential to ensure that UWEP effectively reaches its target beneficiaries and promotes economic inclusiveness among marginalized groups.

(iii) Who is directly involved in implementation of UWEP and what is their role (management, oversight, funding etc.)?

The implementation of UWEP involves various stakeholders at different levels, each with distinct roles and responsibilities. At the national level, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) takes the lead in providing technical guidelines, capacity building, coordination, and overall supervision of the program. It works in partnership with other government ministries such as the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), Ministry of Local Government (MoLG), Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MFPED), Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF), Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), as well as Parliament.

These national-level actors play critical roles in providing political and technical oversight, guidance, and support to the program, ensuring its integration into national policies, plans, and programs.

At the sub-national level, including district and local government levels, various officials such as Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs), Mayors, Town Clerks, Community Development Officers (CDOs), and technical officers are involved. Their roles include mobilizing and sensitizing beneficiaries, facilitating beneficiary selection and preparation, appraising and approving projects, monitoring program implementation, and supporting fund recovery efforts.

However, there are challenges related to coordination and communication between different levels of government. Disconnects between sub-county/local levels and district levels, limited interactions between technical officers and beneficiaries, and procurement challenges have been reported, leading to delays in fund disbursement and implementation.

Women groups visited indicated that the technical officers at the district levels e.g. the District Veterinary Officers (DVOs) and District Agricultural Officers (DAOs) had very limited interactions with them. Another disconnect is that districts can only approve proposals to the tune of UGX 12.5 million while proposals exceeding UGX 12.5 million to a maximum of UGX 25 million is approved by the MGLSD. There are also procurements challenges, the women groups interviewed reported that all these caused delays in disbursement of funds to the groups that are ready.

Additionally, while there is significant activity at the local government and community levels, the involvement of numerous national-level actors who are not directly engaged in program implementation (Parliament, MDAs, OPM, BOU etc) may increase institutional costs without necessarily contributing to program effectiveness. Addressing these challenges and improving coordination between different levels of government is crucial for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of UWEP implementation.

(iv) What was (is) the role of target beneficiaries in the design of the UWEP (how were their views captured and taken care of during the design)?

The role of target beneficiaries in the design of UWEP was limited, with the program primarily following a top-down approach. The initiation of UWEP was influenced by external factors, particularly the timing coinciding with the general elections of 2015 and a perceived need to address women's development challenges following the establishment of a similar program for youths.

During the design phase, there was limited consultation with program beneficiaries, especially those who were new to the program. Empirical findings indicate that only two out of the five districts under study reported being consulted during the program's design, with Wakiso and Mpigi districts being the only ones where beneficiary consultation was acknowledged. However, even within these districts, consultation was primarily with women groups that already had running small-scale businesses, leaving out many new women groups.

Overall, only 45% of the sampled groups reported being consulted prior to program design, indicating a significant portion of beneficiaries who were not involved in the consultation process. This limited involvement of beneficiaries in the design phase may have led to gaps in understanding their needs, preferences, and challenges, potentially affecting the program's effectiveness and inclusiveness. Moving forward, greater efforts to involve target beneficiaries in program design and decision-making processes could enhance the relevance and impact of interventions like UWEP.

(vi) What are the performance targets for UWEP?

The programme had several performance targets as indicated in Table 3.

Table 3: UWEP 5-Year Performance Targets

S/N	Item	5-Year Output Targets
1	Targeted beneficiaries to access funds	100,000 Women
2.	Capacity and skills development	10,000 Women
3.	Monitoring and supervision visits	30 monitoring visits
4.	Revolving fund recovery	100% Recovery
5.	IEC materials developed and disseminated	20,000
6.	Women access market for their goods and services	5,000

Source: MGLSD, UWEP Performance Reports

Some of the performance targets e.g. the targeted beneficiaries were not ambitious enough and therefore were easily achieved and even surpassed. While other programme outputs and outcomes did not have targets.

1. The gaps identified in the UWEP program design highlight the importance of considering long-term strategic needs and strengthening linkages between different levels of administration. While the program design had clear guidelines and defined roles and responsibilities, unforeseen challenges

such as inadequate linkages between administrative levels emerged during implementation. Additionally, the program's short duration may have limited its capacity to address women's strategic long-term needs, such as education, land ownership, housing, and effective participation in decision-making and politics. Moving forward, addressing these gaps and considering long-term strategic objectives could enhance the program's effectiveness and inclusiveness.

2. Structural issues, such as stretched capacities at the MGLSD Secretariat and limited incentives for district-level staff, have also impacted UWEP implementation. The reliance on existing local government structures, which may not prioritize UWEP activities due to competing mandates, contributes to these challenges. To address these issues, there is a need to provide additional support and incentives for both the MGLSD Secretariat and district-level staff involved in UWEP implementation. Strengthening coordination and collaboration between different levels of administration could also improve program delivery.
3. Unpredictable funding from the central government further exacerbates challenges in UWEP implementation. The discrepancy between approved budgets and actual disbursements affects the program's ability to effectively deliver activities at both local and national levels. To address this issue, there is a need for more consistent and adequate funding for UWEP, as well as improved budget planning and allocation processes. Ensuring sufficient financial resources are available will be critical to sustaining and expanding UWEP activities in the future.

Here's a summary discussion of the key findings on the inclusiveness performance of the program design, as presented in Table 4. Scores based on a Likert Scale of 1 to 4 are given to each of the question. These scores were summarised from the FGD and KFI held and the interviewer's assessment of the findings. Average and percentage scores are given to the overall design of the programme.

Table 4: Inclusiveness Assessment of the Programme Design

S/N	Question/Issue	Inclusiveness Score (Ranking out of 4)
1.	What are the goals of the UWEP?	4
2.	What are the activities and their related outputs?	3
3.	How are the activities and outputs expected to translate into outcomes and ultimately impact (appropriateness of the design)?	3
4.	What are the assumptions considered in the design of the UWEP/ what conditions are required for the activities and outputs to translate into outcomes and impact?	2
5.	Who are the target beneficiaries of the UWEP and how were they identified?	3
6.	What is the projected cost of the UWEP?	2
7.	How are the costs allocated across different cost drivers?	3
8.	How much of the expenditure is intended to reach beneficiaries or excluded categories of people?	4
9.	Who is directly involved in implementation of the UWEP and what is their role (management, oversight, funding etc.)?	3
10.	What was (is) the role of target beneficiaries in the design of the UWEP (how were their views captured and taken care of during the design?)	2
11.	What are the performance targets for the UWEP?	2
Average Inclusiveness Score		3

It's clear that while there are some gaps and challenges in the design of the UWEP program, it still achieves a satisfactory level of inclusiveness, scoring 75%. This suggests that the program's goals, activities, and assumptions are generally appropriate and aligned with the context, contributing positively to economic inclusiveness. However, there is room for improvement in areas such as engagement of beneficiaries, sustainability of interventions, and accountability and transparency. Addressing these issues could further enhance the inclusiveness and effectiveness of the program.

4.2 Inclusiveness Assessment of the Efficacy of UWEP

The assessment of the efficacy of UWEP involves evaluating the execution of the program in comparison to its design and plans. This level of assessment seeks to answer the following broad questions:

(i) Were the UWEP activities implemented according to plan?

While activity implementation largely followed the laid-out plan, there were some instances of deviations. Initially, the program was intended to cover 19 districts but was later expanded to encompass the entire country. Additionally, according to the OAG's report for the 2020/21 fiscal year, throughout the first 5-year phase of the program, there were no fund allocations for facilitating technology and market access, which are key components of UWEP. Women groups in Mukono, Wakiso, Luwero, and Mukono districts reported budget cuts resulting in the failure to undertake some planned activities. The monitoring and supervision components were underfunded, especially at the local government levels, and consequently not executed as planned.

Despite the gaps between implementation and the plans, there were instances where performance exceeded the planned targets. For example, the target of financing 100,000 women under the Women Empowerment Fund (WEF) was surpassed, with 135,640 women (136%) being financed.¹⁰ This indicated reaching out to more marginalized women and empowering them beyond the planned scope.

(ii) Did the intended beneficiaries receive a specified treatment/package?

At a national level, by the end of FY 2021/22, a total of 17,852 projects worth UGX. 114.3 billion had been launched, reaching 202,539 women across the country. The latest information indicates that 217,969 beneficiaries had been accessed, supporting 19,723 projects totalling UGX. 127.3 billion.¹¹ These demonstrate the program's reach to the intended beneficiaries, although in some cases lower than what was requested or budgeted, compromising intended inclusiveness outcomes and impacts.

As shown in Table 5, in the focus districts and municipalities of the study, 13,716 women had received UWEP packages by June 30th, 2022.

