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Retrogressive or Misplaced Priorities? An Assessment of Public Expenditure for Food Security and Disaster Risk Reduction in Uganda

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ABSTRACT

The article argues that a rights-based approach to public investment and expenditure in agriculture and disaster risk management is a viable pathway for Uganda to realise the right to adequate food and sustainable development in line with the government's national and international human rights commitments. This study employed a qualitative research paradigm to examine both primary and secondary data on public investment and expenditure in food security and disaster risk reduction in Uganda. Fifty-six key informant interviews were conducted with purposively selected officials at national and Local Government levels. Data and insights obtained were analysed using thematic and rights-based budget analyses. There is minimal application of rights-based approach principles in the budgeting for food security or disaster risk reduction in Uganda. Public expenditure in the agriculture sector and disaster risk management is inadequate to meet the increasing disasters in the country or to effectively protect the right to adequate food of vulnerable communities in disaster-prone regions. As a State Party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and a signatory to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, Uganda is obligated to protect and fulfil the right to adequate food for vulnerable communities in the event of disasters. This will require increased public and private investment in the agriculture sector and strengthening the disaster risk financing mechanisms at both national and Local Government levels.

KEYWORDS

Disaster risk financing; rights-based budget analysis; food security; disaster risk reduction; vulnerability.



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1. Introduction

Disaster risk financing to ensure livelihood resilience and inclusive and sustainable development for vulnerable communities living in hazard-prone regions is a growing area of concern for many governments worldwide (World Bank, 2022; Cvetković, 2023). There is a growing recognition that financial preparedness and prioritisation of key sectors, such as food security and climate change adaptation, contribute to increasing a country's financial resilience to and recovery from disasters when they occur (GFDRR et al., 2016; World Bank, 2022). Globally, the post-2015 development agenda that replaced the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has witnessed a convergence of efforts to achieve inclusive development, prosperity, equity, freedom, dignity and peace on a foundation of human rights (OHCHR, 2013; Filskov & Feiring, 2018). Regarding food security in the context of disasters in Uganda, the allocative efficiency of public expenditure in the agricultural sector has consistently remained low, averaging 3.6% of the national budget. Uganda's share is even lower than that of its East African neighbours, Kenya, Tanzania, and Rwanda. However, all the countries are yet to attain the aspirational Maputo/Malabo Declaration/CAADP target of 10% (World Bank & GOU, 2019). Thus, a strategy to ensure risk-informed development through increased investment in agricultural productivity, substantial reduction of disaster risk losses in lives, livelihoods, socio-economic support and the protection of environmental assets of communities and countries was consolidated under various international instruments like the Maputo/Malabo Declaration, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, among others (World Bank & GOU, 2019; Omoyo et al, 2022).

Uganda ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) in 1987. As a State Party, the country is obligated to respect, protect, and fulfil the rights enshrined in the Covenant. In particular, Article 11 of the ICESCR provides for the protection of the right to an adequate standard of living, including the right to adequate food, which is the focus of this article. Uganda is also a signatory to the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which comprises 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that enjoin countries to ensure inclusive and sustainable development for all and to leave no one behind (UNDP, 2018). Of particular relevance in this article is Goal 1 (No Poverty) and its Target 4, which propose to "build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters" by 2030. Also in focus is the SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) that calls upon States to "end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture" by 2030. In the same vein, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 (hereinafter referred to as the "Sendai Framework") requires countries to take concrete actions to protect development gains from disaster risk. Specifically, the Sendai Framework calls upon countries to ensure "[T]he *substantial reduction of disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods and health and the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities....*" (Sendai Framework, para. 16).

Globally, however, there is generally little to no progress towards either Zero Hunger Target 2.1, which aims to ensure access to safe, nutritious, and adequate food for all people throughout the year, or towards Target 2.2, which seeks to eradicate all forms of malnutrition (FAO, 2021). In 2020, between 720 and 811 million people worldwide faced hunger, representing an increase of 161 million more than in 2019 (FAO, 2021). This implies that nearly 2.37 billion people lacked access to adequate food in 2020 – a 320 million increase in just one year. Estimates from 2019 indicate that nearly 690 million people were hungry that year, accounting for 8.9% of the world's population. Also, nearly half of all deaths of children under 5 are attributable to undernutrition (UNICEF, 2019). Since March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has further exposed weaknesses in the global and national food systems, which threaten the lives and livelihoods of millions of people, especially the most vulnerable and those living in disaster-prone environments (FAO, 2021). Similarly, action to prevent the creation of new disasters and/or reduce existing disaster risk under the Sendai Framework is lagging: economic losses from disasters account for approximately 1% of global gross domestic product (GDP) (Global Target C), and these losses continue to increase (UN, 2020).

States worldwide, Uganda's inclusive, have reaffirmed the right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food, consistent with the right to adequate food and the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger (CESCR, 1999, para.6). In Uganda, poverty and hunger are both a rural and urban reality that prevents many from achieving adequate or nutritious food for themselves or their families. An estimated 54% of the total population in all regions of the country experiences food insecurity or lacks access to an affordable, nutritious diet (IPC, 2017; UBOS, 2024). Peasant or subsistence smallholder farmers and their families comprise a significant proportion of the poor and hungry, with Uganda scoring 27.3 on the hunger scale and ranking 105 out of 127 countries surveyed (UBOS, 2024; Global Hunger Index, 2024). Thus, eradicating poverty and hunger is integrally linked to boosting food production, agricultural productivity and rural incomes. To this end, the agriculture sector in Uganda must become more productive and efficient. Sustainable agricultural practices and food systems, including both production and consumption, must be pursued from a holistic and integrated perspective, as the just expired National Development NDP III (2020/21 – 2024/25) and the recently adopted National Development Plan IV (2025/6 – 2029/30), the Uganda Nutrition Action Plan II (2021 – 2025), among other strategies, propose.

Most projections indicate that global hunger will not be eradicated by 2030 unless concrete actions are taken to accelerate progress, particularly in addressing food access inequality (FAO et al., 2021, 2023). Global hunger remained relatively unchanged from 2021 to 2022, affecting around 9.2 per cent of the world's population in 2022, compared to 7.9 per cent in 2019. Holding all other factors constant, an estimated 660 million people may still face hunger in 2030 due to the lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on global food security (FAO et al., 2021; 2023). Thus, it is pertinent that Uganda increases investment in the agricultural sector to enhance food productivity, as well as in disaster risk reduction, in the face of increasing climate-related disasters. Coherence in the formulation and implementation of policies and investments in food security, health, social protection, and environmental systems is also essential for building synergies towards more efficient and effective food systems that deliver adequate food for all and eradicate hunger.

This paper is organised as follows: In the first part, we outline a rights-based conceptual framework as an optimal paradigm through which to understand and view public expenditure in the protection of the right to adequate food and ensure effective disaster risk reduction in Uganda amidst persistent poverty and an economic downturn induced by the COVID-19 pandemic. The second part examines national expenditures on disaster risk reduction and the views of key national and sub-national actors who implement food security and disaster risk reduction policies among disaster-prone communities. These views are discussed in the next part, and the paper concludes with a call to implement a rights-based approach that ensures robust protection of the right to adequate food and effective disaster risk reduction, guaranteeing inclusive, people-centred development in line with national and international commitments.

2. Methods

2.1 Qualitative Research Paradigm to Budgeting for Food Security and Disaster Risk Reduction

This study employed a qualitative research approach to examine both secondary literature and primary data on public expenditure related to food security and disaster risk reduction in Uganda. Fifty-six (56) key informant interviews were conducted with purposively selected officials at national and Local Government levels using an open-ended interview guide to obtain insights into government expenditure on food security and disaster risk reduction. A rights-based budget analysis of Uganda's recent national budgets (2016-2021) was employed to evaluate and understand this issue from a human rights-based perspective. Specifically, human rights budget analysis (QUB, 2010; OHCHR, 2017) was used to assess the extent to which Uganda's national budget allocations to the agricultural sector (food security) complied with the government's obligation to use "maximum available resources" for the progressive realisation of the right to adequate food (Article 2, ICESCR), and ensuring effective disaster mitigation under the Sendai Framework Priority 3 target.

2.2 Progressive Realisation of Economic and Social Rights through Government Expenditure

Article 2 of the ICESCR states that governments are obligated to “... take steps ...to the *maximum of its available resources*, to achieve *progressively* the full realisation of the rights recognised in the present Covenant... (emphasis added)”. To this end, rights-based budget analysis is an appropriate overarching framework for analysing and assessing how public finance policies comply with the obligation to fulfil economic and social rights, as stipulated under Article 2 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Blyberg & Hofbauer, 2014; OHCHR, 2017). This conceptual framework, when applied to the analysis of government expenditures, enables the identification of how effective, fair, and efficient state expenditure is about sectors that have the most significant impact on the economic and social rights of the people in a country. Through a rights-based budget analysis, it is possible to understand how the government’s allocation or expenditure ratios on specific rights, compared to national or international benchmarks, are either leading to the progressive realisation or retrogression/violation of those rights. Additionally, through a benefit incidence analysis, it is possible to establish whether marginalised or vulnerable groups in society are benefitting from public expenditures (OHCHR, 2017).

