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Original Article

Eradicating Poverty Among the Ugandan Youths: An Evaluation of the Youth Livelihood Programme's Contribution to Achieving MDG 1 and SDG 1

Allan Paul Mbabazi Nshimye[1], Robert Turyamureeba, PhD[1] & Prize Tayebwa[1]*

[1] Bishop Stuart University, P. O. Box 09, Mbarara, Uganda.
* Author for Correspondence ORCID ID; https://orcid.org/0009-0000-0543-8878; Email: apnshimye@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The Millennium Development Goal (MDG) No 1 sought to eradicate extreme poverty, and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No 1 as adopted by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/70/1 seeks to End poverty in all its forms everywhere. Uganda as a participating member of the United Nations General Assembly, is obligated to join the united global fight against poverty stipulated in the resolutions laying out the MDGs and SDGs. In 2014, the Ugandan government launched the Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP) to aid in the fight to end poverty, targeting the largest segment of her population, the youths, in line with Goal 1 in the MDGs and subsequent SDGs. In this study, we: sought to determine the anti-poverty targets in Goal 1 of the MDGs and SDGs; and, scrutinise the Youth Livelihood Programme within the framework targets to eradicate poverty in Goal 1 of the MDGs and SDGs. We used qualitative research which was guided by the critical theory paradigm to analyse the Youth Livelihood Programme with a view to determine if it was a suitable tool in the fight against poverty. We adopted an explanatory research design focusing on the YLP in Uganda as a case study. The findings show that the Youth Livelihood Programme has recorded some success by benefiting 263,897 youths and creating over 1,250,000 indirect jobs (UGANDA-MoFPED, 2024). It is also clear that the YLP has only benefited 3.4% of the Ugandan youth population and the revolving fund is slowly getting depleted due to poor loan recovery rates from the youth groups that borrowed from the YLP fund. Based on the findings of this study, we recommend that the YLP fund can be saved by hiring competent loan recovery managers. The program could be boosted by allocating free land to the YLP beneficiaries. The government ought to increase resource mobilisation and allocation for the YLP and formulate YLP-supportive policies in the agriculture, trade and banking sectors. The recommendations will lead to greater success of the YLP and enable Uganda to fulfil its commitment to Goal 1 within the MDGs and the Successor SDGs.

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INTRODUCTION

Uganda[1] is a sovereign state that gained its independence on 9th October 1962.[2] It later became a member of the United Nations on 25th October 1962. The United Nations was at the dawn of the 21st Century, preoccupied with defining itself after the year 2000. This led to discussions that culminated in the United Nations General Assembly[3] adopting resolution A/Res/55/2 on 18th September 2000 (Campbell, 2017) known as the "United Nations Millennium Declaration" [4], which laid down the Millennium Development Goals. Goal 1 in the Millennium Declaration was the "*Eradication of extreme poverty and hunger"*, with a target of cutting by half the population living on less than a dollar by 2015.

The United Nations member states, which included Uganda, addressed the poverty issue in section III.11 of the Millennium Declaration by boldly declaring that.

> *We will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty, to which more than a billion of them are currently subjected* (United Nations, 2000)

It was hoped that the developing countries would have substantially achieved the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 (Greig and Turner, 2024). The MDGs were praised as the first unified antipoverty movement and it led to substantial progress in the fight against poverty (Campbell, 2017). There was a desire to build on the

[1] The Republic of Uganda is a country that is found in East Africa. It is land locked and its neighbours are South Sudan, Kenya, Tanzania Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

[2] The Uganda (Independence) Order in Council 1962 S.I. 1962 No. 2175 laid before Parliament at the Court at Balmoral, on the 2nd day of October 1962.