10 https://www.oag.go.ug/storage/reports/SDS_CG_VFM_2020_21_1649856588.pdf
11 New Vision, Thursday, August 2023

However, the average/per capita receipts per woman differed in each district, with the lowest being in Kayunga district where each woman received only UGX. 391,137, which may not lead to the desired economic inclusiveness outcomes.

The distribution of funds to the Local Governments was based on parameters such as the population of women, poverty count, and land area. However, these parameters alone may not adequately inform an inclusive and equitable distribution of funds, as they may leave out many vulnerable women groups. Additionally, it was found that the group lending methodology employed, which provides a maximum allocation of UGX 12 million per group, may have worked for start-ups but is not suitable for growth-oriented enterprises.¹²

Table 5: Disbursements per District/Municipality as at 30th June 2022

N/S	Districts / Municipality	Package received (UGX)	Number of Women Projects	Average receipt per Women Project	Number of Women Beneficiaries reached	Average receipt per woman
1	Mukono	1,167,139,050	142	8,219,289	1,803	647,332
2	Mukono Municipality	749,015,000	102	7,343,284	728	1,028,867
3	Kampala City Council Authority (KCCA)	2,478,717,930	257	9,644,817	2,793	887,475
4	Nansana Municipality	601,032,215	118	5,093,493	1,239	485,095
5	Mpigi	280,530,000	29	9,673,448	354	792,458
6	Wakiso	1,636,832,850	192	8,525,171	2,262	723,622
7	Luweero	620,368,256	99	6,266,346	1,216	510,171
8	Makindye Ssabagabo Municipality	820,741,614	112	7,328,050	1,282	640,204
9	Kayunga	797,528,118	167	4,775,617	2,039	391,137
	Totals	9,151,905,033	1218		13,716	

Source: Compiled from Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (UWEP), 2021 and Districts records

(iii) Were program outputs realized within the specified time?

A few processes and short-term outputs, such as the formation of women groups and the selection of beneficiaries, were realized within the specified time. However, others were not. For example, it took between 8 to 12 months from the time of application for a loan to the receipt of funds.¹³ This extended timeframe reduced turnover and hindered the realization of outputs within the specified time, thereby affecting the economic inclusiveness multiplier effects of the program.

Some individuals interviewed pointed out that the three-year period for UWEP projects is adequate for ongoing projects but too short for new and long-term projects whose outcomes and impacts cannot be realized within such a brief timeframe. These projects may potentially bring about better and more inclusive sustainable outcomes.

As noted earlier, outputs related to facilitating market access for women's products and providing access to technology and value addition were not realized within the first 5-year phase of the program because no funds were allocated to them. This further affected the inclusiveness benefits of the program.

(iv) Did UWEP periodic monitoring reports capture the level of performance?

The study found that attempts to capture performance were made at various intervals, including baseline, monthly, quarterly, semi-annual, annual, mid-term, and end-term levels. The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) also conducted quarterly political and technical monitoring and provided support supervision for the program. Monitoring reports primarily focused on metrics such as access to affordable credit and the number of enterprise groups formed. While these reports captured overall performance, they lacked attention to inclusiveness performance and did not provide disaggregated data on the performance of different demographic groups within beneficiary groups, such as persons with disabilities.

Additionally, the Community Development Officers (CDOs), who served as the designated UWEP focal persons, reported visiting each beneficiary group at least twice in the past two years to monitor their performance. However, these officers in the study areas expressed concerns about the lack of logistical support, which hindered their ability to effectively monitor performance and inclusiveness.

¹³ See FIDA-U (2020), The Socio-Economic Effects of Covid-19 on Women in Uganda with a Focus on Groups under the Uganda Women's Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP).

(v) What factors are responsible for the level of performance (activities and outputs)?

Performance was influenced by several factors, including:

- a) Committed leadership at various levels: Women groups with dynamic and enthusiastic leadership, coupled with a good level of education (primary and secondary level education and above), generally performed better.
- b) Supportive political environment: Performance was positively affected by a supportive political environment, especially at the local levels where councilors and LC chairpersons did not interfere with or sabotage the program, and there was no undue influence from higher authorities.
- c) Level of preparedness: Women groups that had been in existence for an extended period, such as those formed during the NAADS period, and had established a rhythm or code of working together, as well as knowledge and skills about government programs, tended to perform better than newly formed groups.
- d) Selection of beneficiary women groups: A good selection of beneficiary groups, with a diverse mix of skills and experiences, enhanced better coordination and led to improved activity implementation and performance. Notably, groups with older women tended to perform better.
- e) Enterprise selection: The suitability and appropriateness of the selected enterprises to the unique characteristics and abilities of women groups also played a significant role in performance.
- f) Conformity with religious and cultural affiliations: Factors such as conformity with religious and cultural affiliations also influenced performance.

While these factors contributed to the success of the program, it should be noted that they alone may not ensure inclusiveness due to the complexities involved. For example, in the formation of women groups, the criteria adopted may prioritize factors like “like-mindedness,” “front runners,” and “risk takers,” rather than ensuring inclusiveness. Some groups may coalesce around factors such as friendship or participation in earlier programs, rather than focusing on the enterprise, leading to challenges such as unequal burden-sharing and free-riding.

As a result, an enterprise like poultry would end up being a one member's burden as the rest lose interest along the way as one woman in Luweero remarked: *"When the initial money for the feeds got finished, members did not want to contribute, some brought very little, others not, the household of the poultry project host would then offer labour while others go on a free riding"* And from Wakiso, another woman remarked, *"When our chicken was stolen, all group members deserted the group and I suffered alone with the remaining chicken."*

(vi) What are the implications of the level of performance for achieving program outcomes and impact?

Performance reports indicate that UWEP is one of the most successful government economic empowerment programs. For example, it has improved the standards of living for women and families, enhanced their financial literacy levels, and reduced cases of gender-based violence, as women are involved in income-generating activities and can easily meet their basic needs.

However, most performance reports focus on socioeconomic indicators and do not adequately assess the extent of multidimensional aspects of economic inclusiveness. These reports should evaluate the program's outcomes and impacts on the sustainability of women's economic empowerment over the medium and long terms.

The inclusiveness assessment of the efficacy of UWEP was found to be substantial, with an average score of 2, representing a percentage score of 45%. This score implies that the execution of the program in relation to the design and plans was below expectations, and therefore, it could not achieve the desired economic inclusiveness outcomes and impacts.

"When the initial money for the feeds got finished, members did not want to contribute, some brought very little, others not, the household of the poultry project host would then offer labour while others go on a free riding"

Table 6: Inclusiveness Performance of the Efficacy of UWEP

S/N	Question/Issue	Inclusiveness ranking/Score out of 4
1.	Were the activities implemented according to plan?	1
2.	Did the intended beneficiaries receive the specified treatment/package?	2
3.	Were Programme outputs realised within the specified time?	2
4.	Did periodic monitoring reports capture the level of performance?	2
5.	What are the factors responsible for the level of performance (activities and outputs)?	2
6.	What are the implications of the level of performance for achievement of Programme outcomes and impact?	2
	Average Inclusiveness Score	2

4.3 Assessment of the Economic Inclusiveness of the Quality of the M&E of UWEP

The assessment of the quality of M&E seeks to answer the following questions:

- (i) **Does the M&E framework cover performance on activities, outputs, and outcomes/objectives of UWEP (including the roles of actors in implementation)?**

UWEP has an M&E framework that specifies the program development objective (impacts), the goal and outcomes, and their indicators and monitoring levels/times as indicated in Table 4. However, the M&E framework does not cover performance on the roles of actors in contributing to the implementation of the program and the extent to which the intended beneficiaries were involved. Due to resource constraints, some groups were only visited once a year; therefore, the M&E framework covered limited activities, outputs, and outcomes.

