



ELIZKA RELIEF FOUNDATION

The 3rd Periodic Review of Uganda

Introduction

On January 21, 1987, Uganda signed the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). However, citizens are still suffering from various violations to their social, economic and cultural rights, and Uganda still receives recommendations from other countries regarding the necessity of providing these rights to all individuals equally as provided in Ugandan laws. Elizka Relief Foundation wants to highlight the following:

First: The Right to access to Education

The right to education is guaranteed by Article 30 of Uganda's 1995 Constitution. Article 18 thereof provides that "the State shall promote free and compulsory primary education." The 2008 Education Act, which is the main legal framework for the education sector in Uganda (except for higher education) and which lays the foundations for the current education system, also guarantees this right.

Believing that education is its only way out of poverty, Uganda is making considerable efforts to improve the quality and efficiency of education. Although 90% of children in Uganda attend primary school, this number drops to Less than 25% in secondary schools due to lack of facilities, which contributes to the persistence of poverty, as those who don't obtain secondary education have fewer opportunities to get jobs, which increases unemployment rates.¹

About 16% of Ugandan children have a disability, this suggests that most children with disabilities are not able to attend school and that learners with special needs fail to transition from one educational level to another. Only 5 per cent of children with disabilities can access education through Inclusive Schools and 10% through special schools.²

There is a huge gap between school enrollment in rural and urban areas, 91% of children attend primary school in urban areas, compared to 85% in rural areas. This gap is even more articulated in secondary education, as 38% of secondary-school-age children in urban areas attend schools, compared to only 14% of children in rural areas. Also, female literacy rates are much higher in urban areas than in rural ones.

80% of school-age children in Uganda live in rural areas that suffer from a lack of basic resources necessary for living and underdeveloped educational infrastructure. The Covid-19 pandemic has also taken its toll on the living standards in rural areas. The UN estimates that the pandemic's impact in the education sector will be greatly borne by low and average-income households who lack access to the technological means necessary for education.³

Eastern Uganda, the region with the highest poverty rates, has the highest classroom overcrowding rates - way above the state-mandated national average of 65 pupils per semester.

¹ Teddy Atim, Dyan Mazurana and Anastasia Marshak, School's out Why northern Uganda's girls and boys are not getting an education and what to do about it, 2019, <https://bit.ly/3hdaGKV>

² Special Needs Education in Uganda: Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) #4 Concerns Quality and Inclusive Education, the world bank, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3o0h5um>

³ Effect Of COVID-19 On The Educational Sector In Uganda, global Livingston, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3eutzaj>



The data clearly shows that in central Uganda, classes contain 49 children, and more than 94 in northern and western Uganda, while in eastern and poorer Uganda the number of students in classes exceeds 80 students.

Also, eastern and northern parts of Uganda, which records the highest average poverty rates in the country, have the lowest student numbers with enough space to sit and write.

Second: The Right to Health

Article 20 (1) of Uganda's Constitution provides that human rights include rights that are inherent and not conferred by the state. The article imposes a duty on all bodies, government agencies, and persons to respect, promote and support every human right including health-related rights.

Uganda's biggest challenge in the health sector is the lack of resources. Although Uganda has five medical colleges and 29 schools, there is still a shortage of health care workers, with only one doctor for every 8,300 Ugandans.

70% of medical practitioners exist in urban areas where only 20% of the population lives, which means that citizens in rural areas can't easily obtain quality health care under medical supervision, as there is only one doctor for every 22,000 people. Hospitals in rural areas also suffer from a shortage of medicines and equipment, long waiting periods, rude service, and insufficient medical staff, forcing patients to travel long distances to receive appropriate treatment.

Also, the Covid-19 pandemic has strained Uganda's fragile health care system. Intensive care units in hospitals in rural areas suffer from a lack of beds and oxygen needed for patients.⁴ There is an indicator called the "Region Result" used to measure the performance of the Ugandan regions in terms of the extent of poverty against the health indicators available there. The higher the score, the better the rated performance (with zero being the lowest possible score and 100 being the highest). The northern and eastern regions scored lower than those in the central and western regions, which means that the population in regions with lower health scores that are classified as poor suffer from lower-quality health services than those in regions with better scores.⁵

Third: The right to an adequate standard of living

a. Poverty

Uganda is still classified as among the poorest countries in the world despite the reduction in its poverty rate, not because of the percentage of poor in Uganda, but because of individuals who live above the poverty line, whose income exceeds the global average poverty (1.9 dollars), but they do not rise to the middle class, because these people are more likely to fall below the poverty line already due to negative environmental and economic shocks. While the poverty rate has decreased over time, the proportion of Ugandans classified as not poor but vulnerable to falling below the poverty line increased. This group does not live in extreme poverty but are considered poor compared to the middle class and they are vulnerable to falling below the poverty line in the face of negative shocks, such as the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. So, the number of poor in eastern, western and central Uganda has increased.