[3] Article 9(1) of the United Nations Charter provides that "The General Assembly shall consist of all the Members of the United Nations". (Accessed on 6 June 2024 at https://treaties.un.org/doc/source/docs/charter-all-lang.pdf)

[4] Article 10 of the United Nations Charter provides that "The General Assembly may discuss any questions or any matters within the scope of the present Charter or relating to the powers and functions of any organs provided for in the present Charter, and, except as provided in Article 12, may make recommendations to the Members of the United Nations or to the Security Council or to both on any such questions or matters.". (Accessed on 6 June 2024 at https://treaties.un.org/doc/source/docs/charter-all-lang.pdf)

momentum of the MDGs. It is this desire to maintain the momentum, that led to the Rio de Janeiro conference in 2012 to formulate a new agenda based on sustainable development after the MDGs set period expired in 2015. The consultation that followed culminated in 17 Goals that were put before the General Assembly of the United Nations for consideration. Upon passing of Resolution A/Res/70/1 by the United Nations General Assembly on 25 September 2015 (United Nations, 2015b). The Global united fight against poverty shifted from the MDGs to the SDGs that aspired to transform the World by 2030 (Campbell, 2017).

The shift from the MDGs to SDGs witnessed a change in focus from development to sustainability (Kannengießer, 2023), with the fight against poverty maintaining the top position of Goal number 1 in the SDGs to *"End poverty in all its forms everywhere"* (United Nations, 2015b).

It is pertinent to note that the resolutions of the General Assembly such as Resolution A/Res/55/2 which led to the MDGs and Resolution A/Res/70/1 which led to the SDGs are all by nature recommendatory to the United Nations member states (Huck and Kurkin, 2018) and do not carry along with them legally binding force. They nonetheless help shape the global direction on any key issue, with member states committing to pursue the issue or in this case, the Goals for the common good (UNICEF, 2014).

Uganda as a member of the United Nations, made commitments to pursue the MDGs and the SDGs, which imposed an obligation on Uganda to formulate programs meant to achieve the aspirational goals to fight poverty contained in resolutions A/Res/55/2 and Resolution A/Res/70/1 of the United Nations. It is within this framework that this paper sought to analyse the Youth Livelihood Programme that was implemented in Uganda. (Marle, 2020).

The Government of Uganda is also enjoined to consider in its plans the Youth who currently dominate the country's demographics. The Ugandan law, the National Youth Council Act defines a youth as a person whose age is between eighteen to thirty years of age. This youth age bracket is also re-echoed in the report of the Uganda National Household Survey 2016/2017(UBOS, 2018), this is nonetheless at variance with the Uganda National Youth policy of 2001, which adopted a definition of the youth from 12 to 30 years. The Uganda National Youth Policy of 2016 revised the targeted policy youth bracket to 15 to 30 years but maintained recognition of the youth population bracket as 18 to 30 years (UGANDA, 2016). The Government of Uganda prioritised youth employment as a driver for poverty eradication in the Uganda National Youth Policy of 2016[5]. In that regard, the poverty eradication intervention that focused on youth which was formulated by the Government of Uganda was the Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP).

The YLP was a five-year programme that was launched on 24 January 2014 to be in operation from Financial Year 2013/14 to 2017/18. The primary objective therein was the economic empowerment of the youths with the view of improving their income. The YLP came under review at the end of 2018, and it was extended by the Cabinet with some changes that took effect from July 1, 2019. It is this programme, the first of its kind targeting the youth

[5] The Government of Uganda focused on Sustainable livelihoods, Employment promotion and Enterprise Development in the National Youth Policy 2016 emphasizing both wage and self-employment. (Accessed on 6 June 2024 at https://www.upfya.or.ug/wp-content/files/National_Youth_Policy_Popular_Version.pdf)

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that is under analysis in this paper. This desk research investigated whether the YLP is in tandem with Uganda's obligations in Goal 1 of the MDGs and SDGs. Specifically, this study sought to determine the anti-poverty targets in Goal One of the MDGs and SDGs; and to scrutinise the YLP within the framework of the targets attached to Goal 1 of the MDGs and SDGs respectively.