Table 7: Programme Results Indicators

DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE (IMPACT): Improved socioeconomic status of Ugandan Women	
GOAL: Empowered Ugandan Women with improved income levels and contributing to economic development	
<i>Indicator 1:</i>	Proportion of women with thriving micro-businesses / Income Generating Activities <i>Monitored twice [Midline & End-line]</i>
<i>Indicator 2:</i>	Proportion of women owning tangible assets - Like Land, Houses etc. <i>Monitored twice [Midline & End-line]</i>
<i>Indicator 3:</i>	Proportion of women's participation in Household (HH) decision making. <i>Monitored twice [Midline & End-line]</i>
<i>Indicator 4:</i>	Percentage of women in effective Decision-Making-Governance. <i>Monitored twice [Midline & End-line]</i>
Outcome 1: Increased Survival of Women businesses. Monitored on an annual basis from district reports	
<i>Indicator:</i>	Percentage of Women businesses surviving after one year of Programme support <u>(Cumulative number of enterprises surviving after one year of receiving funds) x 100</u> Cumulative number of Supported enterprises up to that time <i>Note: The rate will be computed for businesses which have been in existence after one year of funds access</i>
Outcome 2: Increased participation of Women in Enterprise development	
<i>Indicator:</i>	Percentage of women in entrepreneurship; <i>Monitored twice [Midline & End-line]- COBE</i> <u>(Total number of micro-enterprises owned by women) x 100</u> The total number of micro-enterprises surveyed at that time
Outcome3: Increased access to affordable credit & other services	
<i>Indicator1:</i>	Percentage of <i>new</i> women-owned enterprises started after accessing Programme funds; <i>(Quarterly from district reports)</i> <u>(Cumulative number of NEW-UWEP enterprises up to that quarter) x 100</u> Cumulative number of funded enterprises up to that quarter

<i>Indicator2:</i>	Percentage of women accessing credit from financial institutions like SACCOs, MFIs, MDIs or banks. Monitored on an <i>annual</i> basis from district reports <u>(Total number of UWEP Supported women who have ever accessed credit in that reporting year) x 100</u> Total number of UWEP Supported women up to that reporting year
<i>Indicator3:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceptions on access to credit & other services: <i>Monitored on an annual basis from district reports</i> What women say about access to credit and others services <i>[Immediately after rolling out UWEP & Every year]</i> Perceptions to be quantified on a four-point Likert scale
Outcome 4: Increased access to markets for women's products & services	
<i>Indicator1:</i>	Percentage of Women enterprises that have sold their products after Programme support: Quarterly <u>Cumulative NO of enterprises that made sales up to that quarter (Every 3 Months)</u> Cumulative No of enterprises existing up to that quarter
<i>Indicator2:</i>	Perceptions on market access What women say about market access to their products and services [Immediately after rolling out UWEP & Every 6 months] Perceptions to be quantified perceptions on a four- point Likert scale
Outcome 5: Improved adoption of appropriate technologies for production & value addition	
<i>Indicator1:</i>	Percentage of women businesses using appropriate technologies for production and value addition: (3 months) <u>Cumulative No. of microbusinesses using appropriate technologies in that reporting period (3 Months) x 100</u> Cumulative No. of businesses up to that period
Outcome 6: Effective delivery of UWEP activities at national and local government levels (Quarterly)	
<i>Indicator1:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of women beneficiaries satisfied with Programme processes and implementation Percentage of Interested stakeholders satisfied with Programme processes and implementation <i>Note: Satisfaction will be quantified on a 4-point Likert scale</i>
<i>Indicator2:</i>	Percentage of disbursed funds recovered as part of the revolving mechanism – (Monthly) <u>Total amount of funds recovered in that month x 100</u> Total amount of funds received in that month

Source: UWEP Progressive report, 30th June 2022

(ii) Is there credible and up-to-date information on the performance of UWEP?

Performance information is generated at monthly and quarterly levels and is collected by districts. Information is also collected at periodic intervals, including every 3 months on the percentage of women's businesses using appropriate technology for production value addition, every 6 months to assess market performance, and annually on the percentage of women accessing credit from financial institutions. For some indicators, such as the percentage of women in entrepreneurship and the percentage of women in effective decision-making, information is collected at midline and end-line levels. However, in areas where UWEP's performance is weak, such as access to markets, appropriate technology, and value addition, there is limited or no information available, despite these being important areas for assessing inclusiveness and women's empowerment. Other M&E reports are provided by the OAG.

Despite the challenges, efforts have been made to produce performance reports that provide information, although establishing their credibility has not been easy.

(iii) How is performance information used to improve the implementation and effectiveness of UWEP?

Adjustments were made to improve implementation and effectiveness during the course of the program based on the performance information obtained. For example, the increase of the institutional budget component from 15% to 20% resulted from this performance information.

However, the Auditor General's report of 2021 notes that the Technical Support Unit (TSU) only conducted 13 (43 percent) of the planned 30 monitoring and supervisory visits to the regions throughout the five-year period. This resulted in delayed identification of performance gaps and timely remedial actions.¹⁴ As a consequence, program gaps at the enterprise level could not be adequately identified and corrected on time. These delays or the failure to address the gaps during implementation had adverse effects on the economic inclusiveness of the program.

14

<https://www.independent.co.ug/ag-utilization-of-womens-uwep-revolving-fund-unsatisfactory/>

Table 8: Inclusiveness Performance of the Quality of the M&E of UWEP

S/N	Inclusiveness Issues/Questions	Inclusiveness Scores out of 4
1.	Does the M&E framework cover performance on activities, outputs and outcomes/objectives of the UWEP (including roles of actors in implementation)?	1
2.	Is there credible and up-to date information on performance of the UWEP?	2
3.	How is performance information used to improve implementation and effectiveness of the UWEP?	2
Total Inclusiveness Score		2

The inclusiveness average score of the UWEP M&E Framework is substantial at 2, indicating a total score of 42%. The M&E framework was poorly planned, evidenced by several shortcomings. There were fewer monitoring visits than planned, and there was more emphasis on the recovery of funds rather than on the performance of the projects being implemented. Additionally, there was low involvement of lower women council leaders in M&E activities, and the goals of M&E were not clearly spelled out.

The framework also failed to adequately capture the unique role of actors at the national and local government levels. Beneficiaries had limited understanding of the importance of M&E; they perceived it mainly as a reminder to pay back the funds lent to them. Furthermore, while some evaluations were specified, they were not undertaken, and many were more suitable for short-term projects. M&E was under-budgeted, especially at the local government levels, and most of the set timelines were not followed.

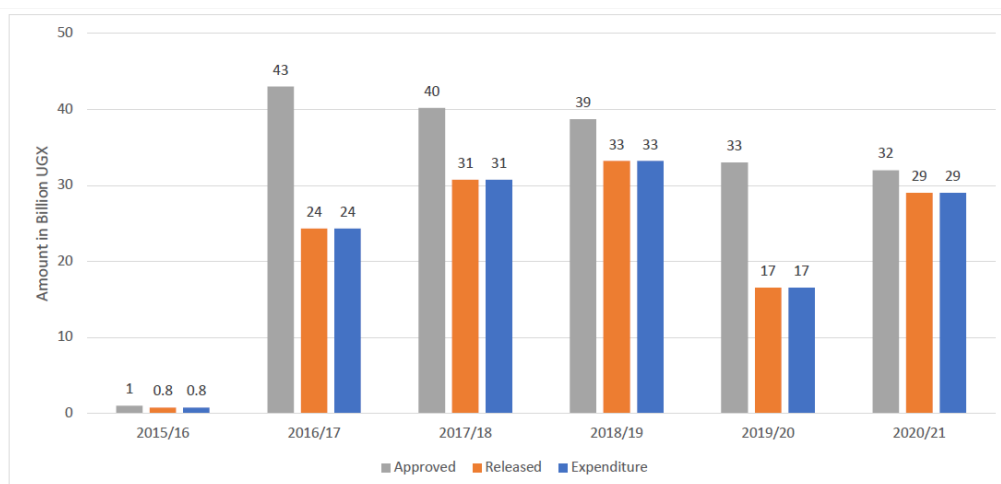
4.4 Economic Inclusiveness Assessment of the Efficiency of UWEP

The assessment of UWEP efficiency seeks to answer the following broad questions:

(i) How close is actual expenditure to the budget?

Figure 3 indicates that releases, though low, are equal to expenditure, implying a 100% absorption capacity of the releases. However, there is a significant gap between the approved budget and releases, with only 67.7% of the planned budget being released between FY2015/16 and 2020/21.

Figure 3: Approved Budget, Releases and Actual Expenditure



Source: MoFPED, annual budget performance reports 2015/16–2020/21

However, in FY 2021/22, 100% of the planned UGX 32 billion though low compared to the expectations, was released. The approvals were also progressively reducing indicating a lower prioritization of the programme. The reduction of budgets was in part due to the unforeseen effects of COVID-19 that greatly affected the allocations and releases. There was, however, a big leap forward in FY 2020/21, though still lower than the pre-COVID period. The big gap between the approved budget and expenditure implies the economic inclusiveness aspirations could not be achieved as desired.

(ii) Have the available resources been utilised as planned?

Table 9 indicates a low disbursement of resources on the capacity building and skills component compared to the earlier planned allocation of 15%. The majority of the funds were allocated to the women enterprise fund. This had a negative implication for building the capacities and skills of women to sustainably manage their enterprises.

