



# A Plan to Help Families in Uganda Support Themselves by Removing Barriers that Hold them Back

**What are the barriers that hurt families?**  
**What can be done to reduce and eliminate the barriers?**  
**What should the government, the Church, families,  
individuals, and others do?**

---

## **Prepared By:**

The Centre of Faith, Family and Justice  
P.O Box 150045 Mukono, Uganda  
Tel: +256760130120  
Email: info@cffj.or.ug  
Web: cffj.or.ug

## **Designed By:**

Wangutusi Arshton

## **Suggested Citation:**

Lwanga, M., Ijjo, A.T., Kabahizi, C.B., Mbabazi, C.,(2023) *A plan to help families in Uganda support themselves by removing barriers that Hold them Back.* Center of Faith Family and Justice.

©Center of Faith Family and Justice 2023.



## **Contributors:**

Martin Lwanga (PhD)  
Alex Thomas Ijjo (PhD)  
Cadreen Barungi Kabahizi  
Cynthia Mbabazi



**Suggested Citation:** Lwanga, M., Ijjo, A.T., Kabahizi, C.B., Mbabazi, C.,(2023) *A plan to help families in Uganda support themselves by removing barriers that Hold them Back*. Center of Faith Family and Justice.

**Key Words:** Barriers, Families, Uganda

**Title:** A Plan to Help Families in Uganda Support Themselves by Removing Barriers that Hold them Back

**Contributors:** Martin Lwanga (PhD), Alex Thomas Ijjo (PhD), Cadreen Barungi Kabahizi (MPP), Cynthia Mbabazi (MPP, MBA)

**Serial:** CFFJ Research Report 0123051

**Project Sponsor and Supervisor:** Jack Klenk

Published by Center of Faith Family and Justice in February 2023

©Center of Faith Family and Justice

Copyright© Center of Faith Family and Justice (CFFJ)

The Center of Faith, Family and Justice (CFFJ) is a Ugandan Christian Think Tank founded in 2021 to contribute to evidence-based policy, advocacy, and decision making. Our main focus is to investigate how the social, political and economic conditions of life affect faith, family and justice. We aspire to connect policymakers and citizens; and to build transformed, resilient, and integrated communities.

**Disclaimer:** The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of Center of Faith, Family and Justice.

Any inquiries can be addressed in writing to the Executive Director at the following address:

Center of Faith Family and Justice  
P.O Box 150045  
Mukono, Uganda  
Tel: +256760130120  
Email: [info@cffj.or.ug](mailto:info@cffj.or.ug)  
Web: [cffj.or.ug](http://cffj.or.ug)



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	04
INTRODUCTION .....	09
CHAPTER 1: Families in Uganda .....	11
The family is God's gift to humanity for human well-being.....	11
Too many families in Uganda are suffering economically.....	11
Why Christians must care about the plight of suffering families.....	12
Christianity is good for the well-being of families.....	12
What families in Uganda look like.....	13
1. Extended.....	13
2. High dependence burden .....	13
3. Insufficient skills .....	14
4. Rising female-headed families .....	14
5. Child-headed families .....	15
CHAPTER 2: Poverty and Vulnerability.....	15
Poverty is a complex issue with no simple solution!.....	15
1. Poverty rates .....	16
2. Rural and urban poverty .....	16
3. Vulnerable groups to poverty .....	18
CHAPTER 3: Approaches to Poverty Alleviation .....	18
An effective approach must recognize both that people have dignity and that they are flawed.....	19
Secular schemes that reject original sin, God, and the traditional family fail.....	20
Anti-poverty programs have flaws which limit their effectiveness.....	22
CHAPTER 4: A Better Approach; Remove or reducing barriers that hurt families in Uganda .....	22
A. What are the barriers that hurt families in Uganda? .....	22
1. Barriers caused by government practices and policies.....	22
a. Uganda's economic system is mostly-unfree. ....	23
b. Taxation levels are too high for the common man .....	23
c. The cost of credit is too high and unfriendly for the thriving of businesses .....	26
d. Government offices are rife with Bureaucracy .....	26
e. Producers suffer limited access to markets .....	27
f. Many Ugandans have low quality of education and shortage of skills.....	27

2. Barriers caused by cultural patterns .....	28
a. Communal land ownership in Northern Uganda does not allow settlers the freedom to invest on or use the land to advance their personal investments .....	28
b. Increasing consumerism in the middle and upper class .....	29
c. Declining Cultural Values and Foreign Cultural Influences .....	29
3. Barriers caused by engrained personal habits .....	30
a. Many lack of faith, suffer negativity and have a mindset of futility that keeps them disillusioned .....	30
b. Many do not know how to set goals, plan for, and implement ideas for their own development .....	30
c. Poor time management is part of Uganda's culture .....	31
d. There is a shortage of individual initiative for development, many are outward looking for help .....	31
B. Recommendations on how to remove or reduce the barriers that hurt families in Uganda .....	32
1. Suggestions for barriers caused by government practices and policies.....	32
a. Increasing Uganda's Economic Freedom .....	32
b. Increase the tax base and reduce the taxation rates .....	33
c. Lower the interest rates/cost of financing .....	33
d. Promote e-government to deal with bureaucracy .....	34
e. Increasing access to markets .....	34
f. Encourage vocational training to improve the quality of skills and education .....	34
2. Suggestions for barriers caused by cultural patterns .....	35
a. Encourage private property ownership in communities with communal land systems .....	35
b. Encourage mindset change and innovation instead of consumerism .....	35
c. Encourage the growth of cultural values, encourage patriotism encourage mindset change.....	35
3. Suggestions for barriers caused by engrained personal habits .....	36
Apply mindset change, mentorship, personal responsibility, resilience and Godliness for better personal habits.....	36
C. The role of stakeholders in removing the barriers .....	36
1. The Church .....	37
Government.....	37
3. Society and individuals .....	39

---

Chapter 5: Conclusion .....	39
EPILOGUE: A pilot proposal for the families in the Shea Industry in Lango Sub-region, Northern Uganda .....	40
Mindset change.....	40
Private property ownership .....	40
Improving market accessibility for the shea products .....	41
Flexible government regulations for the shea industry .....	41
REFERENCES .....	42

## PREFACE

Dear Friends in Christ,

It is my sincere pleasure to commend to you the paper on "A Plan to Help Families in Uganda Support Themselves by Removing Barriers that Hold them Back" prepared by the Center of Faith, Family, and Justice. The Center of Faith, Family and Justice (CFFJ) is a Christian Policy Think Tank founded in 2021 to offer evidence-based policy advice guided by biblical truth and principles.

CFFJ upholds deeply held values and purposes guided by Holy Scripture and the tradition of moral witness as expressed in the Church of Jesus Christ. It believes in the church and wants to support the ministry of the Bride of Christ locally, nationally, and globally through research and policy engagement.

I encourage you to read this paper, and to consider supporting the action points it recommends through the outreach activities of the organization. You can support through prayer, financial contributions, and any offerings of guidance and advice that you might have from your experience and insights. May the Lord bless you in all you do.

Sincerely in Christ,



Rev. Dr. Lawrence E. Adams  
International Director,  
Center of Faith Family and Justice.



Dr. Alex Thomas Ijjo  
National Director,  
Center of Faih Family and Justice

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*The family is God's gift to humanity for human well-being* He instituted the family when He created Eve as a helper suitable for Adam. He blessed the couple and told them to be fruitful, multiply, and to fill the earth. God meant for the family to be an orderly, peaceful and prosperous environment abounding with love, joy and forgiveness but also a source of spiritual, psychological, and other forms of shared support that make the members fruitful in God's plan on earth. After the creation, Scripture says that God saw that everything He created was good; indeed, it was very good!

*And yet too many families in Uganda are suffering economically.* They suffer challenges like low levels of income, low standards of living, unreliable forms of livelihoods, lack of education and skills, among others. Over 8.3 million Ugandans lived in poverty in 2020.

*Christians must care about the plight of the suffering.* God cares deeply for the poor and struggling and wants his people to do the same.

*Christianity is good for the wellbeing of families.* When people receive and live by the Gospel, their well-being generally improves. Studies have shown that economic growth responds positively to religious beliefs.

*Poverty is a complex issue with no simple solution.* Poverty has many dimensions and no quick fixes. The economies of any nation, whether rich or poor, are very complex, so are the reasons why one is rich and the other not.

*An effective approach must recognize both that people have dignity and that they are flawed.* Christian realism recognizes that we are all flawed, and all of us are damaged by our own faults and those of others around us. These factors must be taken into account to come up with effective solutions.

*What not to do! Secular schemes that reject or ignore original sin, God, and the traditional family fail.* Too often, plans to "eliminate" poverty and "solve" social ills fail. The failure has been greatest in secular utopian schemes that reject or ignore original sin, God, and the traditional family.