Under the rights-based approach, a national budget is a process through which financial resources are mobilised and allocated in compliance with the tripartite legal obligations to respect, protect and fulfil human rights (Maastricht Guidelines, 1998; CESCR, 1999; OHCHR, 2017; Meghan et al., 2017; De Schutter, 2018). Thus, it has been argued that:

The budget reflects the values of a country – who it values, whose work it values, who it rewards...and who and what and whose work it does not.... The budget is the most important economic policy instrument of government, and as such can be a powerful tool in transforming [the] country to meet the needs of the poorest” (Debbie Budlender, 1996, p.7).

Under Article 2(2) of the ICESCR, States must “take steps” and dedicate “maximum available resources” to achieve “progressive realisation” of the rights in the Covenant. This implies that a country must discharge its duty both to *resource mobilisation* in conjunction with *spending*, and to collate both dimensions to *outcomes* – to the adequate levels of enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights” (CESR, 2012; De Schutter, 2018, p. 22). Article 2 also requires that, in the event of natural disasters, governments must protect vulnerable members of society by adopting targeted interventions, such as low-cost housing, the provision of basic needs like food, healthcare, safe drinking water, and social protection programs (Blyberg & Hofbauer, 2014; ILC, 2016). One way to accomplish this is to apply the human expenditure ratio, which consists of three types of ratios (public expenditure ratio, social allocation ratio, and social priority ratio) as a share of the total gross domestic product (GDP) allocated to human priority concerns. This approach is consistent with a rights-based approach (UNDP, 1991, 2018; De Schutter, 2018). The UNDP estimates that a country’s human expenditure ratio should be a minimum of 5 per cent of the total gross national product (GNP) to achieve people-centred, inclusive, and sustainable development (UNDP, 1991, 2018a; De Schutter, 2018).

The basic argument made by the rights-based approach in general, and the above expenditure ratios specifically, is that national budgets ought to be restructured in favour of human-centred development, away from the common practice of most government expenditure that is either misdirected to unnecessary areas or inefficiently utilised. If government priorities could be adjusted in favour of the needs of the vulnerable and marginalised, faster, people-centred progress would be achieved for all (UNDP, 1990, 1991, 2016; De Schutter, 2018). In this vein, the Human Development Report (1991) concludes:

Many policymakers frequently concentrate on just one dimension – income. But this concentration is, at best, an oversimplification and, at worst, a gross distortion of reality. Men, women, and children must be at the centre of attention – with development woven around people, not the other way around (HDR, 1991, p. 1).

Thus, Uganda's development trajectory and progress as conceived and represented in the overarching policy instruments like the third National Development Plan III, the Uganda Vision 2040, should be evaluated and measured not by income per capita (GDP) alone, as has been the practice for decades, but also by the quality of life, health, education and general well-being achieved by the greater majority of the population (UNDP, 1990, 2018; Sen, 1992; Hicks, 2014). Economic deprivation or income poverty, therefore, should not be a standard feature of the definition of poverty, as poverty is also characterised by powerlessness and a violation of human dignity (World Bank, 2000; Sen, 1987). For most developing countries, such as Uganda, the obvious strategies to restructure their national budgets and focus their efforts on people-centred development include freezing military expenditure, halting capital flight, combating high corruption, and rationalising the bloated public administration sector (UNDP, 1991; De Schutter, 2018).

Therefore, a national budget should ideally reflect the highest value a country attaches to the realisation of human rights and capabilities of its citizens. National expenditures must also reflect the human rights principles of sustainability, inclusivity, transparency and accountability as outlined in the UN Development Agenda 2030. Although the Uganda government has consistently impressive comparative scores in budget transparency (Open Budget Survey, 2019), the budgetary allocations to social priority sectors that protect the economic and social rights of the marginalised and vulnerable, including communities in the oil-producing areas, remain neglected (Oloka-Onyango, 2017; ISER, 2016; UPR, 2022). Uganda scored 58/100 in "transparency", 22/100 in "public participation", and 59/100 in "budget oversight", according to *Open Budget Survey 2019* (International Budget Partnership, 2019). Thus, for a national budget to be an effective economic policy instrument of the government for transforming society economically for the better, higher investments in social priority sectors (health, education, agriculture, water and sanitation, social protection, etc.) will have to be exponentially stepped up. To this end, the study analysed Uganda's national public expenditure to determine if it demonstrates a commitment to comply with human rights obligations related to the protection and realisation of the right to food security in general and the right to adequate food for communities living in disaster-prone areas of the country. An overview of the current socio-economic livelihood trends in the country, particularly about poverty, provides the necessary context.

3. Results

The study's findings comprise both primary and secondary data on Uganda's investment and expenditure in food security and disaster risk reduction. The study primarily focused its analysis on the financial years (FYs) between 2016 to 2021. Overall, government spending on both food security and disaster risk reduction in Africa remains comparatively low: total disaster risk reduction (DRR) investment, on average, accounts for only 4% of national budgets in 16 African countries. This is similar to the significantly low average of 2.0% investment and public expenditure in agriculture in Sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank, 2019).

3.1 Budgeting for Agriculture and Food Security in Uganda

Uganda's agricultural sector accounts for 25% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employs approximately 64% of the working population, including 72% of young Ugandans (UBOS, 2020; World Bank, 2022). Extreme weather events, such as droughts or heavy rains, regularly cause significant losses to the agricultural sector, with the impact ranging from 1 to 7% of the GDP (MoWE, 2015, 2020). Uganda is projected to incur losses in food and cash crops equivalent to US\$1.5 billion by 2050, reducing the country's foreign exchange earnings by US\$15 to US\$ 80 million per year (World Bank, 2022). The National Development Plan II (2015/16 - 2019/20) and its subsequent successors, the National Development Plan III (2020/21 - 2025/26) and National Development Plan IV (2025/26 - 2029/30), explicitly reiterate that agriculture is a priority sector.

However, despite this official proclamation, the national budget for agriculture has remained low, stagnant, or even decreased in the last decade (FAO, 2014; ISER, 2016; NPA, 2017). In FY 2016/17, for

instance, the budget for agriculture stood at 3.22 per cent, while in FY 2020/21, the budget allocation was only 2.9% (see Figure 1). The five consecutive national budgetary allocations to the agricultural sector from FY 2017 to FY 2021 are all significantly below the 10% target set by the African Union under both the Maputo (2003) and Malabo Declaration (2014) on the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) (FAO, 2014; ISER, 2016). However, to date, there is limited concrete evidence of positive agricultural productivity that can be attributed to this CAADP initiative in African countries (4th CAADP Biennial Review Report, 2023). With the current constraints like poor post-harvest storage infrastructure, low-value addition, limited agro-industrialisation, inefficient land tenure system, lack of irrigation infrastructure, poor all-weather feeder roads in rural areas and limited use of fertilisers and quality seeds, Uganda's agricultural sector growth and productivity was rated at 4.2% in the FY 2019/20, remarkably below the 6% per annum target that was set under the CAADP initiative

Moreover, under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), ratified by Uganda in 1987, the core principle of “progressive realisation” is a central tenet of the State's obligations to respect, protect, and fulfil economic and social rights (CESCR, 2000). This treaty imposes an immediate obligation on States “to take steps...to the maximum of its available resources” towards the full realisation of economic and social rights (Article 2(1), ICESCR). In this instance, the national budgetary allocations to the agriculture sector, which would ensure the right to adequate food for vulnerable communities living in disaster-prone Bududa and Kasese districts, are not being fulfilled. It is important to note, too, that inadequate funding of the agricultural sector contradicts an official 2021 Uganda Government voluntary commitment accepted at a Human Rights Council country review “to implement policies to support food production, access to credit and school meals programs linked to local food production” (UPR, 2011, para. 67). In a subsequent report to the Human Rights Council under the 2022 peer review of Uganda government's performance, the protection of the right to adequate food is addressed vaguely, without directly responding to the 2011 unfulfilled commitment (UPR, 2022, para. 46/47).