Table 9: Disbursements by Programme Components to 30th June 2022

Component	Amount disbursed	% investment	No of projects	No of women
Capacity building and skills component	5,080,233,258	4.4%	714	7,101
Women enterprise fund	109,208,428,264	95.6%	17,138	195,438
Total	114,288,661,522		17,852	202,539

Source: MGLSD UWEP Comprehensive Report 30th June 2022

It's important to note that 60% of the groups visited had received at least 80% of the funds they requested, which is fairly adequate for their business proposals and lays a good foundation for inclusiveness. Muslim groups faced pressure to repay the funds within the first year to avoid paying interest, in line with Islamic banking principles. The four Muslim groups visited repaid 100% of the funds within one year, indicating their credibility as borrowers and their ability to contribute to the inclusiveness of the revolving fund by returning the money promptly for use by other women's groups.

One Muslim group, Masjid UMA Women's group, in Wakiso district mentioned that they even returned 2 million out of the 8 million they received within a month, which is positive for loan recovery but reduces the available group funds for investment and economic empowerment. On average, the other women's groups had repaid 20% of the funds they received after the first two years of implementation. Women appreciated the flexibility to repay any amount without restrictions on installment size. Some groups made up to 13 payment batches in 3 years, with the lowest amount being UGX 50,000.

There was also a high tendency for group members to divide the received funds, allowing each member to pursue their preferred enterprise independently. In Mpigi district, for example, a group of 15 members dwindled to only 3 remaining members willing to continue with the group enterprise, as the others left after failing to receive individual shares of the group funds.

One of the members from Katikamu Sub- County in Luweero district mentioned:

We just received money, bought some tents and chairs and shared the rest of the money amongst ourselves for individuals endeavors; refunding of this money by individuals has been a challenge; it is only the money we get from hiring out the tent and chairs that helps us advance with our loan''

Inefficiencies were also observed in the process between loan application and disbursement. The turnaround time was excessively long, as highlighted by a respondent from Zirobwe who mentioned, *"the period was too long from application to loan disbursement, causing a lot of travel from Zirobwe to Luwero, wasting money, time, and posing many risks during transit."* Similar concerns were voiced by a respondent from Mukono.

These inefficiencies indicate that the funds were not utilized as planned, negatively impacting the inclusiveness objectives of the program. Table 10 presents the results of the assessment.

Table 10: Economic Inclusiveness Performance of the Efficiency of UWEP

S/N	Questions/Issues	Inclusiveness Performance Score out of 4
1.	How close is actual expenditure to the budget?	1
2.	Have available resources been utilised as planned?	1
3.	What factors were responsible for any variations?	2
4.	What implications do financing, and financial management have on implementation of activities outputs, outcomes and impact of the EIP?	2
Average Inclusiveness Score		2

The inclusiveness average score of UWEP efficiency is substantial at 2, indicating a total percentage score of 38%. This poor performance suggests inefficiencies in resource utilization, implying that the program did not maximize outputs per unit of resource inputs as projected.

4.5 Economic Inclusiveness Assessment of the Compliance of UWEP

This area of assessment area is about compliance with respect to accountability and safeguarding i.e. do no harm. The compliance obligations of interest are audits and environmental and social safeguards which have negative implications on economic inclusiveness and wellbeing if not addressed. The assessment is based on responses to the following questions in relation to economic inclusiveness.

(i) What are the applicable accountability and safeguarding compliance obligations for UWEP (with justification)?

Social accountability is one of the key principles underlying the ACODE assessment framework, and adhering to it contributes to greater economic inclusiveness. Some of the accountability and safeguarding compliance obligations include:

- a) Ensuring accountability for the funds provided to women groups and facilitating their prompt recovery, thereby making them available to other women groups to increase benefits and women empowerment.
- b) Imposing the obligation on programme beneficiaries to repay the funds lent to them, sometimes with punitive measures.

- c) Requiring the submission of regular reports on UWEP performance to the secretariat at the MGLSD.
- d) Obligating the holding of regular meetings at national and local levels to ensure the smooth operation of the project.
- e) Ensuring up-to-date record-keeping practices.
- f) Embracing UWEP's socioeconomic responsibility to empower vulnerable women groups in the country.
- g) Conducting regular interactions with programme beneficiaries through compliance monitoring and subjecting the programme to regular audits by the Office of the Auditor General (OAG).
- h) Providing protection for enterprises, especially those based on agriculture, against weather, climate change, and environmental-related challenges.
- i) Implementing a reward system for good performance.

While these obligations are clearly stated in programme documents, it remains unclear whether they were fully understood by programme beneficiaries and implementers. Moreover, there are few provisions for social and environmental obligations, despite the potential for adverse impacts or vulnerability to such impacts. Additionally, there is a lack of recourse for dispute resolution mechanisms, particularly in cases where the programme fails to fulfill its obligations to beneficiaries.

(ii) What is the level of compliance of actors with these obligations?

- a) The recovery rate of the revolving fund is commendable. For instance, of the UGX 27.6 billion due by FY 2020/2021, UGX 20.2 billion, equivalent to 73%, had been recovered, with UGX 10.7 billion subsequently lent to new groups. This high recovery rate facilitates lending to new groups and enhances the inclusiveness impact of the programme. However, the remaining funds yet to be recovered, constituting 23%, render this money unavailable to other women groups, thereby diminishing the programme's inclusiveness effects.
- b) Compliance with environmental sustainability obligations falls short of expectations. There are limited measures in place for climate change adaptation and mitigation, particularly for vulnerable enterprises.

Establishing levels of compliance with these obligations necessitates effective M&E planning, which has been identified as weak. There appears to be a disproportionate emphasis on compliance with monetary obligations at the expense of social and environmental responsibilities.

(iii) How were the compliance undertakings carried out (who, what, how - role of affected persons in the undertaking)?

1. Compliance with undertakings was a collaborative effort involving programme beneficiaries, community leadership, and managers at the community, local, and national levels. Each of these entities had distinct roles and responsibilities in contributing to the success of the programme. For instance:
2. Beneficiaries ensured regular payments according to established schedules and effectively implemented the projects.
3. Local and community leaders ensured that repayments were made in accordance with programme guidelines.
4. Beneficiary women groups exerted pressure on their members to perform and fulfill their repayment obligations.

Additionally, partnerships were forged at various levels, involving stakeholders such as government ministries and departments (MDAs), UN-Women, the Uganda Industrial Research Institute (UIRI), commercial banks, and microfinance institutions. These partnerships aimed to support compliance efforts and ensure the long-term sustainability of the programme.

(i) What were the findings of the undertakings related to the different obligations and how they inform decision-making (interventions to address issues)?

1. Good group leadership characterized by experience and commitment emerged as a key success factor contributing to compliance with various obligations.
2. Programme monitoring predominantly focused on funds recovery obligations rather than ensuring the sustainability of beneficiary businesses.
3. A significant portion of women group projects (57%, n=211), particularly those in peri-urban and rural areas, are agro-based and therefore vulnerable to climate change and environmental degradation, aspects which were not adequately considered in the project design. Future programme designs should prioritize building resilience to adverse climate impacts, such as droughts, floods, diseases, and pests, which disproportionately affect low-input agricultural production and rural women's projects, while also ensuring environmental sustainability.

4. Implement controls: Auditing should be integrated into all UWEP activities and conducted at every stage. For instance, during the formation stages, it is crucial to assess the inclusiveness of women groups (will the design produce inclusive outcomes?), their capacity to manage funds, and community procurement processes. External audits led by the Office of the Auditor General identified gaps and provided numerous recommendations, some of which led to changes aimed at improving performance during programme implementation.

(ii) What are the effects of the programme on the welfare and rights (human rights, cultural rights, socioeconomic rights etc.) of the beneficiaries and the community at large?

1. The programme had a positive impact on the rights and welfare of the beneficiaries and the community at large. It empowered marginalized women groups, making them financially viable and integrating them into the development mainstream.
2. UWEP facilitated women's entry into traditionally male-dominated sectors such as metal works, transportation (boda-boda), and food and beverage trade. Additionally, some women groups ventured into manufacturing, processing, and value addition industries. For instance, in Wakiso, women engaged in tailoring and the sale of Tunic wear (Kanzu).
3. Prior to UWEP, women were often considered uncredit-orthy by banks due to a lack of collateral and other biases. UWEP challenged this notion, demonstrating that women are reliable borrowers. For example, out of the total due repayment amount of UGX 8,710,321,031, UGX 7,069,684,946 has been recovered, representing an 80.1% repayment rate.¹⁵
4. UWEP showcased that small women-owned enterprises are a viable liquidity model capable of supporting the growth of a sustainable micro, small, and medium-sized enterprise (MSME) sector in the country.
5. UWEP enhanced the economic and human rights of marginalized women groups, enabling them to acquire assets such as land and livestock, which were traditionally owned by men. Additionally, it helped overcome cultural barriers that had previously hindered their progress.

¹⁵ <https://www.mediacentre.go.ug/media/approved-cabinet-performance-measures-uganda-women-entrepreneurship-programme>

While these benefits are significant, concerns remain regarding equitable distribution, ensuring real inclusiveness by reaching women of various backgrounds and characteristics.