*Anti-poverty have flaws which limit their effectiveness* for several reasons. Firstly, fighting poverty is the wrong goal. Secondly, poverty is multidimensional, no one problem can solve it and systems problems need systems solutions. And thirdly, most anti-poverty programs are unsustainable by design. Thus their specific interventions are effective for only a short time.

**A better approach: Removing or reducing barriers that hurt families in Uganda.** ‘Barriers’ here refer to the obstacles or hindrances that prevent families from attaining decent levels of welfare, happiness and relationships.

Common barriers in Uganda include:

*Barriers caused by Governmental practices*

- i) Uganda’s economic system is mostly-unfree, with a freedom score of 54.2/100.
- ii) Taxation levels are too high for the common man, consuming about 15%-30% of his monthly earnings
- iii) The cost of credit is too high and unfriendly for the thriving of businesses
- iv) Government offices are rife with bureaucracy
- v) Government offices are ridden with corruption
- vi) Producers suffer limited access to markets
- vii) Many Ugandans have low quality of education and shortage of skills

*Barriers caused by Cultural patterns*

- i) Communal land ownership in Northern Uganda does not allow settlers the freedom to invest on or use the land to advance their personal investments
- ii) Declining cultural values and foreign cultural influences
- iii) Increasing consumerism in the middle and upper class

*Ingrained personal habits*

- i) Many lack of faith, suffer negativity, and have a mindset of futility that keeps them disillusioned
- ii) Many do not know how to set goals, plan for, and implement ideas for their own development
- iii) Poor time management is part of Uganda’s culture
- iv) There is a shortage of individual initiative for development, many are outward looking for help.

Recommended solutions to these barriers include:

*Barriers caused by Governmental practices*

i) Uganda's economic system is mostly-unfree, with a freedom score of 54.2/100- The Government should strengthen rule of law; and minimize impunity, corruption, military and political interference; Increase freedoms of trade, labor, and finance; and promote innovation

ii) Taxation levels are too high for the common man, consuming about 15%-30% of his monthly earnings- The Government should increase taxation base and lower taxation rates.

iii) The cost of credit is too high and unfriendly for the thriving of businesses- The Government should lower interest rates.

iv) Government offices are rife with bureaucracy and ridden with corruption  
- The Government should Promote e-government

v) Producers suffer limited access to markets- The Government should enhance the logistics infrastructure, spread market information, put in place flexible regulations for exports and promote ecommerce

vi) Many Ugandans have low quality of education and shortage of skills- The Government and Non-State actors should continue encouraging vocational training

*Barriers caused by Cultural patterns*

iv) Communal land ownership in Northern Uganda does not allow settlers the freedom to invest on or use the land to advance their personal investments- The Government should encourage private property ownership in communities with communal land systems

v) Declining cultural values and foreign cultural influences- The Church should encourage the growth of cultural values, encourage patriotism, encourage mindset change.

*Barriers caused by Ingrained personal habits*

v) Many lack of faith, suffer negativity, and have a mindset of futility that keeps them disillusioned.

vi) Many do not know how to set goals, plan for, and implement ideas for their own development

vii) Poor time management is part of Uganda's culture

viii) There is a shortage of individual initiative for development, many are outward looking for help

To solve these barriers; The Church should encourage mindset change and the application of Christian values. Family and individuals should apply mindset change, look for mentorship, take responsibility for personal development, and be resilient in innovation and business creation.

*Although*, we know that it may be beyond this paper to deal with systemic constraints like corruption, taxation and the cost of credit, it is important nonetheless to deal with them. The government, non-state actors, the Church and individuals, all together play a vital role in transforming Uganda.

In Conclusion, the recommendations we propose address the broad range of issues entailed in enhancing the wellbeing of families. The issues are multifaceted and require a diverse range of measures and interventions by individuals, families, communities, the State and Non-State actors. These have to act constructively and in a complementary fashion. It will then be possible to realize the kind of positive socioeconomic transformation in the society and the wellbeing of families that God intended for mankind.

### Epilogue

*For the communities lying in the Shea belt* (Lango Sub-region), and where the Shea plays an important role in the people's livelihoods, we further recommend the capacity building of shea industry players, mindset change, improving market accessibility for the shea products.

## INTRODUCTION

God instituted the family when He created Eve as a suitable helper for Adam (Genesis 2:18). He blessed the couple and told them to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth (Genesis 1:28). God's best for the family institution is for it to be founded on the lifetime union of one man and one woman in holy matrimony (Genesis 2:21-24). Scripture also shows that God meant for the family to be an orderly, peaceful, loving, and prosperous environment of worship, and nurturing children in reverence of the Lord (Ephesians 6:1-4; John 10:10; Proverbs 22:6).

The nuclear family is part of the bigger family of God or the "Church". Scripture makes several references to God being a loving Father and people as children of God (1Corinthians 12:13; Romans 12:10-13; Acts 2:42-47). The family in both concepts provides physical, emotional, social, economic, and spiritual support for its members and enables them to be useful and productive in God's plan on earth. God established the family as a foundational building block for strong and Godly societies. All other relationships are to stem from the family. Accordingly, after creation, the bible says, "God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Gen 1:31).

Despite God's wonderful plan for the family, too many families in Uganda face a myriad of challenges in attaining the welfare, dignity, and joy that God intended for them. These challenges include but are not limited to low levels of income, low standards of living, unreliable forms of livelihoods, lack of education and skills, sicknesses, conflict among others. About 8.3 million Ugandans continue to live under the national poverty line of \$1.04 per person per day.

Too often, these challenges have led to lack of faith, poor mental attitude and lack of fulfilling relationships with God and with neighbours. Given the numerous challenges facing families, there are important roles for the government, the church, non-governmental organizations, local communities and especially Christians.

As Christians, we are called to care for those who are suffering. God cares deeply for the poor and struggling and wants his people to do the same. In his first public sermon, Jesus said: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:16-19). He also said, "I was naked, and you clothed me, I was sick, and you visited me, I was in prison, and you came to me" (Matthew 25:31-46).

This project seeks to help families in Uganda who are struggling to support themselves because of barriers that stand in their way. It seeks to identify the barriers preventing families from attaining the wellbeing that God had intended for them, and come up with innovative ways of empowering families to achieve what God intends for them.

To that end, the study reviews the available information on the state of the family wellbeing in Uganda, closely engages with selected households in Uganda and identifies barriers hindering family economic wellbeing, analyses why secular anti-poverty programs fall short of God's best for the family, draws lessons for Uganda from the experience of other countries, and offers innovative recommendations for removing or reducing the barriers.

# CHAPTER 1: Families in Uganda

## The family is God's gift to humanity for human well-being

The family is the foundational institution of society ordained by God for sharing and nurturing life. It comprises people related by marriage, birth, and or adoption. The marital union of husband and wife provides both the environment and the responsibility for caring for the members of the family. Scripture provides ample guidance to parents and to children regarding how to care for one another (Ephesians 5:22-29; 6:1-9).

The importance of the family is such that virtues and vices developed in the family will eventually be amplified in the society. Studies show that families with both parents tend to fare relatively better in many ways but especially economically unlike families with single parents or child-headed families.<sup>1,2,3</sup> In general, two-parent families are better able to support each other in their effort to provide for the family as God intended. They tend to have relatively higher incomes than single or no parent families.<sup>4</sup> In Uganda, unfortunately, there are many single parent and child-headed families and many other families that are unable to adequately support themselves and achieve a decent standard of well-being.<sup>5</sup>

## Too many families in Uganda are suffering economically

In Uganda, families suffer challenges such as low levels of income, low standards of living, unreliable forms of livelihoods, lack of education and skills, and other hardships. They feel stuck and resigned to fate, and too often, these challenges have led to lack of faith, poor mental attitude and desperation.

These families are usually extended and polygamous in nature, with several members in almost every home. There is a certain and considerable proportion of female and child-headed families and too many families are unable to adequately support themselves and achieve a decent standard of well-being.

<sup>1</sup> Crothers (2012)

<sup>2</sup> Asmus & Grudem (2013)

<sup>3</sup> Davis (2013)

<sup>4</sup> Lerman et al. (2017)

<sup>5</sup> UNHS (2020)

Poverty in Uganda exists in both rural and urban areas partly because of high dependence on low-productive agriculture. The problem is not just for the very poor, but also for middle-income households who are at risk of falling back into poverty. The lack of safety net programs increases the vulnerability of families.

## **Why Christians must care about the plight of suffering families**

As Christians, we should and must care for those who are suffering. God cares deeply for the poor and struggling and wants his people to do the same. Jesus, in his first public sermon, said: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour" (Luke 4:16-19). He said, "I was naked, and you clothed me, I was sick, and you visited me, I was in prison, and you came to me" (Matthew 25:31-46). Jesus commands us to love our neighbor; this is the second great commandment, after the commandment to love God (Matthew 22:37-39).