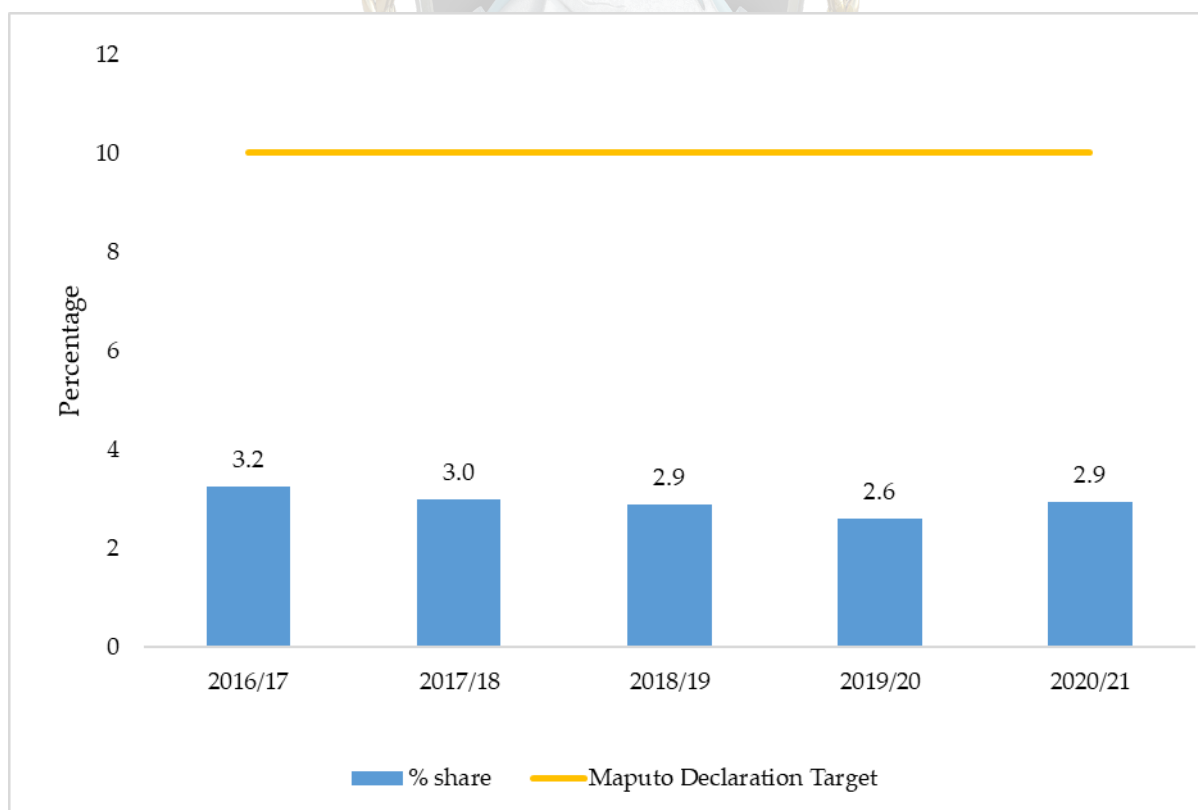


Figure 1: Budget Allocation to the Agricultural Sector (as a % of total budget), FYs 2017 – 2021.
Source: Ministry of Finance, Planning & Economic Development (MFPED), various years.

In **Figure 1** above, it is irresistible to conclude that the national budget allocations to the agriculture sector are indicative of “retrogressive measures” – steps that diminish the fulfilment of the right to adequate food – contrary to the “progressive realisation” obligation under Article 2 of the ICESCR. The level of investment in agriculture, which is significantly below the 10 per cent Maputo/Malabo/CAADP target, is contrary to the cardinal human rights principle of the progressive realisation of economic, social, and cultural rights (CESCR, 1990). The treaty obligations require States to avoid non-retrogressive measures – actions that have the effect of removing or rolling back existing protections for economic and social rights unless justified after applying the maximum available resources (CESCR, 2000).

Moreover, this low public expenditure on agriculture and food security also violates the commitments under the 2004 FAO *Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realisation of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of Food Security*, particularly Guideline 12, on national financial resources. Specifically, Guideline 12.3 stipulates that governments should promote basic social programs and public expenditures that target the poor and vulnerable segments of society. In the specific case of the disaster-prone communities in Bududa and Kasese districts, the study found that there are no concrete safety net programs, for instance, that have been implemented to assist the vulnerable people in getting back on their feet after the loss of all their household assets and their source of livelihoods (subsistence farming) due to floods, mudslides and landslides. Thus, despite the adoption of the national social protection policy in 2016, the coverage, design, and funding of social protection for the most vulnerable citizens reach only 3 per cent of the population, significantly below the average in other East African countries, at 9 per cent of the population (World Bank, 2022).

Despite the low sectoral allocations to the agricultural sector, it is pertinent to note that the available budget also allocates a negligible amount for services and goods that target subsistence farmers, who constitute the majority of the sector (approximately 70% in 2021). For instance, funding for agricultural extension services – a critical component that enhances the capacity of rural subsistence farmers to increase their farming productivity – constituted only 4 per cent of the overall agricultural budget (MFPED, 2016). Consequently, poor funding undermines the effectiveness of agricultural intervention programs. In 2016, only 19 per cent of households in Uganda had accessed extension services, which dropped to 14 per cent for women-headed households and 12 per cent for farms of less than 2 acres in size (IFPRI, 2016).

Moreover, the national expenditure allocated to the health sector, an important complement of the right to adequate food, continues to be underfunded in the national budget at 6.4 and 6.1 per cent in 2020 and 2022, respectively, significantly far below the 15 per cent target, government commitment in the Abuja Declaration (Abuja Declaration, 2001) (see **Figure 2**). Similar to the budget allocations for agriculture, the health budget has stagnated at an average of 6.64 per cent in the past five years, significantly impeding the overall protection of economic and social rights in the country (UPR, 2022). We mention the health sector here deliberately because the inextricable linkages between all human rights are well recognised (Vienna Declaration & Program of Action, 1993, para. 5).

Concerning the rights to adequate food, nutrition security, and the highest attainable standard of health, this linkage is particularly critical for achieving sustainable and inclusive development, as outlined in the 2030 Agenda (Ayala & Meier, 2017; UNDP, 2018a). A comparison of sectoral allocations in FY 2017–2021 between agriculture, health, and security (see **Figure 3**) clearly shows the disparities among these sectors. While funding for both agriculture and health either remained stagnant or decreased significantly below the recommended Abuja and Maputo targets of 15% and 10% of the total national budget, respectively, the security/military budget increased exponentially over the last five years. This lopsided situation presents a classic case of retrogressive measures, a clear violation of state obligations stipulated under the ICESCR (“progressive realisation”) versus “retrogressive measures” (CESCR General Comment No. 3 (para. 9) and CESCR General Comment No. 14 (para. 32)).

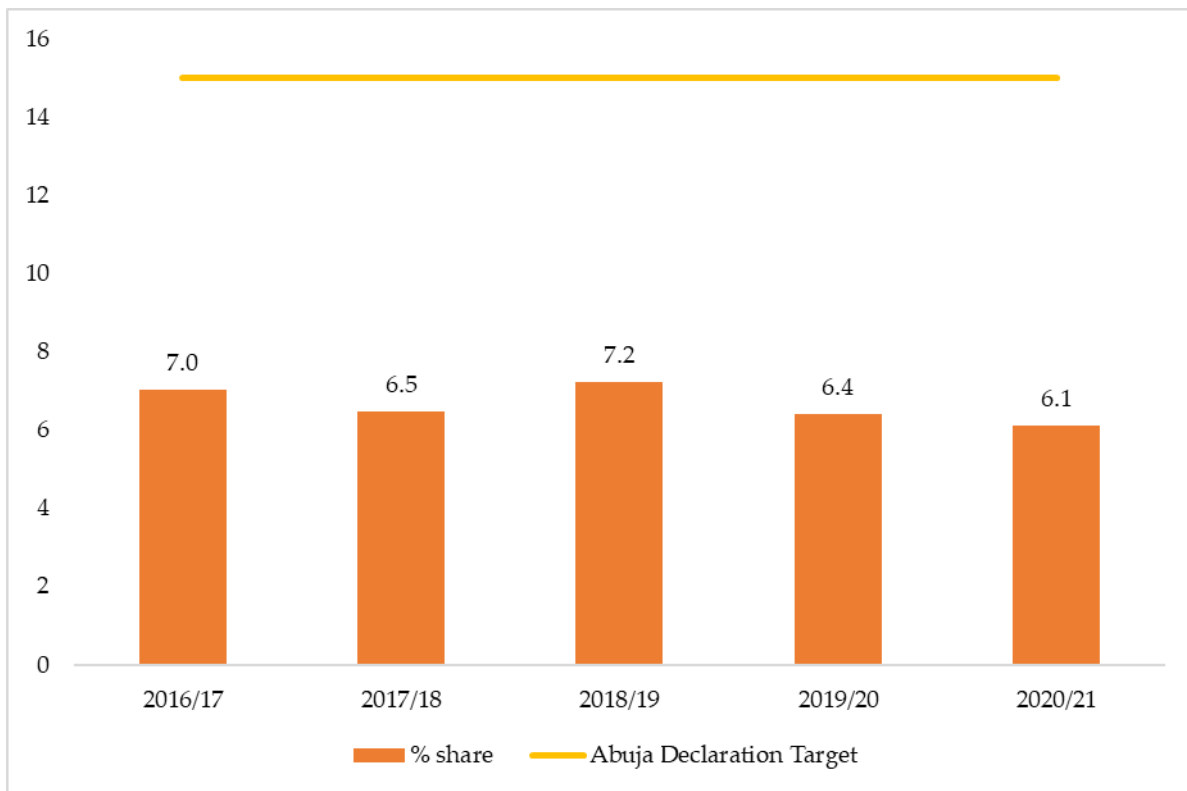


Figure 2: National budget allocations to the health sector (as a % percentage of total budget), Financial Years 2017 - 2021.
Source: Ministry of Finance, Planning & Economic Development (MFPED), various years.