(iv) What are the implications of these effects for programme activities, outputs, outcomes and impact?

- a) UWEP has generated significant transformational impacts on women's socio-economic welfare, positioning itself as one of the most successful government-led economic empowerment initiatives. It has even served as a benchmark for other countries like The Gambia and Zambia seeking to implement similar women empowerment programs.
- b) According to the Poverty Status Report 2021, released in 2023, households with beneficiaries of the Senior Citizens Grant (SCG) and UWEP interventions experienced a lower poverty rate by 15.75% and 23.07%, respectively, compared to those without the intervention. This underscores the inclusive and poverty-reducing effects of the UWEP program.
- c) Progress has been made in increasing women's access to markets for their products and services. For instance, women groups in Ntunda Sub-County, Mukono district, and Katosi have successfully marketed agricultural products and fish, demonstrating their enhanced confidence through UWEP.
- d) Some women groups have embraced modern technologies to enhance their enterprises. Examples include the use of irrigation pumps for agriculture, improved cooking stoves for energy efficiency, and advanced technologies for fish processing, such as "Tandori" and solar driers.
- e) Gonve Women Group in Nsanja Town Council, Mukono district bought an irrigation pump for their banana plantation, the Women group in Mpatta Sub-County in Mukono district embraced energy saving technologies through the use of improved cooking stoves while a women group in Katosi dealing in fish smoking acquired improved technologies such as "Tandori" and solar driers.
- f) Sustainability planning is crucial for the continuity of UWEP. Measures have been taken to ensure sustainability, including partnerships with institutions like the Uganda Industrial Research Institute (UIRI), UN Women, the Belinda and Melinda Gates Foundation, and UBA Bank. While these partnerships may support UWEP in the short to medium term, true sustainability will

depend on the ability of project beneficiaries to independently carry out activities once the program ends.

According to table 11, the inclusiveness average performance score of UWEP compliance is satisfactory at 3, indicating a total score of 71%. This suggests that the program has established compliance obligations regarding accountability and safeguards, particularly audits, and some have been effectively implemented. However, there are weaknesses in implementing environmental and social safeguards, despite being outlined in the program documents.

Table 11: Economic Inclusiveness Performance of the Compliance of UWEP

S/N	Inclusiveness Question/Issues	Inclusiveness Performance Score out of 4
1.	What are the applicable accountability and safeguarding compliance obligations for the UWEP (with justification)?	2
2.	What is the level of compliance of actors with these obligations?	3
3.	How were the compliance undertakings done (who, what, how-role of affected persons in the undertaking)?	2
4.	What were the findings of the undertakings related to the different obligations and how they inform decision making (interventions to address issues)?	2
5.	What are the effects of the programme on the welfare and rights (human rights, cultural rights, socioeconomic rights etc) of the beneficiaries and the community at large?	4
6.	What are the implications of these effects for programme activities, outputs, outcomes and impact?	4
Average Economic Inclusiveness Performance score		3

4.6 Economic Inclusiveness Assessment of Risk Management

Assessment of risk management of UWEP under this framework seeks to answer the following questions:

- (i) **Which programme outcomes are at higher and lower risk in terms of attainment and sustainability?**

Table 12 presents a summary of the outcomes, levels of risk, and reason for the levels.

Table 12: Levels of Risk to the Attainment and Sustainability of Programme Outcomes

S/N	Outcome	Level of Risk	Reason
1.	Increased participation of women in enterprise development	Lower	UWEP enhanced women participation in business and enterprise development
2.	Increased access to credit and other services	Lower	Short-term attainment of access to credit but there is a long-term sustainability challenge especially in view of new competing programmes
3.	Increased access to markets for women's products and services	Higher	Significant challenges still exist in accessing and sustaining markets. The programme performed poorly on this area
4.	Improved adoption of appropriate technologies for production	Higher	Poor performance, outcome not funded, there was almost no adoption of improved technologies.
5.	Improved delivery of UWEP activities at national and local government levels	Higher	Inadequate funding of UWEP, new programmes e.g. PDM pose sustainability challenges. UWEP activities not core mandate of LGs staffs

(ii) What are the sources of those risks?

The sources of these risks encompass various factors:

- Unpredictable budget allocations that fall below the approved budget pose a significant risk to the program's continuity and effectiveness.
- Implementation structures at local and national levels not dedicated to UWEP activities may result in insufficient attention and resources being allocated to program activities.
- Defaults and delays in the recovery of lent funds create financial pressure on beneficiaries and pose risks to the sustainability of the program. Additionally, funds not being lent out to new beneficiaries diminishes the inclusiveness effects of the program.
- Disintegration of beneficiary groups, particularly in urban and peri-urban areas, undermines the collective efforts and effectiveness of the program.

- e) Emergence of new programs like the Parish Development Model (PDM) with similar objectives may divert resources and attention away from UWEP, potentially reducing its impact.

External shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change shocks, and shifts in the political economy and national priorities pose significant risks to the program's operations and outcomes. For instance, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted market access for some beneficiaries, leading to the collapse of group enterprises, as witnessed in the testimony from a beneficiary in Makindye, thus *“our group had moved on well with laying poultry, but when COVID-19 hit the country, we had nowhere to sale the eggs and therefore could not be able to get money to feed our chicken. Group members proposed that we partition the birds amongst ourselves and that marked the end of the group enterprise”*.

(iii) What is the likelihood of occurrence?

These risks are tangible and their likelihood of occurrence is high. Some, like climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic, are already being experienced or their effects are still being felt. This underscores the necessity for timely, comprehensive, and integrated approaches to program implementation to mitigate the adverse effects on the program.

(iv) What are the implications of the risks for the achievement of outcomes and their sustainability?

While a few risks may have minimal effects, most of them pose significant implications for the achievement of outcomes and the sustainability of UWEP, as outlined in Table 12.

(v) Whether the M&E framework provides for tracking risks?

The M&E framework tracks certain risks, such as the declining trend of funding for UWEP activities. However, some risks are challenging to monitor effectively. Overall, the M&E framework is inadequately planned and thus weak in tracking risks.

(vi) Whether monitoring reports capture risks?

Monitoring reports capture some risks, such as the shortfall in released funds compared to approved budgets, which is frequently mentioned in performance

monitoring reports. However, emerging risks like competition from new programs such as PDM and Emyooga were not anticipated or adequately captured. Additionally, risks related to climate change, environment, and external shocks like the COVID-19 pandemic and geopolitical events were not envisaged and thus not reflected in the reports.

(vii) What actions have been undertaken to mitigate the risks?

Various measures have been taken to mitigate program risks, including sustainability planning to ensure program continuity, establishment of partnerships with stakeholders for financial support and mentorship, and alignment of the program with the political economy to maintain support and relevance to the national development agenda.

However, the evaluation reveals that the measures implemented to address program risks, such as inadequate funding, delays and defaults on fund repayments, and group disintegration, were insufficient and impacted program outputs and anticipated outcomes. For instance, only 35% of the visited groups held regular meetings throughout the year, and the training component lacked adequate funding to provide women with necessary skills.

Table 13: Inclusiveness Performance of UWEP on Risk Management

S/N	Inclusiveness Questions/Issues	Inclusiveness Performance Score out of 4
1.	Which programme outcomes are at higher and lower risk in terms of attainment and sustainability?	3
2.	What are the sources of those risks?	3
3.	What is the likelihood of occurrence?	3
4.	What are the implications of the risks for achievement of outcomes and their sustainability?	3
5.	Whether M&E framework provides for tracking risks?	1
6.	Whether monitoring reports capture risks?	1
7.	What actions have been undertaken to mitigate the risks?	2
	Average Inclusiveness Performance	2

The economic inclusiveness average performance score of UWEP on risk management stands at a substantial average score of 2, totalling 57%. While the program has identified outcomes at various levels of attainment, along with clear sources of risks and their likelihood of occurrence, there are notable weaknesses in the M&E framework for tracking and capturing risks, as well as in the actions taken to mitigate them. Although sustainability measures have been implemented in some cases, their long-term impacts remain to be seen.

...the measures implemented to address program risks, such as inadequate funding, delays and defaults on fund repayments, and group disintegration, were insufficient and impacted program outputs and anticipated outcomes.

5.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The discussion of findings comprehensively examines all program areas and their interconnections, highlighting how their performance is interconnected. Table 14 provides a summary of performance across various areas of economic inclusiveness assessment.