When people receive and live by the Gospel, their well-being generally improves. Studies have shown that economic growth responds positively to religious beliefs. The Gospel does not say that people will be prosperous if they become Christians, but when the Gospel is received, people gain the faith required to deal with their challenges which in turn results into increased wellness. As C.S. Lewis famously put it, "Aim at Heaven and you will get Earth 'thrown in': aim at Earth and you will get neither."

## **Christianity is good for the well-being of families**

The call of the Gospel is not to get rich, and the Gospel is distorted if it is seen primarily as a utilitarian means of attaining material things. But when people follow the Gospel, their lives generally improve. When the Gospel is preached, the well-being of people generally improves. Economic growth studies supplement this. Barro and McCleary<sup>6</sup> stated that economic growth responds positively to religious beliefs, notably beliefs in hell and heaven, but negatively to church attendance. This implies that the effective impact of Christianity on economic growth is believing rather than just belonging to a Church because beliefs directly affect individual traits that could enhance economic performance.

---

<sup>6</sup> Barro & McCleary (2003)

Christianity bears fundamental teachings that are good for the well-being of families. The Bible teaches that “if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (1 Timothy 5:8). It also advises on hard work and honesty (Matt. 7:12), loving neighbors (Matthew 22:37-39), and caring for others (Ephesians 4:32). In 2 Corinthians we see Paul at work, teaching and exemplifying transparency, joy, good relationships, sincerity, reputation, service, humility, leadership, performance and accountability, reconciliation, working with nonbelievers, encouragement, generosity, timely fulfilment of obligations, and the proper use of wealth.

## **What families in Uganda look like**

### *1. Extended*

Families in Uganda, as in many other African countries, tend to be large, “extended” and often also polygamous. Participants in our focus groups attested to this – quote: “Families here are usually extended and large. In many cases we have the father, mother, children, brothers and sisters, in-laws, uncles, aunts, grandparents and other relatives living together (FGD 4-1)”. While the average number of persons in a family in Uganda is 5.47, it is not unusual to find families with 10 or more members just as there are also families with no children – usually regarded as misfortune in the African culture.

### *2. High dependence burden*

Family heads in many of the rural households therefore have the responsibility to care for not just the nuclear family but the extended family. This indicates high dependency burdens on family heads. The Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) estimated 92 dependents per 100 working-age population in 2019/20 – with higher level in rural areas(98) than in urban areas (76). Whereas large family sizes can benefit from more hands in household labor in the rural areas with land for cultivation, they represent a handicap in urban areas where families usually buy rather than grow their own food. The trend in viable livelihood forms discourages large family sizes particularly in urban areas.

### *3. Insufficient skills*

Many household heads are insufficiently skilled to join the formal labor force. Approximately half of the family heads in Uganda are aged 25-44 years and only possess a primary-level education (UBOS, 2021). Many of them make their living through casual labor and subsistence farming, often making modest incomes that are often inadequate. Families need additional skills that are relevant to the prevailing employment or entrepreneurial opportunities.

### *4. Rising female-headed families*

There has been a rise in female household headship over the three-year period from 2016/17 to 2019/20<sup>7</sup> signifying a shift in the traditional male-headed family structure and in some cases probably implying father absence and associated vulnerability. In most cases, female-headed households could be single-parent or polygamous families. It is worth noting that there has been an increase in poverty headcount of 0.3 million persons over the same period which appears consistent with this trend.<sup>8</sup>

### *5. Child-headed families*

Child-headed households also present a special group of vulnerable families. These are primarily the result of conflicts but also pandemics like HIV/AIDS and Covid-19. The Uganda National Household Survey (UNHS) (2019/2020) found that 0-17 year-olds headed 0.1% of the 13,000 households canvassed for the UNHS 2019/20. In situations of unstable economic circumstances and low levels of skills and education, the high dependency burdens, and single-parent families signify high levels of vulnerability.

---

<sup>7</sup> UDHS (2016)

<sup>8</sup> UBOS (2021)

## Chapter 2: Poverty and Vulnerability

### Poverty is a complex issue with no simple solution!

Asmus and Grudem<sup>9</sup> note the fact that poverty has many dimensions and no quick fixes. They identified up to seventy-eight factors embracing government economic policies, laws, cultural values and spiritual beliefs. They concluded that donations from wealthy nations, or redistribution of wealth within a nation cannot lead to a higher GDP. Blaming outside factors like Colonialism, among other things, does not help either. It is time to look away from the past unto the present and the future with the only focus being to produce more goods and services.

While economies of any nation, whether rich or poor, are very complex, so are the explanations of why one is rich and the other not. Therefore, one single solution will not be sufficient to lift a nation out of its poverty; however, a good place to start would be a workable economic system. One economic system that works is a free-market system, which is defined, “as one in which economic production and consumption are determined by the free choices of individuals rather than by government, and this process is grounded in private ownership of the means of production.” A brief look at eight other economic systems like subsistence farming, feudalism, and socialism and communism among others in history, shows that while some work better than others it is the free-market economy that overall is the best choice and best solution for nations grappling with poverty. “Free market” in the “Poverty of Nations” book means that it is the people and not the government that owns farms and businesses and where people are free to make economic decisions, under the rule of law.<sup>9</sup>

#### 1. Poverty rates

Uganda has a GDP per capita of \$817 in 2020 and is categorized as a least developed country by the World Bank.<sup>10</sup> As of 2019/20, 20.3% of the country – about 8.3 million Ugandans – lived below the national poverty line of \$1.04 per person per day.<sup>11</sup> The general trend in poverty headcount has been downward especially from the 1990s as shown in the figure below. The incidence of poverty is higher in the North and Eastern parts of Uganda than the rest of the country.

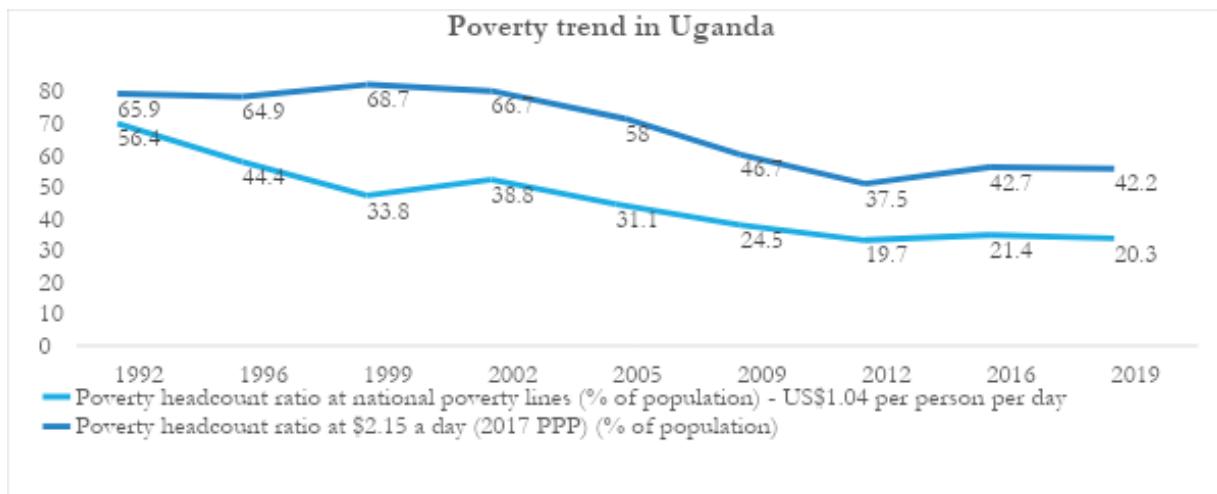
---

<sup>9</sup> Asmus and Grudem (2013)

<sup>10</sup> World Bank ( 2020).

<sup>11</sup> UNHS (2020)

## Figure 1: Trends in Uganda's Poverty Headcount



Source: Poverty headcount data from the World Bank Data.

### 2. Rural and urban poverty

Over a period of three years, (2017 - 2020), poverty levels in rural areas decreased by 2 percentage points while those in urban areas increased by 2 percentage points.<sup>12</sup> In urban areas, the challenges faced by the poor include overcrowding, lack of access to clean water, poor sanitation, unsafe shelter, social problems, and crime. Although there are notable incidences in urban areas, poverty remains largely a rural phenomenon in Uganda and is characterized by over-dependence on low-productivity subsistence agriculture.<sup>13</sup> There is therefore an urgent need to enhance the productivity of the poor to enable them produce enough for their own consumption but also for selling so as to earn additional household income. Asmus and Grudem state that commercialization of agriculture by producing more goods and services to cater for both subsistence and selling could eradicate poverty.<sup>14</sup>

### 3. Vulnerable groups to poverty

Owing to Uganda's economic conditions, 35% of Ugandans rely on their life savings, and 25% rely on their family. Social nets are lacking. This makes falling back into poverty highly likely for many people.<sup>15</sup> Hence, vulnerability levels are quite high. The main categories of the poor and vulnerable in Uganda include

<sup>12</sup> Zerbo, Delgado, & González (2020).