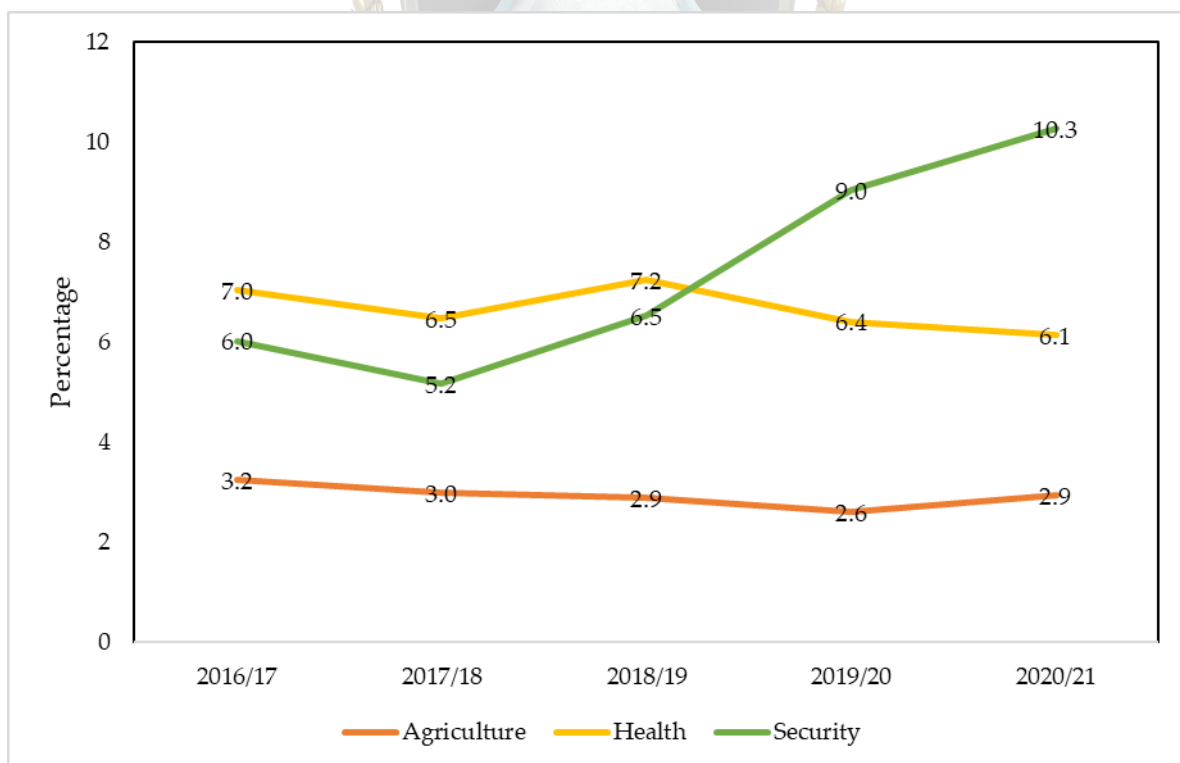


Figure 3. Sector Comparisons-Budget Allocations to Agriculture, Health and Security, Financial Years 2017 - 2021.
Source: Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MFPED), various years

Therefore, national public expenditure and financing for the agricultural sector and disaster risk reduction (DRR) are insufficient to achieve the desired outcomes for the right to adequate food and nutritional security for all Ugandans (FAO, 2014; NPA, 2017). In actuality, contrary to the human

rights principle of progressive realisation of economic and social rights, the government has instead consistently engaged in retrogressive measures (CESCR, 2000, 1990). For instance, public expenditure for agriculture was reduced from 10 per cent of the total budget in 1980 to 3.7 per cent in 2008/9 (FAO, 2014; ISER, 2016). As already indicated, a retrogressive measure is any action taken by the government that has the effect of removing or rolling back budgets, laws, programs, or institutions previously used to safeguard a right, as reflected in paragraph 9 of the CESCR (CESCR, 1990). Thus, the overall national public expenditure on hunger and food and nutrition security programs remains underfunded, often fragmented, and donor-driven, failing to have a fundamental impact on food security in the country (NPA, 2017).

3.2 Financial Incoherence between Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Policies

Uganda is a signatory to a multiplicity of regional and international disaster risk reduction frameworks, including the Paris Climate Change Agreement, 2015, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2030), the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction, the IGAD Drought Disaster Resilience and Sustainability Initiative Strategy and the EAC Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Strategy (2012–2016). At the domestic level, Uganda adopted a national policy for disaster preparedness and management in 2010. This policy, however, was formulated during the last five years of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), 2005–2015, which expired in 2015 and was replaced by the current Sendai Framework. Therefore, this policy is now outdated and requires revision to fully align with the new strategies outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Global Development, specifically the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2030), the Paris Climate Agreement, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Under the National Development III, the government demonstrates a deliberate effort to integrate disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation (CCA) fields (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), 2022), as envisioned under the global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. However, when analysed from a strategic, conceptual, institutional, operational, and financial dimension, Uganda's policy architecture for tackling disaster risk reduction (DRR) and implementing climate change adaptation (CCA) reveals limited coherence across all five dimensions, thus limiting its effectiveness (UNDRR, 2022). Strategically, the relationship and linkages between DRR and CCA are not strong, while conceptually, the phenomena of risk and resilience are inadequately conceived in the policy instruments. Furthermore, from an institutional perspective, the practical coordination between DRR and CCA institutions (or the potential for coordination) is weak, unclear, or duplicative.

Most important for our purpose here is the coherence of the financial policy architecture for disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation (CCA). This aspect examines how funding strategies and investments effectively integrate both Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) to mitigate risk and prevent the creation of new risks in the development process. Overall, while Uganda is credited with formulating a comprehensive policy architecture to deal with disaster risk, the financial viability is largely "limited" in its reach or scope (UNDRR, 2022), as was corroborated by interviews of the policy implementers. The national disaster policy is housed in the Department of Relief, Disaster Preparedness, and Management within the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM). It aims to minimise the vulnerability levels of Ugandans to natural and human-induced hazards and to save lives and livelihood assets when disasters occur. Similarly, there are related policies on climate change adaptation (CCA), including the National Climate Change Policy (2015), the Strategic Program for Climate Resilience (2017), and the National Costed Implementation Strategy (2013), which are domiciled in the Ministry of Water and Environment.

However, when the above key instruments in the policy architecture were assessed for their financial viability, they were found to be primarily "limited" or incoherent, except for two policies that were considered "substantial" in financial terms (see **Table 1**) (Pietschmann, 2019). Such a lack of adequate funding for DRR, despite the best policy intentions, is not unique to Uganda but a widespread practice in many countries (Mitchell et al., 2010; Gordon, 2013). In effect, this implies that the

policies cannot be effectively implemented to ensure disaster risk reduction in the country. According to the National Climate Change Policy and Costed Implementation Strategy estimates, Uganda will require financing of USD 2.9 billion, about 1.2 per cent of the year 2011 GDP, by 2030. However, an analysis of DRR investment for 2016/17 – 2018/19 indicates these projections are unrealistic and cannot be met.

Table 1. Level of Financial Coherence of Uganda’s Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation Policy Instruments

| Policy Instrument | Level of Coherence |
|--|--------------------|
| National Development Plan, 2018 - 2022 | Substantial |
| National Disaster and Preparedness Policy, 2010 | Limited |
| Disaster Preparedness Strategic Plan & Budget, 2017 - 2022 | Limited |
| National Climate Change Policy, 2015 | Limited |
| Strategic Program for Climate Resilience, 2017 | Limited |
| National Costed Implementation Strategy, 2013 | Substantial |

Source: Adopted from United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (2022, p. 21).