Table 14: Summary of Performance on Key Economic Inclusiveness Assessment Areas

S/N	Programme Inclusiveness Assessment Areas	Average performance Score out of 4	Percentage inclusiveness score (%)
1.	Programme design	3	73
2.	Efficacy	2	45
3.	Quality of M&E	2	42
4.	Efficiency	2	38
5.	Compliance	3	71
6.	Risk Management	2	57
Average Inclusiveness score of UWEP		2	54

The average performance scores out of 4 were determined based on the responses gathered from the interviews, providing a summary of common themes. These scores were then converted into percentages to allow for better comparisons across different areas of assessment. The average inclusiveness score was **substantial at 2**, equivalent to 54% in percentage terms.

From Table 13, it is evident that the UWEP design and compliance were satisfactory, considering key aspects crucial for ensuring program inclusiveness. However, these elements alone were insufficient to guarantee economic inclusiveness, as there were notable implementation gaps hindering the achievement of intended outcomes and impacts. The program exhibited weaknesses, particularly in efficacy, quality of M&E, and efficiency. It's important to recognize that these key areas are interconnected, and shortcomings in one area can impede progress toward overall program objectives.

UWEP demonstrated weaknesses in efficiency, with significant performance gaps observed in this domain. For instance, there were issues concerning budget releases falling far below approved allocations, highlighting concerns about allocative efficiency across different program components. Key areas

such as capacity building, technology, and market development appeared to be marginalized in resource allocation despite their potential contributions to program outcomes. Furthermore, concerns arose regarding resource utilization, with outputs realized per unit input being lower, indicating inefficiency.

These findings underscore the substantial disparities between program design, which is largely theoretical, and the practical realities of implementation encapsulated within efficacy, M&E quality, efficiency, compliance enforcement, and risk management.

5.1 Emerging Issues and challenges

- Smaller budget releases compared to the approved budgets have been a consistent challenge, limiting the program's ability to fully implement planned activities and achieve intended outcomes.
- Data constraints on the different identities and characteristics of women pose challenges for inclusive planning and measuring the economic inclusiveness impacts of interventions. Without comprehensive data, it's difficult to tailor interventions to specific needs and ensure equitable outcomes.
- Limited stakeholder coordination in implementation, with UWEP being predominantly driven by the public sector, restricts the involvement of community-based organizations, religious and cultural institutions, and the private sector. This hampers efforts to address inclusiveness issues comprehensively.
- Lack of recognition of the complementary role of men in UWEP initiatives hinders program benefits, particularly at the household level. Involving men can enhance the effectiveness of interventions and promote gender equality within households.
- The impact of external shocks, such as COVID-19 and climate change, has exposed the program's low resilience to such events, affecting performance and its inclusive effects. Building resilience to external shocks is essential for program sustainability.
- Politicization of UWEP to advance the selfish interests of politicians has led to misinformation and contradictions between technical and political actors. This undermines program objectives and can result in poor implementation outcomes.

- The high tendency of free riders within groups poses challenges to the effective utilization of loans. Individual projects within groups may benefit women more but can undermine collective efforts and hinder group cohesion.
- UWEP being subsumed into the Parish Development Model (PDM) without clear alignment of goals and structures poses a challenge to program continuity and effectiveness. Proper integration of key personnel from UWEP into the PDM Secretariat is essential for ensuring a smooth transition and maintaining program momentum.

5.2 Lessons Learnt

- Involving husbands in UWEP activities helps them better appreciate the benefits of the program and be supportive to their wives. Married women, especially when working together with their husbands, along with widows, were among the greatest beneficiaries of UWEP. 16
- UWEP has shown that small women enterprises can serve as a viable source of liquidity to support the growth of a sustainable SME sector in the country. Investing in women's businesses can have significant economic benefits and contribute to broader economic development.
- Effective and dedicated leadership is crucial for maximizing the inclusiveness impacts of UWEP. Strong leadership ensures efficient implementation of program activities and fosters a conducive environment for women's economic empowerment.
- Building on existing structures enhances the effectiveness of UWEP interventions. The program performed better in areas where there were already organized women's groups, such as those established during NAADS activities. Leveraging existing networks and organizations can facilitate smoother implementation and greater inclusiveness.
- (x) Partnerships with other stakeholders are essential for enhancing the impact of UWEP. Collaborating with organizations like Telcan Innovations Ltd helped provide additional support and resources to women's groups, enabling them to access equipment and skills needed for their businesses. Partnering with various actors can complement UWEP's efforts and lead to more sustainable outcomes.

5.3 Policy implications

- Closing the gap between program design and actual resource allocation is essential for the effective implementation of UWEP. This requires aligning budget allocations with the approved budgets and addressing any discrepancies caused by changing political priorities.
- Strengthening the institutional frameworks of UWEP is crucial for its success. This involves ensuring that the program design considers the social, cultural, political, and governance dynamics within which it operates. Understanding these intricacies can help in navigating challenges and maximizing the program's impact.
- (iii) Incentivizing local government officials and other implementers is vital for enhancing the performance of UWEP. This can be achieved by providing incentives that align with program objectives and encourage effective implementation. Additionally, addressing any distortions in the incentive structure, such as those related to the capacity-building component, is necessary to improve program performance.

5.4 Practical implications

Balancing theory and practice is crucial for the success of UWEP and similar programs. This requires a thorough understanding of the context and the specific needs of the beneficiaries, which may not always align with theoretical assumptions. Incorporating lessons learned from previous program implementations into new designs is essential for addressing real-world challenges and improving effectiveness.

Additionally, there should be mechanisms in place for ongoing monitoring and evaluation to assess the actual implementation of the program and make necessary adjustments. This iterative process allows for continuous learning and adaptation to ensure that the program remains relevant and impactful.

Moreover, involving stakeholders, including beneficiaries, in the design and implementation process can help to ensure that the program addresses their needs and priorities effectively. This participatory approach fosters ownership and accountability, increasing the likelihood of success.

Overall, bridging the gap between theory and practice requires a holistic approach that considers the complexities of the operating environment and actively engages stakeholders throughout the program lifecycle.

5.5 Research Implications

Indeed, conducting further research on economic empowerment programs, particularly regarding their performance on economic inclusiveness, is crucial for enhancing their effectiveness and impact. This research should focus on policy and institutional issues, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of assessment models such as the ACODE economic inclusiveness assessment model.

It's essential to understand the reasons behind program failures, whether they stem from design flaws or implementation challenges. By identifying these factors, policymakers and practitioners can make informed decisions to improve program design, implementation, and overall outcomes.

Moreover, developing frameworks specifically tailored to assess economic inclusion as a key development tenet is necessary. These frameworks should go beyond traditional empowerment approaches and encompass broader aspects of economic participation, access, and opportunity for marginalized groups.

Additionally, research should explore methods to bridge the gap between program design and implementation. This could involve examining best practices, lessons learned from successful programs, and innovative approaches to program delivery and monitoring.

Overall, research plays a vital role in informing evidence-based policymaking and program implementation, ultimately contributing to more inclusive and sustainable development outcomes.

5.6 Training Implications

Economic inclusiveness is indeed a critical aspect of national development, and there is a clear need for increased understanding and capacity building in this area. Rolling out the ACODE economic inclusiveness assessment model and providing training to stakeholders on its use would be a valuable step forward.

Training and capacity building are essential components of promoting economic inclusiveness. By equipping stakeholders with the necessary knowledge and skills, particularly in marginalized segments of the population, programs can enhance their effectiveness and ensure that no one is left behind in economic activities.

Allocating sufficient budgetary resources to training initiatives is crucial to ensure their success and sustainability. This investment in human capital development can yield significant dividends in terms of promoting economic empowerment, fostering entrepreneurship, and reducing inequalities.

Overall, integrating training and capacity building into economic empowerment programs is essential for advancing economic inclusiveness and achieving broader development goals. It is a proactive approach that can empower individuals and communities to actively participate in and benefit from economic opportunities.

Training and capacity building are essential components of promoting economic inclusiveness. By equipping stakeholders with the necessary knowledge and skills, particularly in marginalized segments of the population, programs can enhance their effectiveness and ensure that no one is left behind in economic activities.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The objective of this study was to assess the economic inclusiveness of the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP). Inclusiveness as a concept is still nascent, with few developed frameworks to aid in its assessment. The assessment was anchored on the ACODE EIP Assessment framework, biased more towards economic empowerment than economic inclusiveness. However, it provided pointers towards inclusion gaps as evidenced in the discussion. As work continues to evolve around inclusion, it's important to assess programs like UWEP using well-tested inclusion-specific frameworks.

The study reinforces the observation that women are pivotal in economic empowerment, social inclusiveness, and socioeconomic transformation, making targeting them a key development strategy. From the findings, recommendations to address emerging issues and gaps are highlighted below:

6.1 Programme design

- a) The Ministry of Local Government (MoLG) should collaborate with the Ministry of Gender, Labor, and Social Development (MoGLSD) to apply lessons from UWEP in implementing the Parish Development Model for sustainability. Implementation should begin with fewer local governments before rolling out nationwide to align with available budgetary resources.
- b) MoLG and MoGLSD need to create incentives, especially at the local and community levels, to ensure UWEP activities are core to their mandate.
- c) For effective group formation and enterprise selection, local government officers should deliberately include diverse social, economic, cultural, and religious backgrounds among beneficiaries.
- d) MoGLSD should decentralize UWEP service delivery to smaller sub-regional levels for quicker feedback loops, enhancing effectiveness and efficiency.