<sup>13</sup> UBOS (2021)

<sup>14</sup> Asmus & Grudem (2013)

<sup>15</sup> Hurtt (2017)

<sup>16</sup> UBOS (2014)

<sup>17</sup> Dinkelman, Lam, & Leibbrandt (2008)

orphans, child-headed households, street children, persons living with disability (PWDs), female-headed households, widows, older people and their dependents, and landless peasants.<sup>16</sup> Youth unemployment has risen greatly – increasing the vulnerability of youth to poverty. Adolescent girls and young women as a result tend to look for alternative sources of income often getting involved in sexual relations for money and running the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS and related diseases.<sup>17</sup> A local council participant in Kawempe division stated that “We have over 50 teenagers and youths here between the age of 12-25 years who got pregnant during the pandemic. Many of these girls have dropped out of school. (FGD 1)”.

#### *4. Poverty contributes to violence in families*

Poverty is usually seen in terms of the family’s inability to provide the basic requirements such as food, water, shelter, clothing, education and others. While poverty in families does not cause conflict and strife –otherwise all poor people would exhibit such behaviours, which is not the case– it contributes to the challenges associated with sharing meagre resources. In many instances, poverty is accompanied by self-defeating habits such as alcoholism, domestic and or gender-based violence and family feuds. A participant in our FGDs reported:

“The biggest challenge we have in our families is lack of food. As a result of the lack, many family members end up fighting. Poverty is causing violence in the home (FGD 3-2)”. “Domestic violence due to poverty is still a rampant problem. This happens because of limited resources to share for large households. (KII 3)

---

<sup>16</sup> UBOS (2014)

<sup>17</sup> Dinkelman, Lam, & Leibbrandt (2008)

## CHAPTER 3: Approaches to Poverty Alleviation

**An effective approach must recognize both that people have dignity and that they are flawed.**

Respecting the dignity of people in need means using approaches that bring love and teach God's ways; and that promote spiritual well-being, self-responsibility, willingness to help oneself, independence, confidence, healthy relationships, positive attitudes, and having tools for coping with challenges. Additionally, Christian realism recognizes that we are all flawed, and all of us are damaged by our own faults and those of others around us. These factors must be taken into account to come up with effective solutions.

Yet too often, programs for the alleviation of poverty benefit those who run the programs more than they help the people for whose benefit the programs are supposed to exist. Dambisa Moyo states that foreign aid payments made directly to developing governments, either through government-to-government transfers or through agencies such as the World Bank, did not produce results for poor people but instead made them poorer<sup>18</sup>.

To effectively address poverty, we start with recognizing that people are made in God's image (Genesis 1:27) and therefore have value and dignity no matter their circumstances. Respecting the dignity of people in need means using approaches that bring love and teach God's ways; and that promote spiritual well-being, self-responsibility, willingness to help oneself, independence, not feeling like victims, healthy relationships, positive attitudes, and having tools for coping with challenges. It is not enough to just give people money; people have to be shown how to work hard to get the money for sustainability.

While people are made in God's image, at the same time they are damaged by sin (Psalm 51:5, Romans 3:23, Romans 5:12). Christian realism recognizes that we are all flawed, and all of us are damaged by our own faults and those of others around us. Sin is a universal problem that to one extent or another affects all aspects of our lives, individual and social. It is true for everybody, those who suffer economically, those who are prosperous, and those who devise and operate schemes to help people in need.

In a fallen world where all people are wounded by sin, perfection is not possible. There is no utopia (“utopia” literally means “no place”). As Jesus himself said, “The poor you will always have with you” (Matthew 26:11). This does not mean we give up or are fatalistic, it means we approach the problem with realistic expectations and employ approaches that are most likely to work and not create other problems.

## **Secular schemes that reject original sin, God, and the traditional family fail**

Too often, plans to “eliminate” poverty and “solve” social ills fail. The failure has been greatest in secular utopian schemes that reject or ignore original sin, God, and the traditional family. There have been secular utopian schemes for creating new societies based on ideologies that rejected original sin and believed that human nature was good (or that it was plastic and could be changed). And their results have been calamitous! “For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools” (Romans 1:21-22).

The failure has been greatest in secular utopian schemes that reject or ignore original sin, God, and the traditional family. Such schemes often treat the traditional family as an obstacle to social progress and an authoritarian and patriarchal relic of the past, rather than what it is: a priceless gift from God which we all have an obligation to protect. Certain donor organizations, while promoting family planning, also promote abortion and in so doing participate in gruesome termination of precious lives, and denial of the opportunity to raise children in fear of the Lord, not to mention the guilt and trauma that continues to haunt the would-be mothers for life<sup>19</sup>. These external actors are usually well-funded, aggressive and unapologetic in their pursuit of these vanities. The fact is that all these are deceptions and not real answers to poverty and underdevelopment because there is no excellence without right living.

There have been secular utopian schemes for creating new societies based on an ideology that rejected original sin and believed that human nature was good

---

<sup>19</sup> Klasen, Bevan, Grimm et al. (2004)

Such schemes have failed again and again, even when they prided themselves as being “scientific” and, as in the Soviet Union and other countries, those in command had unlimited, totalitarian government power to compel acquiescence to their schemes. Rejecting original sin, they, in whole or in part, rejected God and his will for society as revealed in the Bible. In democratic as well as totalitarian countries, social welfare policies have been based on secular principles that ignored or were hostile to the traditional family. The results have been calamitous. “For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools” (Romans 1:21-22).

## **Most anti-poverty programs do not succeed in bringing people out of poverty because of flaws which limit their effectiveness**

Most anti-poverty programs don’t succeed in bringing people out of poverty. A study of 60,000 people in 15 countries found that fewer than 1% of people who moved out of poverty attributed it to the anti-poverty programs.<sup>20</sup>

Efosa Ojomo of the Christensen Institute observes that “it is clear that anti-poverty programs are rarely successful at actually fighting poverty and creating economic independence.” He gives three reasons why so many anti-poverty programs fail rather than succeed: Firstly, fighting poverty is the wrong goal. Programs should be aimed at creating prosperity. Secondly, “most anti-poverty programs are too focused on solving a particular problem, like access to water, education, health, and so on. But poverty is multidimensional, no one problem can solve it and systems problems need systems solutions.” And thirdly, “most anti-poverty programs are unsustainable by design most don’t have the sustainability mechanism built into them.” Thus most anti-poverty programs, no matter how well-intended, fail to bring people out of poverty.<sup>21</sup>

In many cases government-led anti-poverty programs tend to be top-bottom in nature and are not really “owned” by the affected persons. Lack of ownership of the programs seems to be part of the reason why they have had limited effects.

---

<sup>20</sup>Narayan et al (2009)

<sup>21</sup> Efosa Ojomo 2021, <https://www.christenseninstitute.org/blog/three-reasons-anti-poverty-programs-dont-work-and-how-theres-a-better-way/>  
[utm\\_source=GP%20Digest&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=September](https://www.christenseninstitute.org/blog/three-reasons-anti-poverty-programs-dont-work-and-how-theres-a-better-way/?utm_source=GP%20Digest&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=September)

Also, many of the intricacies of coming out of poverty cannot be anticipated from the comfort of a leader's office, hence the inappropriateness of a purely top-bottom design of anti-poverty programs. It is crucial for affected persons to be involved in the conceptualization and implementation of the transformation process. This way they are able to respond to issues that arise, in real time.

Since the early 1990s, the Government of Uganda has been involved in massive poverty eradication programs. Whereas there has been some notable progress in reducing poverty from 56% in 1986, the poverty level continues to stagnate 20%.<sup>22</sup> This creates the need for us to ask why massive well-funded programs have limited success. Several respondents relay this concern:

"I speak as a boda-boda rider. The government hasn't given us any significant help. However, we resorted to starting small savings groups where we raise funds and support each other even though prices of commodities such as fuel and other items have kept rising."

"The government has started a series of projects to help the citizens. However, these projects are selective. Those at high levels of management within the project structures access and use the finances rather than the targeted groups of vulnerable citizens languishing in poverty. (FGD 1)"

"I was elected to represent the women at the LC1 in my zone. We haven't benefited from any government programs. Some elderly women seek help from us, but we are constrained due to limited finances to help. The elderly people at the grass roots haven't benefited at all. (FGD 2)"

---

<sup>22</sup> UBOS (2021)

## **CHAPTER 4: A Better Approach: Remove or reducing barriers that hurt families in Uganda**

Rather than relying on anti-poverty programs to solve economic hardship in Uganda, we think a better approach would be to remove barriers that prevent families from supporting themselves.