3.3. Disaster Risk Financing and Management: The Uncertain Fate of the Contingencies Fund

Even in instances where relevant legislation is explicit and specific on the modalities of expenditure for disaster risk reduction, it is not always adhered to. Domestic financing for DRR activities is undertaken under the Contingency Fund established by the Public Finance Management (PFM) Act 2015. In 2021, the Parliament amended the Public Finance Management Act 2015 to cater for the use and management of oil revenues in the country, specifically through the Public Finance Management (Amendment) Act 2021. However, Section 26 of the PFM Act is silent on the modalities for utilising the funds for disasters despite the government consistently failing to replenish the Contingency Fund (Rukundo *et al.*, 2016; CSBAG, 2018). Moreover, Section 26 requires the government to earmark or ring-fence at least 3.5 per cent of the annual national budget for a Contingency Fund specifically to deal with disasters; however, this obligation has not been consistently implemented (Rukundo *et al.*, 2016; CSBAG, 2018). Lack of sufficient government funding and ineffective implementation capacity for disaster preparedness, prevention, and response in the Ministry of Relief, Disaster Preparedness and Refugees remains a constant cause of concern to top ministry officials, as the government is unable to adequately respond to a plethora of disaster events in the country (CSBAG, 2018; Development Initiatives, 2019; MFPED, 2019; OPM, 2021).

As a result, four years after the Public Finance and Management Act was enacted into law by Parliament in 2015, the Contingency Fund had not yet been operationalised. In May 2017, the Minister for Relief, Disaster Preparedness and Refugees decried the government’s delay in establishing the contingency fund to respond to disasters despite their frequency and increasing severity in the country:

“We need to have money in the budget for disasters. This is something that warrants consideration. Last year, we did not have the funds to help the people of Mutukula who were affected by the earthquake. Even now, the money is very little to handle the people who are affected”, H. O (15 May 2017).

In the FY 2018 – 2019, the first instance that funds (UGX 62 billion) were allocated to the Contingency Fund, the Kakumiro District Women member of parliament complained that the operationalisation of the Contingency Fund was not fast enough, which was adversely affecting farmers who had been compelled to sell their crops at low prices after a bumper harvest season. The Member of Parliament said:

“We need the government to fast-track the Contingency Fund to protect our farmers from price volatility,” R. N (25 July 2018).

However, even when the Contingency Fund was eventually operationalised with 62 billion shillings in FY 2019/20, the reserve fund remained in a deficit amounting to 16 trillion shillings (CSBAG, 2022). This is because the government was not consistently allocating sufficient funds to replenish the funds, in contravention of the provisions of the Public Finance Management Act, 2021. In fact, since the inception of this reserve fund in 2018, it has received less than 0.2 per cent (approximately \$ 17 million) in funding. In the financial year (FY) 2015/16, a supplementary budget of Uganda Shillings (UGX) 5 billion (approximately US\$1.4 million) was disbursed to the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), of which UGX 4 billion (approximately US\$1.2 million) was earmarked to provide relief for disaster victims. Similarly, in FY 2016/17, a supplementary budget of UGX 25 billion (US\$ 7.04 million) was earmarked to provide relief to disaster victims. This practice of relying on supplementary budgets as a disaster risk financing mechanism has been found to contribute to the government's overall poor budget performance (World Bank, 2022).

There are also indications of financial mismanagement contrary to the law that established the Contingency Fund. Ironically, in 2021, the Prime Minister, who, as a backbencher three years earlier, had called for the fast-tracking of the establishment of the Contingency Fund, was now being accused by the parliament of withdrawing 5 billion shillings from it without following proper procedure or accounting for it (*New Vision*, 2021). Public finance diagnostic studies in the country regularly indicate that budget credibility at both national and local government levels is weak due to erratic cash flow management, corruption, volatile inflation, and uncertain donor funding. For instance, a recent study shows that in FY 2017/18, development budget releases underperformed by 23.3%, which improved to 14.2% in FY 2021/22. Surprisingly, on the other hand, non-wage recurrent expenditure budget releases consistently outperformed for all the years under review (UNICEF, 2023).

Poor budget performance and execution make consistent financing of climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction difficult to manage (DI, 2019; UNICEF, 2023). Uganda has consistently suffered from poor service delivery due to weak institutions and limited oversight, particularly at the local government level (IPA, 2015). Accusations of corruption in the use of public funds are constant, with Uganda regularly scoring very low on the global Corruption Perception Index (CPI) surveys. For instance, there were scandals in the Office of the Prime Minister, where shillings 60 billion were embezzled. Shillings 340 billion was lost to fictitious pensioners in the Ministry of Public Service, equivalent to the total budget of the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry, and Fisheries in 2013/14 and approximately 3% of Uganda's total annual budget (Munyambonera & Lwanga, 2015; Kakumba, 2021).

In 2020 and 2021, according to Transparency International, Uganda's corruption perception index (CPI) was 27/100 (score) and 144/180 (rank). In 2020, a collation of civil society organisations (CSOs) known as the Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG) wrote a public letter to the Ugandan president complaining about the government's excesses and disregard of the proper procedures under the Public Finance Management Act.:

As civil society organisations, we are concerned about prudent public finance management practices. The PFMA requires Parliament to be transparent, accountable, efficient, and effective and ensure the sustainable utilisation of resources. There is no information available to indicate that the Budget Committee discussed and recommended this allocation (UGX 10bn) based on the report of the Budget Committee on the Supplementary Expenditure Schedule 2 Addendum 1 and 2 for FY 2019/20. This is concerning to citizens, as Parliament is the vanguard of checks against the misuse of funds by the Executive. The acts of stealthily allocating themselves 10 billion without discussion and details on accountability set a dangerous precedent and run contrary to the letter and spirit of the PFMA and the Constitution. (p. 2) (CSBAG, 17 April, 2020).

According to the government's own Inspector General of Government (IGG) report in 2019, Uganda loses a total of 9.144 trillion shillings to corruption annually, equivalent to 44% of the total government revenue that year (IGG, 2019).

3.3 Uganda's Disaster Risk Reduction Expenditures under the Sendai Framework 2015- 2030

In FY 2018/19, for instance, the Government of Uganda spent USD 16.7 million, equivalent to UGX 62.068 billion (UNDRR, 2022). An analysis of the budget allocations from FY 2016 to FY 2021 (see **Table 2**) reveals several important issues. First, direct disaster risk reduction spending is, on average, less than 1 (%) per cent of the total national budget, similar to at least sixteen other African countries (UNDRR, 2019). Thus, despite some progress in implementing disaster risk and climate change adaptation activities, Uganda still lacks a definitive, coherent, and systematic disaster risk reduction (DRR) investment policy.

This highlights an urgent need to increase direct disaster risk reduction spending in the country, ensuring that other investments towards the SDGs do not create new risks but rather build resilience (UNDRR, 2019). Second, there is insufficient information available about the effectiveness or financing of specific disaster risk reduction (DRR) components, such as climate change adaptation and local government DRR structures (district disaster committees), which are not directly funded by the government (DI, 2020). In essence, the government is still spending a substantial portion of the DRR budget on responding to and managing disasters rather than mitigating and reducing disaster risk in the country (MFPED, 2019). Third, expenditure fluctuates significantly between years and is not commensurate with current levels of risk and the pace of risk creation. Uganda lacks a robust multi-hazard early warning system and access to appropriate disaster risk information and assessments.

Table 2. Budget allocations and expenditures for disaster preparedness and refugees, 2016 -2021

| FY | Budget | Release | Expenditure | Supplementary |
|---------|--------|---------|-------------|---------------|
| 2015/16 | 20.53 | 25.74 | 23.21 | 5.21 |
| 2016/17 | 12.56 | 36.14 | 36.91 | 23.58 |
| 2017/18 | 11.9 | 13.14 | 13.12 | 1.24 |
| 2018/19 | 12.18 | 7.45 | 6.7 | 0 |
| 2019/20 | 128.68 | 187.6 | 165.34 | 58.92 |
| 2020/21 | 250.18 | 237.05 | 195.37 | 0 |

Source: MFPED Vote Performance reports, Financial Year 2016 – 2021. Figures in UGX billions.

3.4. Uganda's Compliance with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction

Concerning the Sendai Framework specifically, when Uganda's disaster risk reduction expenditures and investments for three years (FYs 2016/17 – 2018/19) were reviewed using the OECD DAC DRR risk-sensitive budget analysis formula, several important issues were revealed (OECD, 2017). First, only one institution in Uganda, the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), was found to have explicitly budgeted for strengthening disaster risk reduction (DRR) preparedness and response (termed 'principal' under the OECD DAC DRR formula) in the three financial years (FYs) reviewed. However, while there was no other budget item that explicitly mentioned 'disaster' in the three years, a total of 222 disaster risk reduction-related activities or projects (termed 'significant' under the OECD DAC DRR formula) were identified across other government ministries agencies and departments. Second, overall, the OPM had the largest number of projects with a DRR focus and received the largest share (35.9%) of principal DRR-marked investments over the three financial years. The Ministry of Health followed this with three sub-programs (11.2%), the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development with two projects (9.9%), the Ministry of Works and Transport with one project (10%), and the Ministry of Agriculture with one project (0.2%) (DI, 2019).