6.2 Efficacy

The local government focal persons and the MoGLSD secretariat should ensure borrowed funds are utilized as planned through effective monitoring, involvement of community leadership, self-regulation, and compliance enforcement.

6.3 Quality of M&E

- a) NPA, MFPED, OPM, and other relevant MDAs should ensure good program design and M&E planning, including adequate budget allocation and participation of all key actors to ensure efficiency and alignment with planned targets.
- b) M&E by MGLSD should ensure a balance between funds recovery and project/enterprise performance. Strengthening the framework to track and mitigate risks, integrating environmental and social safeguards, is essential.
- c) The OAG, MGLSD, and all involved in UWEP M&E should ensure disaggregated reporting to capture performance based on different beneficiary characteristics.

6.4 Efficiency

- a) MoFPED should minimize the gap between approved and released budgets to ensure full implementation of planned activities.
- b) MoGLSD should reduce the time between approval and disbursement through advocacy and lobbying for timely funding, enhancing economic inclusiveness.
- c) MoFPED and MoGLSD should prioritize budget allocation to skills development, market access, technology, and value addition for sustainable women economic empowerment.

6.5 Compliance

- a) MoGLSD should ensure a balanced combination of punitive and reward systems to ensure compliance by different actors.
- b) The district Natural Resource Department, in liaison with district project focal persons, should strengthen implementation of weak environmental and social safeguards compared to accountability and audit safeguards.
- c) MoGLSD should undertake sustainability planning to translate activities into outputs, outcomes, and impacts for the survival and benefit of targeted people.
- d) The district focal person should ensure equitable benefit sharing within and among groups with diverse characteristics, interests, and abilities.

- e) MoLGSD should establish mechanisms to ensure program implementers meet obligations, and beneficiaries can hold them accountable in case of failure.

6.6 Risk Management

- a) Government should build mechanisms for identifying, mitigating, and building resilience against future shocks that may affect program implementation.
- b) Clear understanding of the political economy during program design and alignment with changing government priorities can minimize risks.
- c) MoGLSD should build and strengthen partnerships with MDAs, CSOs, the private sector, and ongoing programs like OWC to ensure long-term sustainability.
- d) h) MoFPED should address the recurrent problem of inadequate funding by diversifying funding sources and identifying innovative mechanisms for planned activities.

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Summary of economic inclusiveness performance assessment of UWEP and scores

Table 6 gives a summary discussion of the key findings and their performance scores based on a Likert Scale of 1 to 4. These scores were summarised from the FGD, KFIIs and the interviewer's assessment of the findings. A percentage score is given to each of the six areas of the ACODE Economic Assessment Framework.

Table 15. A Summary of key findings, emerging issues and Inclusive Performance Scores

No.	Questions to guide assessment	Discussion of Key Findings, Issues, and Inclusive Performance Gaps	Average Score
1	Programme design		
	Goal of UWEP	Well defined goal and clear objectives. It addresses the development challenges facing women	4
	Activities and related outputs	Activities and outputs well defined though some do not have quantitative targets	3
	How activities and outputs are expected to translate into outcomes and impact	<p>Several mechanisms put in place to translate activities into outputs and impacts including creating partnerships but there are/were gaps e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget cuts and delays • Institutional weaknesses that caused implementation challenges • Weak partnerships 	3

No.	Questions to guide assessment	Discussion of Key Findings, Issues, and Inclusive Performance Gaps	Average Score
	Assumptions considered	<p>The success of UWEP depended on several assumptions/conditions however there are the following gaps in the validity of the assumptions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No dedicated institutions at LG and community levels with adequate capacity and incentives to carry out UWEP activities • Some women groups disintegrated and the loans could not be recovered from the beneficiaries • Shocks e.g. climate change and COVID-19 not factored in design • Contextual changes e.g. new programmes (Emyoooga, PDM) reduced interest in UWEP • Budget cuts and delays 	2
	Targeted beneficiaries and how identified	<p>Clear mechanisms put in place to identify targeted beneficiaries including use of guidelines and participation of community beneficiaries. However, there were gaps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The different characteristics and identities of the beneficiary groups are not taken into consideration. • Influence peddling in beneficiary selection by political leaderships 	3
	Beneficiary selection	<p>Participatory process with clear structures and guidelines for beneficiary selection were in place however, there were a few gaps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guidelines not followed to the dot. • Some of the would-be beneficiary groups did not have minimum requirement e.g. National IDs and project site/land and were therefore left out. • Some of the selected members were widows but were among the working class and could hardly have time for group meetings. • In some cases, pressure from “above” influenced selection process 	3

No.	Questions to guide assessment	Discussion of Key Findings, Issues, and Inclusive Performance Gaps	Average Score
	What is the projected cost of the UWEP?	The first phase of UWEP was projected at UGX 585 billion. This is a low projection given the nation-wide coverage of the programme and level of ambition and its demand	3
	How are the costs allocated across different cost drivers?	Cost allocation: Capacity skills development (15%), Women enterprise fund (70%) and Institutional development (15%). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is good Women enterprise/ beneficiary groups got the biggest percentage allocation, The institutional and capacity development components should have got more allocation for better knowledge and skills that are critical for effectiveness and efficiency 	3
	How much of the expenditure is intended to reach beneficiaries or excluded categories of people?	Nationally a total budget of UGX 585 billion and a share of 70% i.e. UGX 409 billion was intended to reach beneficiaries. For the focus districts of study only UGX 9,151,905,033 reached the beneficiaries. There were gaps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget cuts, low per capita receipts, variations in releases to women groups and delays which minimised the expected benefits from the releases, Allocation criteria (poverty count 40%, number of women 45%, land area 15%) not adequate to reach intended beneficiaries 	3
	Who is directly involved in the implementation of UWEP and what is their role?	National, Local government and Community levels actors were clearly identified and their roles specified. There are gaps in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many less effective national level actors (MDAs, OPMs, Parliament). Should have had lower-level actors who are the implementers Disconnects between beneficiary, community and LG actors and LGs and National levels 	3

No.	Questions to guide assessment	Discussion of Key Findings, Issues, and Inclusive Performance Gaps	Average Score
	What was (is) the role of target beneficiaries in the design of the UWEP (how were their views captured and taken care of during the design)?	<p>A few women with on-going enterprises in Mukono, Wakiso and Makindye Ssabagabo that existed before UWEP were consulted during design. Some of the targeted beneficiaries fall within the mandate of the MGLSD their views and issues are already known. Gaps include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UWEP design largely modelled on YLP whose characteristics are totally different • Top-down approach of the programme limited consultation • New women groups not consulted; their views not captured • Some of the target groups are hard to reach so not consulted 	2
	What are the performance targets for the UWEP?	<p>Performance targets were set on the number of women to be reached, funds recovery, field monitoring visits and skills and capacity building. The gaps were in;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of ambition, e.g. the number of women to be reached (100,000) was not ambitions and was easily surpassed • No budget allocations to some of the targeted activities and therefore not achievable 	3
	What are the factors responsible for the level of performance (activities and outputs)?	<p>Performance was determined by different factors including: commitment and quality of leadership at all levels especially at the community levels, group dynamics, political economy, budget allocations, project selection and resilience to shocks e.g. COVID-19, climate change etc.</p> <p>The key questions/gaps are:</p> <p>Are these factors known and were they taken into account to improve UWEP implementation process? Stakeholder interviews and literature review indicate no adjustments arising out of from these factors.</p>	3
	Total Percentage Score on Project design		73

No.	Questions to guide assessment	Discussion of Key Findings, Issues, and Inclusive Performance Gaps	Average Score
	Assessment of Efficacy		
	Were the UWEP activities implemented according to plan?	<p>UWEP implementation largely followed the laid-out plan and conditions. However, there were gaps in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delays in release of funds affected planned activity implementation • Amendments of the plan to accommodate emerging issues and challenges e.g. from 19 districts to cover the whole country, increase on allocation to institutional component <p>Limited focus on skills and capacity development, technology and innovation and market access with some not done at all.</p>	2
	Did the intended beneficiaries receive a specified treatment/package?	<p>While the programme reached more than the targeted beneficiaries the following gaps were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delayed release of funds (up to 3 years after request) to the extent that some groups had some of their members leave before funds were released • Account opening involved several back-and-forth movements which were tiresome. • A lot of paper work required by both the Government and Banks for women to access money • Some groups that accessed funds had a strong desire to share the funds and work independently rather than working in groups. It is not clear how the sharing was done • Free riders who benefited without putting in adequate efforts. 	3