Barriers can hurt families directly and indirectly. Direct barriers are obstacles that directly limit the ability of *families themselves to start and grow businesses and otherwise engage in entrepreneurship*. Indirect barriers are obstacles that *indirectly hurt families by limiting the ability of others to start and grow business that would help families*. If businesses do not start and grow, they don't provide families with employment, goods and services, and do not create innovations that would benefit families.

In the context of the family, a barrier is used to refer to obstacles or hindrances that prevent families from attaining decent levels of welfare, happiness and relationships. Barriers are of different types and vary from region to region or from family to family. This means that interventions to alleviate the effect of barriers have to be specific to the nature of the hindrance and the specific circumstances of respective families. Given the complex nature of these hindrances, there is need for innovative solutions with collective effort of all stakeholders to help families overcome these barriers.

### **A. What are the barriers that hurt families in Uganda?**

#### *1. Barriers caused by government practices and policy*

##### **a. Uganda's economic system is mostly-unfree.**

In 2022, Uganda earned a freedom score of 54.2/100. Uganda's economic system suffers poor fiscal health, low labor freedom, low trade freedom, very low government integrity, very low judicial effectiveness, low property rights and low business freedom. Such an environment does not support the thriving of businesses.

As earlier stated by Asmus and Grudem, the economic freedom of individuals is

a very strong motivating factor for individual enterprise, economic growth and ultimately prosperity of the societies. This “Economic liberalism” is a distinctive characteristic of free and competitive market economic system.

Uganda professes to be a free-market economy that is private sector led and export-oriented and friendly to foreign direct investment (FDI). Although this ideology is in line with the recent success stories especially in East Asia, numerous challenges still remain in the case of Uganda. These include weak institutions and political interferences, and supply-related infrastructural constraints that hamper the smooth functioning of the market economy. In addition to the supply side constraints, there is lack of social safety nets for the very poor, marginalized, elderly, disabled, and minorities since the country does not have any welfare system especially for the informal sector.

#### **b. Taxation levels are too high for the common man**

Taxation consumes about 15%-30% of the common man’s earnings. This occasionally proves to be too high for the success of a business. The majority of the business traders we interacted with commented that taxation reduced their profits considerably and that they could barely survive or reinvest in their businesses.

“The biggest issue is that small businesses are not supported, and the high tax levels can inhibit someone’s starting and doing everything correctly right from the beginning. So, you find that a lot of small businesses sort of dodge taxes. (KII 2)”

When taxation is too high, the damage can be both economic and moral. There is economic damage if economic activity is stifled and people are kept in poverty and distress. There is moral damage if people resort to tax evasion and political favoritism, when they practice and accept corruption. One commentator writes that “it is very difficult to break even in business in the present Ugandan economy if one pays one’s taxes in full” and “Without tax evasion, without corruption in other words, at least 95 percent of present Ugandan businesses will fold.”<sup>23</sup> He relates that a businessman told him that to be successful in business in Uganda, “You either evade taxes or you must have a political godfather.”

---

<sup>23</sup>

<https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/magazines/people-power/why-do-ugandans-tolerate-corruption-4200202> 23

The Table 1 below shows the different taxes and fees individuals and businesses are obligated to pay in Uganda.

**Table 1: Taxes and Fees**

Tax	Range/Rate	Payer
<i>Domestic Tax Revenues</i>		
Presumptive tax	0.4% to 0.7% of gross sales	Small business owners
Individual Income tax	10% to 40% of profits	Business owners
Corporation tax	30% of profits	Companies
Pay As You Earn	10% to 40% of salary	Employees
Rental Tax	25% of rental income - interest on mortgage	Property owners
Value Added Tax	18% of product cost	Consumers and producers
Gaming Tax	20% of revenues	Companies
<i>Customs Tax Revenues</i>		
Excise Duty	From Ugx 200 per litre to Ugx 200,000	Importers/Producers
Import Duty	25% of Item cost	Importers
Infrastructural Levy	1.5% of Item cost	Importers
Environmental Levy	50% of Item cost	Importers
<i>Non-Tax Revenues</i>		
Licences and registration	Ugx 5,000 to over Ugx 365,000,000,000 yearly	Businesses and individuals

The Table 2 below shows the scores of the ease of doing business computed from the indicators of business climate for a selected set of countries. Uganda scored 57.06 out of 100 and was ranked number 127 out of 190 countries in 2019 (World Bank 2019).

**Table 2: Selected Business Environment Indicators**

	Overall Ease of Doing Business Score (out of 100)	Rank out of 190 countries	Average lending Interest rates	Corporate Tax rates
Uganda	57.06	127	19.8	30
Kenya	70.31	61	16.5	30
Rwanda	77.88	29	16.2	30
Mauritius	79.58	20	8.5	15
Tanzania	53.63	144	14.2	30
Nigeria	52.89	146	11.5	30
Botswana	65.40	86	6.3	22
Ghana	59.22	114	16.5	25
South Africa	66.03	82	9.8	28
Singapore	85.24	02	4.3	17

Source: World Bank, 2020.

The official corporate tax rate in Uganda is 30% as in many low-income countries. It is worth noting that this tax rate is higher than in high-performing countries like Singapore, Mauritius, and Botswana. In addition to the high tax rates, Uganda has a narrow tax base and the large informal sector that is difficult to assess for taxation. Hence, the formal sector tends to bear the brunt of Uganda's full range of taxation that includes, value-added-tax at 18%, pay-as-you-earn at 10%-40%, and others such as customs duties, property taxes, stamp duties, payroll taxes, environmental levies (20% on motor vehicles that are eight years old or older), property tax, and indirect taxes at varying rates.<sup>24</sup> This leaves most citizens with less disposable income to invest or grow innovative businesses.

24

<https://www.tradeclub.standardbank.com/portal/en/market-potential/uganda/taxes#>

More so, tax corporate incentives are skewed toward foreign rather than domestic investors. Uganda's investment Code grants generous tax holidays to large foreign investors with high value-added production, export and job creation potentials in comparison to domestic investors. The level of support for domestic entrepreneurs especially small and medium enterprise owners seems generally lower with business start-up challenges as reported by the World Bank's ease of doing business indices.

#### **c. The cost of credit is too high and unfriendly for the thriving of businesses**

The cost of credit in Uganda is much higher than that in the region and the rest of the continent. Average lending rates in Uganda are nearly 20% per annum. On the other hand, countries like Mauritius have much lower lending interest rate of about 8.5% per annum and have put in place efficient business start-up processes involving only a few steps that are also available online. For example, Mauritius developed an efficient 4-step procedure for starting up businesses compared to Uganda's 13 steps. Finally, the cost of starting up a business is also much less in Mauritius than in Uganda.

#### **d. Government offices are rife with Bureaucracy**

Bureaucracy provides an opportunity for corruption which cripples innovation and productivity. Some respondents asserted that the certification procedures are tedious and costly for those that travel long distances to get government services. This leads them to give bribes for quick results or give up on the matter altogether. Corrupt public officials that take advantage of the bureaucracies deny poor households the opportunity to get out of poverty due to the resulting poor services delivery. The poor have to surrender their last penny to a corrupt official or end up not receiving a service. Uganda is reported to lose nearly 2 trillion shillings to corruption annually<sup>25</sup>.

#### **e. Government offices are ridden with Corruption**

Corruption is one of the major challenges facing Uganda. In the public sector and among politicians this problem is not only endemic but systemic. On regular basis, cases of embezzlement of huge sums of public funds are reported. Corruption consumes about 1/5 of Uganda's government revenue and mainly benefits the rich<sup>26</sup>, it stifles economic growth and hurts the poor. There

---

<sup>25</sup> [Okello \(2020\)](#)

<sup>26</sup> [Saxton, Jared \(2022\) "Corruption in Uganda," Ballard Brief: Vol. 2022: Iss. 2, Article 2 retrieved from <https://ballardbrief.byu.edu/issue-briefs/corruption-in-uganda>](#)

There are cases of payment of ghost beneficiaries; public and private land grabs; inflated government procurement budget (for example during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Uganda); Inflated public infrastructure costs and many others. Uganda is regularly ranked as one of the most corrupt countries in Africa, scoring 27% on its Corruption Perceptions Index in 2022<sup>27</sup>.