The low budget allocation to the agriculture sub-program (0.2%) within the overall DRR expenditure under the OPM is indicative of the low expenditures on the overall agricultural sector, as highlighted in the first part of this study. Thus, from a human rights perspective, the low budgetary allocations to disaster risk reduction, similar to those in the agriculture sector, are regressive

and not in compliance with Uganda's commitments under Priority Three of the Sendai Framework 2015–2030. Priority Three requires States to invest in disaster risk reduction to build resilience for vulnerable people, communities and the environment. The vulnerable communities living in disaster-prone areas in Bududa and Kasese districts and elsewhere require their basic livelihood needs to be prioritised as much as the government prioritises the luxury vehicles for the members of Uganda Parliament or ceremonial cars for the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the same institution, for instance (*Monitor*, 7 June 2022).

3.5 Disaster Risk Financing: Findings from Government Duty-bearers at National and Local Levels

This study also conducted key informant interviews with fifty-six (56) government officials and reviewed relevant secondary documents related to budgeting for disaster risk reduction. Within the human rights framework, the government is the principal duty bearer with a triple obligation to respect, protect, and fulfil human rights (ICESCR, Art. 2(1); ICCPR, Art. 2(1)). However, findings from field research indicate that the government has not yet shifted its outlook and response framework from *managing disasters* to *managing risk*, as required under the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. In terms of budgeting and financing disaster risk reduction in the country, gaps remain evident. The Minister for Relief, Disaster Preparedness and Refugees expressed this clearly at the launch of Uganda's National Risk and Vulnerability Atlas on 22 February 2021 in Kampala. While commenting on the budgeting for disasters, the Minister called for a dedicated budget to deal with disasters and stated the following:

“Currently, we operate on contingency funding, which is undefined. Now that we have scientific evidence of disasters, we should have a budget to be able to address the issues identified”.
H.O (22 Feb., 2021).

The Minister's assertion above was echoed by another government official in one of the line ministries thus:

“There is some money under the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM). However, we do not have a specific grant going to districts to handle disasters at the district level because the Office of the Prime Minister indeed handles all disasters...” N.D2 (10 Feb., 2020)

It is evident, thus, that the sub-national level of the government administration (Local Governments or Districts) does not get any budgetary allocations for disaster risk reduction. However, on paper, if not in actual practice, as many as 75% of the districts countrywide (CSBAG, 2018) have established District Disaster Management Committees (DDMCs), including Bududa and Kasese Districts.

However, these committees are essentially dormant as they cannot function effectively in their role as a mechanism for early warning and disaster preparedness without funding. Thus, when hazards such as landslides, floods, and mudslides occur, local governments are often helpless to intervene in any practical way beyond alerting the national authorities in Kampala. The affected districts must wait for the national disaster mechanism, the National Emergency Coordination Committee (NECOC), to intervene. This often delays, leading to the loss of additional lives and property. When asked about the local budgeting for disasters in Bududa District, one local official reported:

“As a district, I cannot say we have any adequate budget because the national government controls the budget, and there is nothing like having indicative figures for us on this side. So, I cannot lie to you that we know of the disaster budget...However, the budget is not there as far as I can see. The OPM manages the national budget, but they do not communicate the indicative figures to us, indicating which one is for which purpose. As far as we are concerned, we do not have a budget here...” BD 1 (8 July 2019).

Similarly, in Kasese District, an official working in the humanitarian response sector confirmed the same non-funding situation thus:

"I would say a hundred per cent there is no funding for disasters in the district. I have seen the district disaster management committee struggling because it lacks funding and support. One, the district lacks transportation to conduct assessments. One factor that has consistently hindered the district from producing timely assessment reports is the lack of transportation. I can give a scenario. It happened yesterday. One of the sub-counties experienced floods. There were calls of "please come and help us see what has happened" in the sub-county. However, there was no transportation to conduct an on-site assessment. So funding is one of the critical challenges. No fund or budget is put aside to facilitate the DDMC to assess emergency disaster incidents" KD 2 (12 Feb. 2020).

The impact of lack of funding on the local efforts by the District Disaster Management Committees (DDMCs) to ensure effective disaster risk reduction at the district level is enormous. One of the officials summarised it thus:

"The DDMC is supposed to have monthly meetings depending on the situation, but sometimes, there is a single meeting. Sometimes, it does not take place. The DDMC is not motivated. The DDMC is supposed to have about 25 members, but the whole DDMC rotates around only five people. Because others are not motivated. The DDMC is purely voluntary; only those who have the spirit of helping are the ones who fuel their vehicles and help". KD 3 (13 Feb., 2020).

Another Local Government official added the following:

"So, I will say that Kasese is not doing well in budgeting for the implementation of activities against these disasters. Today, you will put up a bridge or a road, but tomorrow morning, you will see it nowhere to be found. Therefore, we require a dedicated fund to address the issue of disasters. We will also examine the issue of managing preparedness, response, and recovery. All these stages need concerted efforts and resource allocation." KD 4 (11 Feb., 2020)

Thus, despite the financial and political powers extended to local governments to implement a multiplicity of activities in Uganda, local governments or districts are not directly funded to deal with disasters in their localities. This is a critical implementation gap. From both legal and practical perspectives, therefore, local governments should be at the forefront of addressing disasters in all their phases: preparedness, response, and recovery and reconstruction. This will only be possible if funding is devolved from the central (national) level and extended to these sub-national administrative units.

3.6 Civil Society Not Adequately Applying the Human Rights-based Approach in Budget Advocacy

The role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), specifically and civil society broadly, in the realisation of economic and social rights cannot be overstated. These groups have been instrumental in advocating for all categories of rights in Uganda, with remarkable results over the years (Renzio et al., 2006; Devlin-Foltz, n.d.). On budget advocacy, the Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG) is a coalition of activists credited with consistently highlighting social priority concerns in the national budget, particularly advocating for pro-poor budgets that prioritise the needs of the poor and vulnerable sections of the population. However, civil society activists need to adopt the language of the rights-based and capability approaches to achieve greater effectiveness in advocating for the needs of the poor, vulnerable, and marginalised sections of the population. The rhetoric of human rights as a robust legitimating discourse is undeniable, especially when emphasis is put on the legally binding obligations of States (Doz Costa, 2008). The current civil society's advocacy language lacks the legitimating appeal and power of human rights; in many ways, their language is similar, if not identical, to the government's income-centric approach, which continues to leave behind the poor and most vulnerable populations in Uganda's development trajectory.

4. Discussion

From the above analysis, it is evident that the Government of Uganda is unlikely to increase national budgetary expenditure on the agriculture sector to achieve the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Program (CAADP) target of 10% in the foreseeable future. This notwithstanding, at 3.6% public investment and expenditure on agriculture, Uganda's position is still significantly above the Sub-Saharan average of about 2.0% (World Bank, 2019). Overall, Africa's level of public expenditure on agriculture remains low, lagging behind that of other regions. Specifically, agricultural spending as a share of overall public spending (the indicator used in the Maputo/Malabo/Kampala Declarations/CAADP) is significantly lower in Africa than in other similar regions, particularly East Asia and South Asia. Since the adoption of the CAADP initiative in 2014, only four countries in Africa – Burkina Faso, Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe are on record to have achieved or slightly surpassed the 10% target budget expenditure on agriculture (World Bank & GOU, 2019). Additionally, only three countries (Niger, Rwanda and Zambia) have been close at 9%. There has been more regression than progress since 2014. By 2023, no African country was on track to achieve the CAADP goals and targets, particularly to finance 10% of the national budget for agriculture and to achieve an annual sectoral growth rate of 6% (4th CAADP Biennial Report, 2023).

4.1 The Nexus Between Food Security and Disaster Risk in Uganda

In Uganda, the frequency and severity of natural and human-induced hazards, such as droughts, landslides, floods, and earthquakes, significantly impact the livelihoods of substantial sections of the population (GOU, 2011; Rukundo *et al.*, 2014; ACAPS, 2018). In 2019, the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) estimated that annually, floods alone impact nearly fifty-thousand (50,000) people in Uganda, and over USD sixty-two (62) million in gross domestic product (GDP) is lost. Similarly, droughts affected 2.4 million people between 2004 and 2013. Between 2010 and 2011, drought conditions led to further losses, estimated at USD 1.2 billion, equivalent to 7.5 per cent of Uganda's 2010 GDP. In 2017, due to drought, the GDP from the agricultural sector decreased from UGX 3,257.83 billion in the third quarter to UGX 3,110.66 billion in the fourth quarter, severely impacting the livelihoods of many (MFPED, 2019).