⁴ Halima Athumani, Uganda's Health Care System Struggling Against Second COVID Wave, voa news, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2R66jgo>

⁵ Poverty in Uganda: National and regional data and trends, 2020, [file:///C:/Users/moham/Downloads/Poverty in Uganda - National and regional data and trends.pdf](file:///C:/Users/moham/Downloads/Poverty%20in%20Uganda%20-%20National%20and%20regional%20data%20and%20trends.pdf)



Also, the proportion of people living in poverty according to the national poverty line has increased by 1.7% between 2012 and 2017. The international poverty line measure of \$1.90 also shows an increase, with 41.7% of the population living in extreme poverty as of 2017.

There are disparities between Ugandan regions in non-economic consequences to poverty, such as the performance indicators of the education, health, water and sanitation sectors in these regions, but the national report on poverty does not show accurate numbers about these sectors and their impact on poverty in Uganda since 2014.

Uganda has experienced increasing regional inequalities since the 1990s. While extreme poverty at the national level has generally declined since the 1990s, this trend has not occurred evenly across the country. Although the northern and western regions have reported a decrease in the proportion of the population living in poverty, the eastern region has recorded an increase in poverty rates (from 24.3% in 1999/2000 to 36.7% in 2017/2018). Likewise, poverty rates have increased in the central region from 10.7% in 1999/2000 to 12.9% in 2017/2018.⁶

B. Unemployment

Uganda's national unemployment rate is 9.2%, while the unemployment rate for youth aged 18-30 is 13.3%. Although high, these rates are not so far removed from global averages. Consider the European Union, where the average youth unemployment rate has hovered at 14.3% for the last few months of 2019.

But the unemployment statistics for Uganda are misleading. In reality, Ugandans, and especially young Ugandans, are highly likely to be underemployed, in precarious and non-rewarding work, or in jobs that cannot offer decent incomes. Therefore, unemployment indicators appear as if it is normal, close to global figures, and Uganda does not suffer from unemployment.

83.5% of the Ugandan population aged between 15-29 work in informal, unstable jobs, and that figure is 10% higher for young women than men.

41% of the total working-age population in Uganda are engaged in subsistence farming, which means that a substantial proportion of the workforce neither generates an income nor engages with markets.

Overall, the high prevalence of informality skews the unemployment rate, resulting in an inaccurate reflection of the realities of the Ugandan labour market.

The country is facing crucial systemic barriers that limit economic growth and job creation. Chief among these is an unfavourable business climate, characterized by an often-prohibitive cost of doing business, and limited access to start-up or scale-up capital. The poor quality of basic education also inadequately prepares youth for work, and limited infrastructure to support business operations and logistics means businesses struggle to engage with markets.⁷

Fourth: the Right to Social Security

⁶ UGANDA'S MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY PROFILE, unicef, 2020, <https://uni.cf/3fcmmeu>

⁷ Youth Unemployment in Uganda Has Been Misdiagnosed, the palladium group, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3fakxOO>



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The Ugandan government has a National Social Protection Policy in place that is also integrated into the second National Development Plan (NDP II); but, the coverage and design of national social protection programs are currently insufficient to meaningfully address the range and scope of vulnerabilities to shocks in Uganda. For example, two main programs, the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF3) financed by the World Bank and the Senior Citizen Grant (SCG), reach 3% of the population. This number is very low compared to other African countries with comparable economic status, where similar programs reach more than 6% of the population.

Government spending on the two major programs is also inadequate. Spending amounts to about 0.14% of gross domestic product (GDP) in FY17/18. A large part of spending on the SCG and NUSAF3 is provided by donor grants or concessional loans, which raises a concern about the medium-to-long-term sustainability of financing to the sector.

Finally, most Ugandans work in agriculture – some 64% of the overall labour force and 72% of young Ugandans. The agricultural sector continues to be highly exposed to climatic shocks and hazards including floods, droughts, landslides, and most recently locusts. Having adaptive social protection in place that can rapidly scale up in response to a shock is important so that one can respond quickly to emergencies.⁸

Conclusion & Recommendations

Although the Ugandan economy is striving to catch up with development, the economic and social rights of the Ugandan citizen still have some shortcomings that limit individuals' access to their full economic and social rights. Therefore, Elizka concludes this report with some recommendations that would help the Ugandan state in the midst of its efforts to bypass the obstacles that prevent its citizens from obtaining their rights:

- 1- The Ugandan government must give priority in spending, follow-up and control to the educational system's programs and institutions because in recent years Uganda has been preoccupied with economic growth and energy and infrastructure projects at the expense of other sectors. Therefore, the government must increase education allocations in its general budget.
- 2- The distribution of medical staff among regions in Uganda must be governed by the number of people in each region, not the extent of its well-being. Most of the doctors are concentrated in rich urban areas, while residents of rural areas suffer from poverty and lack of health care. Therefore, medical doctors must be encouraged with material rewards to go to poor areas.
- 3- Expanding the scope of social protection to include agricultural workers because they are the most vulnerable to the risks of leaving their work as a result of environmental disasters.
- 4- Providing training and education for Ugandan youth, which represent nearly half of the Ugandan population, to increase productivity and achieve development.
- 5- Enact detailed laws evaluating the work of social protection programs to oblige the government to increase spending on these programs and to ensure that they reach their beneficiaries.

⁸ Uganda Economic Update: Investing in Ugandans by Expanding Social Protection, the world bank, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3xXrYBD>