#### **f. Producers suffer limited access to markets**

The role of markets is critical to a vibrant economy. Access to larger markets enables businesses to produce more goods and services and contribute to employment and economic growth. Poor logistical infrastructure – transport and shipping, lack of market information, rigid regulations for exports and long procedures limit market access for businesses. A participant stated that

“Our biggest challenge is the middlemen. They come to farmers and buy shea at very low prices, and then they go and make money from selling the shea. Then they block our other customers, the potential buyers who would come to buy shea. If there is a way to help the farmers connect them directly to the buyers, which would be very helpful. (FGD 3-2)”

#### **g. Many Ugandans have low quality of education and shortage of skills**

Education and training represent a key requirement in delivering inclusive and equitable growth and development in society. Uganda has put in place Universal Primary Education (UPE) and Universal Secondary Education (USE). However, the quality of the education remains questionable. Thus, while there is access to basic education the literacy levels of the children in these schools are generally low. In addition, Uganda has a dual school system with private schools that provide generally better-quality education than the public UPE and USE school. The private are however more expensive and largely inaccessible to low-income households than the public UPE and USE schools. This dual system tends to perpetuate the quality divide in education and ultimately income inequality in the country. It is the responsibility of government to address the problem of the quality of education and the duality of the system.

This rate of literacy in Uganda is still lower than the target rate set by the

---

<sup>27</sup><https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/uganda>

This rate of literacy in Uganda is still lower than the target rate set by the sustainable development goals. Education is the instrument for developing the requisite level of human capital for economic growth. Uganda's human capital index (HCI) measured on a scale of 0-1 was 0.4 in 2017<sup>28</sup>. This means that a child born in Uganda today will only attain 40 percent of his or her productivity that is possible with complete education and full health. The challenge is to raise the productivity to its full potential level by providing the requisite educational opportunities and appropriate health care.

Additionally, the lack of practical skills limits families from attaining descent levels of welfare. These skills are usually acquired through vocational training, internships and apprenticeships. The genesis of this problem is partly the inadequacy of practical skills-oriented vocational training institutes in the country. Uganda's educational system is largely oriented toward creating graduates for white collar rather than blue collar jobs.

## *2. Barriers caused by cultural patterns*

- a. Communal land ownership in Northern Uganda does not allow settlers the freedom to invest on or use the land to advance their personal investments

According to Asmus and Grudem, private ownership of property greatly enhances the ability of entrepreneurs and business owners to acquire capital through loans. However, in Uganda, many families in rural areas still live use customary/communal land, and for many who own their land, few possess the official documentation, i.e., land titles, which would be used to get loans. Furthermore, the majority of the land in rural areas is jointly owned by relatives because of inheritance and land fragmentation. A key informant shared that, "There are many land wrangles in society because of population pressure (three-quarters of young prisoners (18-35) are in jail because of land wrangles). KII 3". Additionally, private property registration in Uganda is an expensive and lengthy process with little information on the procedures available for the layman.

---

<sup>28</sup>

World Bank (2022)

### **b. Increasing consumerism in the middle and upper class**

Contrary to Asmus and Grudem's recommendation of continuous production of more goods and services per person each year in order to reduce poverty, Ugandans consume more than they produce. We are consumer-driven. We mostly produce to consume and not produce for sale. In the 2019/20 Uganda national household survey (UNHS) report, it was observed that the distribution of poor persons follows a similar trend to households in the subsistence economy i.e., production for consumption. A high consumption culture discourages savings for investment, leading to prolonged poverty.

### **c. Declining Cultural Values and Foreign Cultural Influences**

In Uganda, many traditional cultural norms mirror conservative Christian moral values. This includes things like respect for parents and the elderly, heterosexual marriages, love and care for family members, and many others. These values are however increasingly being undermined through the excitement and euphoria of questionable modernization. For example, informal education or oral tradition used to provide opportunities to pass cultural values from one generation to the next<sup>29</sup>. This is increasingly being undermined by many factors. An instance of this is the 'Ekisakaate' of the Baganda, in which girls are taught about their traditional roles and responsibilities in family and society, but which is being gradually eroded and abandoned.

In the current era of globalization and especially its cultural component, the family in Uganda continues to receive strong influences of both positive and negative foreign cultures. One of these negative influences targeting the traditional family, for example, is the onslaught of gay and lesbian agenda in the country<sup>30</sup>. This is arguably one of the most insidious attacks on the family as God envisaged. Procreation is possible only through the union between male and female human beings. The proliferation of this alternative lifestyles grossly undermines the institution of the family. This will inevitably also undermine all the other aspects of the family wellbeing as it represents a violation of God's fundamental principle of human welfare. Foreign influences also eclipse other traditional practices like blacksmith, traditional tools and crafts and even

---

<sup>29</sup>Otiso (2006)

<sup>30</sup>Wan (2014)

languages. A key informant observed this as: “Foreign culture has killed local innovation – expecting things instead of creating things. We used to make our own tools and even toys for children rather than buy them from supermarkets!” (KII 3). Thus, a major part of the short fall in family wellbeing is therefore the erosion of conservative Christian family values that accompanies the secular humanism of cultural globalization.

### *3. Barriers caused by ingrained personal habits*

#### **a. Many lack of faith, suffer negativity, and have a mindset of futility that keeps them disillusioned**

One of the most important aspects of wellbeing is the state of a person’s mind, that is, their mental attitude. The Bible attests to this in several places (Proverb 17:22; 15:13; 12:25; 18:14; 2Corinthians 7:10; Romans 5:2-5; Ecclesiastes 9:7-9; Psalm 102:3-5; 2Corinthians 2:7; Psalm 32: 3-4; 22:15). Many families in Uganda, however, tend to lose sight of this fact due to the numerous challenges and discouragements they experience in the world. This leads them to resort to substance and alcohol abuse. There are many families with negative mental attitudes and fatalism about their circumstances and they tend to believe that poverty is their lot in life! Indeed, some even proudly refer to themselves as “poor” and often go ahead to name their children after suffering or misfortune!

Additionally, the attitude of futility that is not uncommon among low-income families in Uganda. This mindset seems to be fuelled by the difficult circumstances of their existence and the absence of success stories to emulate. Their environment is made up of similar conditions of lack and deprivation and low living standards with no great community examples. In addition to the scanty success stories and role models, many families lack the vision, practical knowledge, information, and commitment to confront their circumstances and strive for positive change. In other cases, even where families have the desire to improve their circumstances, there is often a lot of discouragements and obstacles from their environment.

#### **b. Many do not know how to set goals, plan for, and implement ideas for their own development**

Through participant observation, we have also noticed that even where families do acknowledge role models that are worthy of emulating and even where they

are willing to do so, most often they do not have the skills and capability to define goals clearly and design strategies to attain the goals. This problem merges with the low levels of education and training among family members in Uganda. Proverbs 29:18 says without a vision, the people perish or “cast off restrain”, is relevant here. There is no clear, and compelling motivation for efficiency and productivity.

c. Poor time management is part of Uganda's culture

Partly due to lack of strong motivating goals, another related problem facing many Ugandan families is poor time management. Many individuals and families tend to be laid back and wasteful in managing time. Lack of compelling life vision and goals that motivate people and make them plan and devote time to attaining the goals appears to be part of the problem. The Ugandan society is replete with so many practices that show poor time management. These include failure to report for work on time, time consuming social engagements such as social visits, weddings, funerals and related functions that take unnecessarily longer than they do elsewhere! Many people tend to be laid back and take their time to perform these functions. In general, there is little sense of urgency and effort toward productivity.

d. There is a shortage of individual initiative for development, many are outward looking for help

In Uganda, most citizens have mindset that heavily relies on the public sector intervention which expects the government to provide the solutions to development. This is largely because citizens have not been empowered to take developmental initiatives that can benefit them or their communities. They heavily rely on government and donor handouts that have crippled their creative minds. The government is partly responsible for this mindset because they have always positioned themselves as the “life savers, i.e., give cash handouts, implement anti-poverty programs with no community or citizen participation, police officers threatening citizens, etc. Citizens lack information to guide them and often fear government regulation and giving bribes in case they take personal initiative for development, for example when constructing a feeder road, cross border trade, etc.

## B. Recommendations on how to remove or reduce the barriers that hurt families in Uganda

The government, non-state actors, the Church and individuals, all together play a vital role in transforming Uganda. Following are suggestions for barriers caused by government practices, cultural patterns, and ingrained personal habits; and recommendations for Church, government, society and individuals). Some barriers may be systemic and more difficult to remove or reduce, while others may be easier and quicker to change (“low-hanging fruit”). Jesus commands us to love our neighbour (the second Great Command). With the suffering that barriers are causing to families, the need is to aim high, start somewhere, and persist.