Notably, there is a direct connection between disasters and food insecurity (FAO, 2013; Rukundo *et al.*, 2016). Climate-related hazards in Uganda, such as droughts, floods, landslides, and earthquakes, destroy agricultural, livestock, and food processing infrastructure, assets, inputs, and production capacity (Mertens, 2016). Hazards disrupt the food supply, decrease household incomes, deplete savings, and erode livelihoods. Katongole (2020) examines the role of disaster risk financing in building the resilience of poor communities in the Karamoja region in north-eastern Uganda. The Karamoja region is a semi-arid region with some of the most vulnerable and impoverished communities in the country, which are perennially affected by famines, droughts, and inter-ethnic conflict. This presents a relevant counterpoint to the landslide- and flood-prone Bududa and Kasese districts, respectively. However, the Government of Uganda's over-reliance on ex-post financing instruments, such as emergency releases of supplementary budgets and donor aid, is neither comprehensive nor sustainable for adequately managing the country's growing hazard profile (UNDP, 2024).

These climate-induced hazards and shocks inevitably lead to socioeconomic crises such as soaring food prices, famines, malnutrition and hunger that force the rural poor to sell their meagre assets, decrease food consumption, reduce their dietary diversity and access to safe and quality food (FAO, 2013; Rukundo *et al.*, 2016; MFPED, 2017). Food insecurity is a reality in Uganda: in 2017/2018, 13 per cent of the total population in the country was facing 'stressed food insecurity' (phase 2). An estimated 5.3 million people experienced 'acute food insecurity' (phase 2, 3), of which 440 821 (one per cent) were in crisis (phase 3), with minimally adequate food consumption (IPC, 2017). Thus, disasters create or exacerbate vicious cycles of poverty, increasing the prevalence of hunger, food insecurity, and general vulnerability (Rukundo *et al.*, 2016).

Disasters are increasingly being recognised as a function of poverty, vulnerability and exposure to a host of different hazards. Landslides and floods constitute the primary hazards with the most significant impact on the right to food in the Mount Elgon and Mount Rwenzori regions, where Bududa and Kasese districts are located. While complete data about the earliest landslide and flood fatalities in both districts are scanty or outright unavailable, earlier studies indicate an estimated 154 people were killed by landslides in the 20th century, with the years 1933, 1964 and 1970 being par-

ticularly disastrous in the Mount Elgon region (Knapien *et al.*, 2006; Staudt *et al.*, 2014). More current data indicate that from 2010 to 2012, over 500 people were killed in the Bukalasi sub-county on 1 March 2010, and on 25 June 2012, over 100 people were killed (Jenkins *et al.*, 2012) while on 11 October 2018, at least 66 people were killed in the same area (*Observer*, 2018; *New Vision*, 2018). On 5 June 2019, a major mudslide killed at least five people; 50 others were still missing, and 150 houses were destroyed (URCS, 2019). In the Rwenzori mountains, on the other hand, at least 56 people have been killed by landslides or flash floods in the last fifteen years (Kervyn *et al.*, 2017). In November and December 2019, heavy floods and landslides in the Bududa and Kasese districts left over 36 people killed, thousands displaced, and property destroyed (ACAPS, 2019).

Vulnerability to disasters is not just a natural phenomenon. Still, it is also attributed to unequal economic systems, limited access to resources, and a lack of voice in formal and informal governance institutions. Therefore, vulnerability to disasters is inextricably linked to power and powerlessness, as well as the governance systems in society (SAMHSA, 2017). In Africa, broadly, and in Uganda specifically, international and regional frameworks for tackling disaster risk reduction have not translated into a significant reduction in vulnerability (Manyena, 2016). While short-term progress has been achieved in mobilising communities for disaster risk reduction, the underlying vulnerabilities persist. A chasm exists between vulnerable local communities, district governments, and national policy technocrats in many instances, characterised by weak or unclear institutional mandates, inadequate capacity, and limited financial resources for disaster risk reduction (Rukundo *et al.*, 2016).

Thus, at the national level, while the government has designed a robust architecture to ensure that Ugandans enjoy the right to adequate food, the central challenge is effective implementation (NPA, 2017). The 1995 Constitution (as amended), particularly Objectives XIV and XXII, titled “National Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy” (NODPSP), explicitly requires the government to ensure that all Ugandans enjoy food and nutrition security. Similarly, Objective XXIII provides for the rapid activation of mitigation measures against natural disasters whenever they occur. Moreover, although Article 249 of the Constitution provides for the establishment of a National Disaster Preparedness and Management Commission, it is notable that the Parliament of Uganda has yet to adopt the relevant legislation to establish such a commission for over twenty years. In 2010, the Uganda Human Rights Commission recommended to Parliament for an urgent establishment of such an agency. Unfortunately, the government instead created a more politically expedient (and weaker) office of disaster preparedness under the OPM. In the majority of disaster events, this office is often financially constrained in responding effectively (UHRC, 13th Annual Report, 2010).

Moreover, a proposed Food and Nutrition Bill has languished in draft form for over a decade (since 2008). This important legislation, if ultimately adopted by parliament, would constitute a vital step in implementing several related policies, including the Uganda Food and Nutrition Strategy and Investment Plan (UFNSIP) and the Uganda Food and Nutrition Policy, among others. Equally important, the aggregate government expenditure on the agricultural sector (essential for food security) remains perennially below the international benchmarks agreed upon to ensure adequate food and nutrition security in the country (FAO, 2014; 2016). Similarly, investment in disaster risk reduction (DRR) is constrained: Uganda allocated, on average, 64% of total principal DRR investment to mitigation and prevention, 4% to preparedness, 6% to response and relief activities, and 26% to recovery activities. However, these investments have neglected to focus on developing disaster risk knowledge (Sendai Priority 1) or strengthening disaster risk governance (DI, 2019).

The failure to protect or adequately allocate sufficient financial resources to the agricultural and disaster reduction sectors, however, remains a challenge. From a human rights perspective, this omission is contrary to the principles of progressive realisation of economic and social rights, including the right to adequate food. Article 2(2) of the ICESCR commits States “to take steps, individually and through international assistance and co-operation, especially economic and technical, to the maximum of [their] available resources, to achieve progressively the full realisation of the rights recognised in the present Covenant by all appropriate means, including particularly the adoption of legislative measures”. This human rights principles of “progressive realisation” obligates governments to exponentially increase budgetary allocations to improve conditions for the realisation of

economic and social rights (CESCR, 1990). This would imply, concerning the government's budget, that financial allocations and expenditure on food security or disaster management should increase by at least the same rate as the overall budget. In effect, if the total government budget increases by 5 per cent from one year to the next, funding for food security and disaster management should increase by at least 5 per cent (OHCHR, 2017).

Moreover, the Sendai Framework Priority 3 on "Investing in Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience" enjoins countries to ensure "public and private investment in disaster risk prevention and reduction through structural and non-structural measures ...essential to enhance the economic, social, health and cultural resilience of persons, communities.... and their assets, as well as the environment" (Sendai Framework, para. 29). To the extent that the actual realisation of these multiple obligations is ignored or unfulfilled in Uganda (Rukundo *et al.*, 2014; 2016; NPA, 2017), the underlying reasons for this delinquency was examined about national public expenditure to understand its impact on the realisation of the right to adequate food of vulnerable communities impacted by disasters.

4.2 Poverty and Pro-Poor Budgeting in Uganda: The Case of the FY 2019/20 Budget

To understand the extent to which Uganda is committed to eradicating poverty and realising the right to adequate food and disaster risk reduction, it is necessary to examine the government's pro-poor budgeting credentials. As already indicated, despite a general decline in overall poverty levels over the last two decades, Uganda remains a poor nation term, and recent proclamations about attaining a middle-income status remain hollow. For instance, the president's public insistence on 8 June 2022 in the State of the Nation address that Uganda had achieved a "middle-income status" was met with scepticism by most economists and the general public. They pointed out the government's poverty figures, which indicated that more than 12.3 million in the country were still living below the official poverty line (MFPED, 2021).

The economy grew by only 3.1 per cent in FY 2019/20, which was significantly lower than the 6.8 per cent growth in FY 2018/19 due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, locust and flood disasters (MFPED, 2019); this is exacerbated by the absence a truly pro-poor budgeting framework in Uganda (DI, 2020).