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative research was guided by the Critical Theory paradigm because critical theorists seek inquiry with a view of transforming society for the better. In this investigation, we intend to analyse the Youth Livelihood Programme with a view to determining its suitability in the fight against poverty. In that regard, an explanatory research design by way of a case study was adopted as ideal for the in-depth analysis of the YLP implemented by the Government of Uganda for the benefit of the Youths. The tools of data collection included documentary and archival analysis of documents related to the research topic. The primary sources consulted comprised the United Nations Resolution A/Res/55/2 (Millennium Development Goals), United Nations Resolution A/Res/70/1 (Sustainable Development Goals), the Millennium Development Goals Report for Uganda 2015, Uganda National Youth Policy of 2016, Youth Livelihood Programme implementation report 2021 and The Uganda Budget Speech for the Financial Year 2024/2025 among other relevant documents.

Qualitative methods were considered for this article since we hoped that they could provide us with rich, detailed insights into the experiences, perceptions, and challenges faced by Ugandan youths participating in the Youth Livelihood Programme. Qualitative approaches were also deemed to help us understand the program's impact within the specific context of Uganda, considering the country's cultural, social, and economic factors. Unlike quantitative methods, the authors hoped that qualitative methods could better facilitate a nuanced evaluation of the program's effectiveness, identifying its strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement.

The authors were aware of the fact that using qualitative methods posed a number of limitations such as limited generalizability of the findings, subjective interpretation and researcher biases that might have influenced findings, the small sample sizes used in qualitative studies, the significant difficulties in quantifying results and limitations in the statistical analysis of the findings, among others. To mitigate these limitations, the authors considered measures such as triangulation by using more than one source, and reflexivity for managing potential researcher biases and increasing the validity and reliability of their findings.

To ensure the integrity of this paper in line with the general research ethics, the authors paid a lot of respect to transparency and accountability by clearly documenting the methods used and the findings adhering to the well laid down procedures, and all sources consulted have been included in the reference section of this paper.

Millennium Development Goal 1

Goal 1 of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was "*to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger*.*"* The success of this Goal in the MDGs was linked to three key targets namely; 1A) To reduce by half the people earning less than one dollar by 2015 1B) To ensure that all persons, including the youth, get decent productive work and 1C) To reduce by half the people suffering hunger by the year 2015 (Campbell, 2017).

The United Nations Resolution A/Res/55/2 (Millennium Development Goals) passed on 18th September 2000 provides among other things that the countries including Uganda, resolved to create

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an environment at the national level[6] that promotes development and aims to eliminate poverty (United Nations, 2000). Campell (2017) stated that the pursuit of Goal Number 1 of the Millennium Declaration led to the reduction of extreme poverty from 47% in 1990 to 14% in 2015, which translates into a reduction of persons facing extreme poverty from the 1990s estimate of 1926 million to at least 836 million by 2015.

Uganda in pursuit of this commitment in the Millennium Declaration resolution also took steps to reduce poverty. The Millennium Development Goals report for Uganda 2015 provides that Uganda achieved target 1A to reduce by half the number of people earning less than one dollar by 2015. Regarding target 1B, the available information cannot lead to a confirmation that the target to get productive and decent employment was achieved and lastly, the report provides that Uganda narrowly missed fulfilling target 1C of Goal 1 of the MDGs (UNDP, 2015).

It should be noted that the youths are a crucial demographic group in achieving Sustainable Development outcomes, given their position as key stakeholders in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), to which they both contribute and benefit. The youths can contribute to a demographic dividend, driving economic growth and development if their potential is harnessed, as they bring fresh perspectives, innovation, and creativity to address the numerous development challenges. In developing countries where Uganda falls, the youths are disproportionately affected by poverty, unemployment, and limited access to education and skills training, making it difficult for them to participate in the development efforts of their nations, yet, if given a chance, the youths can be powerful agents of change, driving progress toward sustainable development and contributing to their communities' well-being.