### *1. Suggestions for barriers caused by government practices and policy*

#### a. Increase Uganda's Economic Freedom

In a free market system, one is rewarded for the fruit of one’s labor. Asmus and Grudem<sup>31</sup> emphasize that a major factor that is necessary for a free market to thrive is the rule of law. All human beings are created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26–27; 9:6; James 3:9), and therefore should have equal rights before the law. Sadly, in Uganda, a small group of rulers have superior rights to dictate everyone else’s economic decisions. Corrupt governments often interfere with the rule of law, the establishment of transparent civil institutions and the protection of civil liberties, which makes both domestic and foreign investment in countries like Uganda unattractive<sup>32</sup>.

Uganda already has excellent laws against theft, fraud, the violation of contracts, and the sale of defective and dangerous products however, the rule of law is still a problem. Government therefore needs to strengthen the rule of law in Uganda by publicly punishing wrong and rewarding right conduct equally. The Government also needs to put in place facilitative infrastructure and enterprise supporting policies and procedures to enable the free market system. Government should reduce barriers caused by its own practices that make it difficult for families to support themselves. The goal is to encourage prosperity. It may be desirable for the government to have social registries and encourage safety nets such as insurance and social security for the informal sector; but the best thing would be for families to be able to support themselves without becoming dependent on government.

---

<sup>31</sup> Asmus & Grudem (2013)

<sup>32</sup> Moyo (2009)

### b. Increase the tax base and reduce the taxation rates

Taxation is necessary for contributing to the financial reserves of the country. However, if too much, it can cripple the economy, especially for small businesses. If people keep more of what they earn, they tend to produce more, and innovation and creativity increase. It was mentioned that “much as Ugandans start businesses very quickly, mortality rates for businesses are the highest. Almost 70% of the businesses die within the first three years (KII 5).” Therefore, the Government could give tax breaks or tax reductions for local small businesses in their first years until they are able to thrive. The tax reductions could depend on the level of productivity. This will enable business to be innovative and increase productivity. Concurrently, the tax base can be expanded into the informal sector by easing TIN registration procedures and giving incentives.

### c. Lower the interest rates/cost of financing

The role of credit is important in helping individuals accelerate their exit from poverty. The Central Bank could lower the bank rate and reduce the cost of credit especially for new businesses. This would go a long way in encouraging increased uptake of credit and boost production and employment. According to World Bank's Doing Business report, Kenya has a borrowing interest rate of around 12% per annum, quite high but much lower than Uganda's 19.8% per annum. Kenya is doing very well in resolving insolvency, both in time and cost.

The Central Bank rate is 10% p.a., however commercial banks lend up to 20% p.a. and give very low interests on deposits 5%p.a. There is a large disparity, and this cripples the economy. There is need to increase effective competition in the banking sector. Microfinance and Tier 1 financial institutions are unlikely to be able to lower interest rates or compete effective with larger banks. They rely primarily on fixed deposits which require them to charge high interest rates on loans. The consolidation of smaller banks, to encourage competition through the creation of medium-sized banks, would facilitate economies of scale and reduce the duplication of infrastructure across many small banks, thus reducing overhead costs. Experiences from Kenya highlight that encouraging the growth of smaller/medium sized banks to challenge the dominant, large players provides a competitive market.

#### d. Promote e-government to deal with bureaucracy and corruption

Government bureaucrats need to learn to work diligently for the common good rather than for selfish interests. They need to embrace honesty and to give up corruption and abuse of office in their work. Bureaucratic procedures give an opportunity for abuse of power, therefore there is need to reduce the length of time spent on accessing government services through digitization that creates transparency and provides information to citizens. This would help businesses and individuals operate efficiently. For example, the Rwanda Development Board brings all business services under one umbrella to simplify their regulatory processes. Because of the various online platforms provided for business procedures, starting and running a business in Rwanda is inexpensive, efficient and not as cumbersome as it is in Uganda.

#### e. Increase access to markets

Access to larger markets enables businesses to produce more goods and services and contributes to employment and economic growth. Measures that can increase market access, such as enhancing the logistics infrastructure, market information, flexible regulations for exports and ecommerce could be taken by the Government to help entrepreneurial families reach their full potential.

#### f. Encourage vocational training to improve quality of skills and education

The government could support the provision of basic vocational skills, affordable education loans and information that empowers people. Vocational education coupled with business management skills should be continually promoted to empower the under-skilled in society. These remain in short supply because of the high levels of illiteracy in the community. Individuals and families will need to invest in practical skills but also in consistent diligent effort in viable income generating opportunities in order to break out of the traps imposed by lack of skills. In many of these situations, family members will need advice, mentoring, training or even counselling to develop the required attitudes, mindsets and skills sets<sup>33</sup>.

---

<sup>33</sup> Efosa Ojomo says, "solving an education problem in isolation doesn't move the needle enough on poverty, systems problems require systems solutions." [https://www.christenseninstitute.org/blog/three-reasons-anti-poverty-programs-dont-work-and-how-theres-a-better-way/utm\\_source=GP%20Digest&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=September](https://www.christenseninstitute.org/blog/three-reasons-anti-poverty-programs-dont-work-and-how-theres-a-better-way/utm_source=GP%20Digest&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=September)

## **2. Suggestions for barriers caused by cultural patterns**

### **a. Encourage private property ownership in communities with communal land systems**

Private property ownership is a motivating factor for individual enterprise and prosperity. Free market economies thrive when there is private ownership of properties that have legal titles. Titles and deeds make it possible for people to borrow money for investment and build wealth; without verifiable documents their assets are useless. Private ownership brings with it a sense of stewardship. Families should be encouraged to own legal titles for their properties through their cultural leaders and local government. The process of acquiring documentation should be made affordable and easy to access for even the illiterate in the community.

### **b. Encourage mindset change and innovation instead of consumerism**

Consumerism in Uganda is evidenced when people sell their assets or receive loans to extensively buy materialistic items above their income level like cars, expensive clothing, phones, among others. Credit and materialism make people spend above their income level which leaves no room for wealth creation or savings for a rainy day. A culture that discourages the greedy accumulation of items that are not necessary and keep people in poverty should be fostered in families from childhood.

Additionally, Ugandans should be encouraged to embracing a productive and innovative mindset in order to improve their income. When farmers engage in value addition activities, it accelerates their incomes. It was observed that when a crop is sold in its raw form the income generated is so little that it threatens the livelihood of farmers. Embracing innovation is a clear vehicle to help farmers improve their income.

### **c. Encourage the growth of cultural values, encourage patriotism, encourage mindset change**

The church and community leaders need to take a strong position to educate and nurture their members into productive individuals with great Christian values of hard work, good relationships and family. The majority of Ugandans are Christian (82%) and citizens trust church and cultural leaders more than government leaders. Leaders should encourage a balanced emphasis on economic productivity along with relational and spiritual growth by using the Bible as an authority that is more persuasive than any arguments from

economists. They can promote belief in honesty, hard work, economic productivity, respect for property, education, humility, and other productive values. This will gradually transform the values held by their people, and these values will effectively lead the nation to adopt better laws and economic policies.

### *3. Suggestions for barriers caused by ingrained personal habits*

#### **Apply mindset change, mentorship, personal responsibility, resilience and Godliness for better personal habits**

It is this mental attitude that motivates and drives people to work hard and to have faith in a good future (Hebrews 11:6; Jeremiah 29:11). It is therefore incumbent not only Christians but all families to maintain faith in the goodness of God and his plans for humanity. This will enable families to cultivate positive mental attitudes towards life and be able to face the challenges of life with courage and hope. The Church has a role to play in encouraging and instilling faith in people and in helping people shift from hopelessness to faith in the possibility of positive change in their circumstances. The Church could also offer counselling, encouragement, and the teaching of faith to people. More so, on their part, individuals and families need to invest in mindset change, knowledge and skills development and cultivation of positive mental attitude and diligent commitment to exploit available economic opportunities.

Low levels of training and mentorship among young people continues to bring about unproductivity. Mentorship by successful families and entrepreneurs would go a long way in encouraging better attitudes towards life challenges and businesses resilience. Mentorship and great community influencers would encourage individuals to do set goals, plan and implement them in a timely manner in order to improve their wellbeing. Family members could also cultivate practical skills, management capability, and perseverance in getting things done in addition to theoretical knowledge, and faith in the possibility of change in their circumstances.

It is important that people take on the responsibility of transforming their lives as opposed to waiting for the government to solve their problems. Mindset change geared towards promoting this independence and an attitude of solving problems at the lowest level possible would greatly influence a shift in action

from passive to active. It is crucial that people have an inward-looking approach for solutions to problems in their lives, families and communities. As recommended by one of the key informants, a work mindset should be instilled in Ugandans, no matter the age or status in society, in order to contribute to development. The church could provide a good example to the communities by spearheading innovative initiatives, creating income-generating activities, and liaising with government and civil society.