To assess the government's pro-poor budget credentials, the following considerations are critical. First, the extent to which budget allocations/appropriations are consistent with the stated national poverty reduction strategies. Second, whether domestic revenue mobilisation measures (especially taxation) place a lesser fiscal burden on lower-income individuals and households. Third, how budget deficits are managed – while budget deficits are also a common element of most national budgets, debt is a cause of poverty as it diverts resources (money) that would otherwise be allocated to poverty eradication programs, welfare, and service provision. Fourth, a pro-poor-oriented budget should have clear budget lines or programs (such as social protection) aimed at boosting the welfare of the poorest and protecting them from economic shocks. Lastly, the issue of poverty reduction outcomes of related expenditure.

Although the scope of this article is limited, these issues are crucial in the overall assessment of Uganda's pro-poor orientation in national expenditure. And when all evidence is examined, there is little pro-poor orientation in national public expenditures in Uganda, contrary to its human rights commitments (DI, 2016; 2019; UPR, 2011, 2022). A pro-poor budgeting process that is democratic, open, inclusive, participatory, transparent, accountable, and responsive to the needs of the people, particularly the marginalised and vulnerable, is a human rights obligation (UN-DESA, 2005; OHCHR, 2012, 2017). While the Uganda government scores favourably on budget transparency processes (IPB, 2021), critical financial allocations to the sectors that would benefit the most vulnerable and marginalised sections of the population remain largely unrealised (DI, 2020; ISER, 2021; 2023).

Relevant illustrative evidence shows that the agriculture sector provides a source of livelihood for the majority of Ugandans. In 2019/20, the sector accounted for 72 per cent of total employment in the country. The sector also contributed 24 per cent of Uganda's Gross Domestic Product (UBOS, 2021). Admittedly, the government still views agriculture as a means to promote GDP growth and the

country's economic transformation, as outlined in Vision 2040, the NDP III, NDP IV, and other related policies. However, "there is limited understanding of the importance of the sector for 'food security', 'nutrition security', 'livelihood', 'agro-ecological/conservation', 'resilience' as well as 'social protection' functions in light of the rapidly increasing population and environmental challenges" (Pietschmann, 2019, p.10). For instance, despite being a crucial subsector for the structural transformation of the economy, agro-industrialisation is not yet sufficiently funded. In 2021, agro-processing and marketing accounted for only 12 per cent and 7 per cent of private-sector credit, respectively, according to Bank of Uganda statistics. In 2009, the African Development Bank identified inadequate financial resources as one of the core constraints to agro-industrial development in Uganda. A highly constrained financing environment limits innovations, high-tech interventions, and industrial expansion, all necessary ingredients for agro-industrialisation. For Uganda, even the available financing sources have not been supportive of sustainable agro-industrial development. For example, 83 and 78 per cent of firms use retained earnings to finance operations and fixed assets acquisition, respectively (EPRC, 2016; 2021).

Thus, viewing agriculture highly without increased budgetary allocations to the sector is counterproductive. The Poverty Action Fund (PAF) expenditure is low (at 7 per cent) in comparative terms to other sectors, yet the majority of people (54 per cent) live in rural areas and are subsistence farmers still living in poverty (DI, 2020; UBOS, 2020). Therefore, it is imperative to give a higher priority to the social protection and agriculture sectors and significantly increase their PAF expenditure allocations to reduce the vulnerability of the population, especially those in disaster-prone areas like Bududa and Kasese districts. The external debt constitutes 74 per cent of total debt against a target of 29 per cent. The optimal solution would be to increase resource mobilisation by expanding the current low tax base and, more importantly, to enhance efficiency in the use of public resources by effectively eradicating corruption loopholes and wasteful expenditures (DI, 2020; FAO, 2022).

5. Conclusions and recommendations

The findings in the study reveal that public investment and expenditure on agriculture and disaster risk reduction in Uganda is retrogressive and not in compliance with a rights-based approach standard "to use maximum available resources" for the progressive realisation of the right to adequate food stipulated under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights or risk-informed development under the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction (Priority 3). More broadly, the East African countries need to review, integrate, and align their disaster risk management and climate change adaptation laws, policies, and strategies to ensure that they reduce climate change impacts and exposure to people, whole communities, and the environment. This will require greater action and coherence at national and sub-regional levels in the implementation of the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework as well as the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Uganda, in particular, will need to fast-track efforts to ensure its disaster and climate-related legal, policy, and institutional frameworks are risk-informed in line with the Sendai Framework, making the approximately 50 million Ugandans safer and more resilient to disasters by 2030. To this end, while Uganda adopted a long-overdue climate-smart disaster law in 2021, the National Climate Change Act 2021 needs to be enforced with urgency to have a positive impact at the grassroots level, particularly in disaster-prone communities like Bududa and Kasese districts, which are home to many vulnerable people.

More specifically, it is noted that Uganda is vulnerable to multiple shocks and climatic hazards like droughts, floods, landslides, earthquakes, displacements and epidemics with increasing frequency and severity over the last twenty years. These disasters have had and will continue to exert a negative macroeconomic impact by eroding the country's development gains if not comprehensively addressed. Overall, the government still faces significant challenges without an effective national shock and hazard-responsive and social protection system. To ensure adequate protection of the right to adequate food for Uganda's rapidly growing population, the government will need to embrace a rights-based approach to food security by increased investment in the agricultural sector, in line with the African Union commitments under the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Program (CAADP). Allocating the CAADP target 10% of the national budget to the agricul-

tural sector will facilitate faster poverty eradication and higher productivity of the sector through climate-smart agriculture, wealth creation, food security and sustainable economic growth. Thus, sustainable agricultural practices and food systems, including both production and consumption, must be pursued from an integrated and rights-based perspective, in line with international and national human rights commitments in the Vision 2040, the National Development NDP III (2020/21 – 2024/25), the recently adopted National Development Plan IV (2025/6 – 2029/30), the Uganda Nutrition Action Plan II (2021 – 2025), among other strategies.

Therefore, it is pertinent that Uganda increases investment in the agricultural sector for higher food productivity as well as in disaster risk reduction in the face of increased climate-related disasters. The government must move away from empty rhetoric and make concrete efforts to fulfil its commitments under the Malabo, Abuja, Sendai Framework, and the Sustainable Development Goals, among others. The limited financial coherence in the national policies on disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation has to be increased in tandem with more effective implementation of agricultural policies. Higher investments in food security, health, social protection and environmental systems are also essential to building on the synergies towards a more efficient and effective food systems transformation agenda that will deliver adequate food for all and eradicate hunger.

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed both the global and national weaknesses inherent in the food systems. Climatic hazards like floods and landslides in Bududa or Kasese districts and epidemic shocks like COVID-19 across the country disproportionately impact the poor and worsen poverty. Uganda, therefore, faces the urgent need to not only recover from the severe impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic but also to strengthen its economic growth effort and get back on track to sustainably raise incomes, eradicate poverty and end persistent hunger in the country. To effectively finance disaster risk and climate change adaptation objectives, Uganda will need to put more focus towards investing in prevention against hydro-meteorological hazards, particularly floods and landslides in the Mount Elgon and Mount Rwenzori ecosystems. There is an urgent need to prioritise a shock-responsive social protection system in districts like Bududa and Kasese that have very high levels of vulnerability to disasters. The people's poverty and vulnerability are the evidence required to spur higher government financial investment to respect, protect and fulfil their right to adequate food and ensure effective disaster risk reduction.

The Local Governments or district-level authorities have a critical role to play as the primary responders in the event of disaster events. However, the findings of this study also reveal that disaster risk financing under the Local Governments (Districts) is either weak or non-existent. There are limited administrative and financial powers extended to Local Governments (Districts) for disaster risk reduction in Uganda. Thus, District Disaster Management Committees (DDMCs) at the district, county and sub-county remain largely underused and interactions between them are very limited. The lack of funding at the district level directed towards disaster risk reduction and preparedness has rendered the implementation of the District Contingency Plans highly impracticable. This also makes the DDMCs either helpless or ineffective in delivering their mandate in the face of disaster events and displaced populations in their midst. Thus, there is a need to empower Local Governments with adequate financial, technical and human resources for them to effectively fulfil their mandate as the primary responders in the disaster response architecture outlined in the national disaster policy adopted in 2010.

Finally, the Government of Uganda will need to be more intentional about the implementation of a rights-based approach to disaster risk reduction in the development process. This will involve integrating disaster risk reduction measures in the country's international human rights obligations, assigning specific roles and obligations to government institutions (like the Office of the Prime Minister) on the basis of human rights obligations or commitments, and ensuring that national disaster risk laws, policies and institutions are aligned to human rights standards. Furthermore, there is a need to mobilise the maximum available resources for food security and disaster risk reduction in line with international human rights commitments. This holistic program-based approach, if implemented in conjunction with a human rights-based approach, would provide a most conducive opportunity for a more inclusive and sustainable development effort against food insecurity, hunger and disaster risk reduction that leaves no one behind.

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