No.	Questions to guide assessment	Discussion of Key Findings, Issues, and Inclusive Performance Gaps	Average Score
	Were programme outputs realised within the specified time?	<p>Most of the programme outputs were not realised within the specified time. The following affected timely realisation of programme outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate funding for training e.g. Women in Makindye Ssabagabo never received funds for this component • The skills component also had inadequate funding • The three-year project period is only good for on-going projects but is too short for new projects and long-term projects whose outputs cannot be realized within such a short time. 	2
	Did periodic monitoring reports capture the level of performance?	<p>The programme mandated for periodic monitoring reports. The following gaps are noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer monitoring visits than planned therefore the few reports could not capture the level of performance • Some groups changed locations and phone contacts, especially during the Covid-19 outbreak 	2
	What are the implications of the level of performance for achievement of Programme outcomes and impact?	<p>Despite the challenges faced, reports and stakeholder interviews indicate that UWEP is one of the most successful EIP in Uganda and would be on course to attainment of programme outcomes and impacts if given more resources. However, there are gaps/challenges on:</p> <p>Sustainability of programme outcomes and impacts when UWEP ends</p>	3
	% Average Score on Efficacy		60

No.	Questions to guide assessment	Discussion of Key Findings, Issues, and Inclusive Performance Gaps	Average Score
	Assessment of Quality of M&E		
	Existence of an UWEP M&E framework defining performance indicators and targets for objectives, activities, outputs and outcomes, and specifying the types of evaluations to be undertaken (internal or external evaluation, baseline, midline and endline).	<p>M&E framework which specifies programme development objective (impacts), outcomes, the goal, the indicators and how often they are monitored exists. However, there are the following gaps in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the M&E framework does not define the specific roles of different actors the M&E is not well-planned i.e focus on the recovery of funds, limited or no feedback mechanisms, technical staffs from districts not facilitated Limited budgeting for M&E 	2
	Quality of M&E assessed by functionality including; undertaking M&E functions and activities, and producing M&E outputs, routine collection of data, meetings, production of periodic reports and other products	<p>Weak M&E planning affected its functionality demonstrated in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fewer monitoring visits than planned More emphasis on the recovery of funds than performance of the projects being implemented Low involvement of lower women council leaders in M&E Goals of M&E not clearly spelt out M&E does not adequately capture the unique role of actors at the national and local government levels Beneficiaries have limited understanding of the importance of M&E, they look at it as a reminder to pay back the funds lent to them Though some of the evaluations are specified, they were not undertaken and many are more suitable to short-term projects. M&E was under-budgeted especially at the local government levels and most of the time lines set were not followed 	1

No.	Questions to guide assessment	Discussion of Key Findings, Issues, and Inclusive Performance Gaps	Average Score
	How is performance information used to improve implementation and effectiveness of the UWEP?	As a result of weak M&E planning there was no timely, accurate and organized performance information to identify program weaknesses or failures, and suggest timely and appropriate corrective actions to improve effectiveness.	2
	% Average score on Quality of M&E		42
	Assessment of Efficiency		
	How close is actual expenditure to the budget?	There is a big gap between approved budget and actual expenditure though the budget releases are equal to actual expenditure indicating 100% budget absorption.	1
	Have available resources been utilized as planned?	<p>To a large extent available resources were utilized as planned with absorption of releases at 100%. However, there were issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More resources were removed from other components and allocated to the skills development component (20%) though still inadequate • Women in Makindye Ssabagabo complained of inadequate funds for training in project management skills. • Groups visited did not receive IEC materials because financial resources were not allocated for this activity. 	2
	What factors were responsible for any variations?	<p>Causes of variations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emerging issues and challenges not anticipated e.g. COVID-19 • Invalid assumptions during the Programme design • Capacity issues especially in value addition, technology and market access • High demand for the Programme services compared to what was planned and existing capacity 	2

No.	Questions to guide assessment	Discussion of Key Findings, Issues, and Inclusive Performance Gaps	Average Score
	What implications do financing, and financial management have on implementation of activities outputs, outcomes and impact of the EIP?	<p>Financing and financial management have adverse implications on implementation of UWEP activities and attainment of outputs, outcomes and impacts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financing has high implications on activity implementation For example, less than expected loan recovery, delayed funding, reducing and unpredictable funding greatly affected UWEP activities, outputs, outcomes and the expected impacts and inclusiveness multiplier effects. Inadequate budget allocations for the Programme and the associated budget cuts Delayed budget releases Financing is important it is not sufficient on its own to drive activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts. Other factors such as good leadership, political economy are complementary to financing. 	1
	% Average Score on Efficiency		38
	Compliance Assessment What are the applicable accountability and safeguarding compliance obligations for the UWEP (with justification)	<p>The Programme has applicable accountability and safeguarding obligations and these were identified and in some cases control measures to ensure compliance were put in place. Gaps were identified in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most compliance obligations were skewed towards loan recovery. Limited focus on social safeguards and environmental safeguards though contained in the Programme document 	2

No.	Questions to guide assessment	Discussion of Key Findings, Issues, and Inclusive Performance Gaps	Average Score
	How were the compliance undertakings done (who, what, how-role of affected persons in the undertaking)?	<p>Measures were put in place to ensure compliance to undertakings (especially the financially related ones) with even defined roles to national, local government and community level actors. The were however gaps in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of affected groups more inclined to ensuring loan recovery obligations • Some undertakings e.g. social, environment and climate change compliance undertakings were only mentioned in the Programme document but little was done to ensure compliance 	3
	What were the findings of the undertakings related to the different obligations and how they inform decision making (interventions to address issues)?	<p>Apart from a few cases, the findings of the undertakings did not significantly improve compliance nor inform decision making and corrective interventions to address issues identified.</p>	2
	What are the effects of the Programme on the welfare and rights (human rights, cultural rights, socioeconomic rights etc.) of the beneficiaries and the community at large?	<p>The Programme had significant transformative effects on welfare and rights of the beneficiaries and is one of the most successful EIPs so far implemented. However, it had a few performance gaps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religious affiliations e.g. to the Muslim women groups who are not supposed to take loans and pay fees (if payment delayed) • Balancing domestic/homestead obligations and UWEP activities was a challenge to some beneficiaries 	4
	What are the implications of these effects for Programme activities, outputs, outcomes and impact?	<p>Generally, there were limited or no implications of these effects on Programme activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts.</p>	4
	Average percentage score		75

No.	Questions to guide assessment	Discussion of Key Findings, Issues, and Inclusive Performance Gaps	Average Score
	Risk Management		
	Which Programme outcomes are at higher and lower risk in terms of attainment and sustainability?	Most of the outcomes are at a higher risk of not being attained and where they are attained, they face high sustainability challenges.	2
	What are the sources of those risks?	The sources of the risks were correctly identified and for some mitigation measures put in place. However, the Programme was affected by COVID-19, budget cuts were not envisaged and no mitigation measures	3
	What are the implications of the risks for achievement of outcomes and their sustainability?	The risks had significant implications on the achievement of outcomes and sustainability e.g. due to COVID-19 women were not accessing markets for their products and services	2
	Whether M&E framework provides for tracking risks	The M&E does not adequately track risks	2
	Whether monitoring reports capture risks?	Monitoring reports are few but they capture risks. Some groups changed locations and phone contacts, especially during the COVID-19 outbreak and therefore, it was difficult to monitor.	2
	What actions have been undertaken to mitigate the risks?	Several actions were taken to mitigate risks such as creating partnerships with various stakeholders to ensure sustainability, sustainability planning and alignment of the programme to the country's political economy. However, for some risks, no measures were taken to mitigate them, and the effectiveness of some of the measures is questionable. Some mitigation measures e.g. agroforestry to mitigate the effects of climate change, are only mentioned in the programme document but not adequate action are taken	2
	Average Percentage Inclusiveness Score		54

ABOUT ACODE

The Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment (ACODE) is an independent public policy research and advocacy think tank based in Uganda. ACODE's work focuses on four programme areas: Economic Governance; Environment and Natural Resources Governance; Democracy, Peace and Security; Science, Technology and Innovation. For the last eight consecutive years, ACODE has been ranked as the best think tank in Uganda and one of the top 100 think tanks in Sub-Saharan Africa and globally in the Global Think Tanks Index Report published by the University of Pennsylvania Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program (TTCSP).



**Advocates Coalition on Development and
Environment (ACODE)**

**Plot 96 Kanjokya Street, Kamwokya
P O. Box 29386, Kampala**

Tel: +256 312 812 150, Email: acode@acode-u.org

Website: <http://www.acode-u.org>