### C. What stakeholders can do to remove barriers

#### 1. The Church

The church is viewed with certain ambivalence and there is a need for it to take up its place in the community with vigor. The majority of Ugandans are Christian (82%) and citizens trust church leaders more than government leaders. Thus, the church is in a strong position to educate and nurture its congregation into productive individuals. Biblical Church teaching is very instrumental in equipping individuals and families with faith and convictions in biblical principles for living and will enable them face daunting challenges with the firm belief of the goodness of God and his plan for mankind.

The church should equip individuals with requisite faith and winning mindsets and attitudes. Given some of the feedback from focus group discussions, the role of the church remains ambiguous and confusing to many people. There is therefore a need to clarify the true role of the church in respect of families but also in the political sphere. The church could also provide a good example in the community by spearheading innovative initiatives, creating income-generating activities and liaising with government and civil society.

#### 2. Government

There is no apparent indication that government programs or handouts can help alleviate poverty totally. However, government policies are important in creating a free-market economy that can enable economic freedom. It is important that government continues to provide a favorable and an enabling environment that encourages business prosperity such as low taxes and low interest rates, provides practical skills to the illiterate, reinforces the rule of law and provides security, and safety social nets to the vulnerable. This is the context deemed most favorable for development on the basis of empirical context deemed most

favorable for development on the basis of empirical evidence from Western free market economies but also the experience of the East Asian economies. Additionally, improving infrastructure, digitization of processes, reducing the high cost of finance in Uganda through enhancing competition in the financial sector could encourage economic productivity of families.

### *3. Society and individuals*

The community plays a critical role in shaping the cultural norms, attitudes and actions of its members. If communities were proactive about solving their problems independently, without relying too heavily on the government, development and progress in the community would be much faster. With the backing of government information and policies, people should be encouraged to take a more active role in solving problems and providing services in the community. This would encourage people and families to have an inward-looking approach towards solving their own problems. People and communities would be able to harness creativity and innovation to create the solutions they need.

Family members also need to cultivate faith and hope in the possibility of positive change in their circumstances. Individuals and families need to invest in knowledge and skills and consistent diligent effort in income generating opportunities. In many of these situations, family members will need advice, mentoring, training or even counselling to develop the requisite attitudes, mindsets and focus.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

The recommendations we propose address the broad range of obstacles to the wellbeing of families. The true wellbeing of a family is more than material prosperity. It also needs to be spiritually wellbeing, to have a widespread cultural belief that each individual's spiritual health and relationship with God are far more important than economic wellbeing.

The issues are multifaceted and require a diverse range of measures and interventions by individuals, families, communities, the State and Non-State actors. These have to act constructively and in a complementary fashion. It will then be possible to realize the kind of positive socioeconomic transformation in the society and the wellbeing of families that God intended for mankind.

## **EPILOGUE: A pilot proposal for the families in the Shea Industry in Lango Sub-region, Northern Uganda**

While all barriers discussed earlier on in this paper may not be removed or reduced, focused interventions with clearly measurable results are key to enabling families. This was evidenced in the Lango sub-region where the Government financed advanced machinery that helped shea butter farmers leap out of poverty. Crops such as shea butter can be promoted among stakeholders in order to enhance the livelihoods of struggling families. Of the many recommendations proposed for the whole country, the following interventions could be taken to realize outstanding results for families in the Shea industry in Lango.

### ***Capacity-building and skilling of shea industry players***

Capacity-building for members of the shea value chain would be very beneficial. The majority of shea industry participants are uneducated women with little business mentorship. Many require improved technology and business management skills to increase their production and efficient participation in the industry.

### ***Mindset change***

A positive and optimistic attitude towards resolving problems in their community is necessary in the shea parklands community. Many continue to feel disheartened and resigned to the problems and limitations they face. But an attitude of independence in problem-solving would encourage the shea farmers and investors to harness creativity, innovation and opportunities to create the changes needed in their lives and businesses.

### ***Promoting private property ownership***

The shea butter tree offers vast opportunities for income. This is evidenced by the number of products it can spawn on the market. Private ownership of Shea trees with proper legal documentation would be beneficial to Shea tree owners in terms of receiving credit during periods of no harvest. It would also give farmers a sense of stewardship and they would prevent them from cutting the trees down as it would take another 15-20 years for it to grow. In conjunction with micro development banks, the government could encourage registration and appraisal of Shea trees and extend cheap credit to farmers with private titles of shea trees.

### *Improving market accessibility for the shea products*

A longstanding challenge in the shea industry is limited access to the international market for shea products. By 2020, Global Shea Alliance (GSA), based in Ghana, had brought together 593 groups/companies from several West African countries<sup>34</sup>. GSA provides a marketing platform that connects the vast supply to the demand abroad. It thus provides an exporting platform that, in turn, brings in ample returns to the shea industry players in West Africa. Entrepreneurs in Uganda would do well to emulate the GSA initiative so as to fill the much-needed marketing gap that currently exists. Digital marketing and marketing initiatives could be employed by investors or civil society organizations to connect existing shea products on the market with demand abroad and within Africa.

### *Flexible government regulations for the shea industry*

In order to accelerate innovation and productivity in the shea industry, the government could reduce taxes, quicken the organic certification process and loosen the regulation of shea exports in order to create an enabling environment. This could be done for a few years and impact assessed in terms of productivity and employment. This would enable job creation and increase economic activity.

---

<sup>34</sup> Global Shea Alliance (2021)

## REFERENCES

- Asmus, B. & Grudem, W. (2013). The poverty of nations – A sustainable solution. Crossway.  
<https://www.prismaweb.org/nl/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/The-poverty-of-nations-a-sustainable-solution%E2%94%82Grudem-and-Asmus%E2%94%822013.pdf>
- Barro, R. J., & McCleary, R. M. (2003). Religion and Economic Growth across Countries. American Sociological Review, 68(5), 760–781. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1519761>
- Crothers, T. (2012). Queen of Katwe. Scribe Publications. ISBN 9781922070159
- Davis, A. (2013). Highlights from the health and well-being findings. Gallup.  
<https://news.gallup.com/poll/166640/gallup-top-discoveries-2013.aspx>
- Deepa, N., Lant, P., & Soumya, K. (2009). Moving out of poverty: Volume 2. Success from the bottom up. Washington, DC: World Bank and Palgrave Macmillan. © World Bank.
- Dinkelman, T., Lam, D., & Leibbrandt, M. (2008). Linking poverty and income shocks to risky sexual behaviour: Evidence from a panel study of young adults in Cape Town. The South African Journal of Economics, S52–S74. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1813-6982.2008.00170.x>
- Global Shea Alliance. (2021). Creating the industry of tomorrow. Global Shea Alliance Annual Report 2020.
- Hurtt Haley (2017). The main causes of poverty in Uganda. Retrieved on October 14, 2021 from <https://borgenproject.org/causes-poverty-in-uganda/>
- Klasen, S., Bevan, D., Grimm, M., Keith, A., Mackinnon, J., Davies, F., & Yates, J. (2004). Population growth, (per capita) economic growth, and poverty reduction in Uganda: A brief summary of theory and evidence. Retrieved from <https://ideas.repec.org/p/got/vwldps/125.html>
- Lerman, R.I., Price, J. & Wilcox, W. B. (2017). Family structure and economic success across the life course. Marriage & Family Review.
- Moyo, D. (2009). Dead Aid: Why Aid Is Not Working and How There Is a Better Way for Africa (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2009).
- Okello, G. (2020, January 15). Uganda losing UGX2T to corruption every year – Nakalema, PML Daily. <https://www.pmldaily.com/news/2020/01/uganda-losing-ugx2-trillion-to-corruption-every-year-nakalema.html>
- Otiso, K. M. (2006). Culture and customs of Uganda. First. London: Greenwood Press.

Saxton, Jared (2022) "Corruption in Uganda," Ballard Brief: Vol. 2022: Iss. 2, Article 2 retrieved from <https://ballardbrief.byu.edu/issue-briefs/corruption-in-uganda>

UBOS, (2021). Uganda National Household Survey Report 2019/2020. Kampala, Uganda: UBOS.

Wan, J. (2014). Meet the LGBT activists fighting Uganda's anti-gay law | Uganda. The Guardian. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/31/uganda-anti-gay-laws-lgbt-activists>

World Bank. (2020). Doing Business 2020 (Vol. 6). <https://doi.org/10.7256/1812-8688.2014.6.12196>

World Bank. (2022). Fertility rates total (births per woman). Uganda Data. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN?locations=UG>

Zerbo A, Delgado, R. C., González P. A. (2020). Vulnerability and everyday health risks of urban informal settlements in Sub-Saharan Africa. Global Health Journal, 4(2), 46-50. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.glohj.2020.04.003>.

**The Center of Faith, Family and Justice**  
**P.O Box 150045 Mukono, Uganda**  
**Tel: +256760130120**  
**Email: info@cffj.or.ug**  
**Web: cffj.or.ug**



**0123051**