It is therefore important to focus on the youths and ensure their full participation in the development process of their communities by investing in them to enable them to have long-term benefits for sustainable development and poverty reduction. Empowering the youths can contribute to economic growth, stability, and prosperity, and can foster social progress, improved health, and economic well-being.

The Millennium Development Goals Report for Uganda 2015 discussed above gives a picture of Uganda's fight against poverty within the MDGs framework prior to the commencement of the SDGs. What is clear is that although poverty had generally reduced, it was still prevalent in Uganda. It is noteworthy that we did not review the status of poverty among the youth, so it cannot be deduced from this paper whether poverty reduction was also evident among the youth as a cluster within the wider population.

Sustainable Development Goal 1

In the SDGs, Goal 1 seeks to "*End poverty in all its forms everywhere*". One of the targets under Goal 1 is to eradicate extreme poverty for all persons everywhere by 2030 (United Nations, 2015b). The measure of extreme poverty was in resolution A/Res/70/1 on SDGs pegged to persons living on less than 1.25 USD a day. This implies that the United Nations member states such as Uganda, undertook to ensure that by 2030, no one in their

[6] Section III.12 of the Millenium declaration states that "We resolve therefore to create an environment – at the national and global levels alike – which is conducive to development and to the elimination of poverty."

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borders would be living on less than $1.25 a day, which when converted into Uganda Shillings, would amount to Uganda shillings 4,634/= basing on the closing June 2023 average exchange rate of Uganda shillings 3,707.8/US$ in the Uganda Annual Macroeconomic & Fiscal Performance Report[7] for the financial year 2022/2023 (MoFPED, 2023). This implies that as the financial year 2023/24 commenced on 1st July 2023, the Government of Uganda was obligated to ensure that her citizens are not living on less than Uganda shillings 4,633 a day.

The challenges faced by Uganda in achieving the Sustainable Development Goal targets were set out in a publication titled "*United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, Uganda 2021 – 2025",* in which it was stated that the challenges cut across social, economic and environmental dimensions (UNSDCF Uganda, 2021). It was identified by the United Nations Common Country Analysis (CCA) that poverty remains a key challenge for Uganda in its pursuit of achieving Sustainable Development Goal 1. In the discussion regarding poverty levels in Uganda between 2016 to 2020, it was published that

> *"The 2016/17 Uganda National Household Survey (UNHS) estimated that 21.4 per cent of Ugandans are poor, corresponding to nearly eight million people. Over the last four years, the vulnerable category grew by 9.3 percent translating into an annualized growth rate of 2.1 per cent. The rising poverty is further compounded by increasing inequalities. Income inequality as measured by the Gini coefficient, increased from 0.40 in 2012/13 to 0.42 in 2016/17. Close to 45 percent of the population is multi-dimensionally poor, which is twice the monetary poverty rate of 21.4 percent, raising concerns over the prospects of achieving SDGs 1"*(UNSDCF Uganda, 2021)

The report from which this excerpt was picked paints a grim picture of the fight against poverty, drawing attention to the challenges faced by the marginalised vulnerable groups, which include the youths that risk being left out in the fight to eradicate poverty everywhere if they are not deliberately targeted as benefactors of social empowerment and livelihood programmes (UNSDCF Uganda, 2021)

Uganda's Youth Livelihood Programme

In Uganda, the only exclusively youth-focused anti-poverty programme that was implemented during the period of the MDGs and SDGs is the Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP) which was launched in January 2014. The programme was formulated to target unemployed youth aged 18 to 30 years within the 112 local government districts (including Kampala) that existed in Uganda at the time of the launch of the Youth Livelihood Programme.

The operational aspects of the YLP are detailed in the Youth Livelihood Programme Report 2021[8], in which it stated that the programme required youth to form groups comprising a minimum of 5 persons, with 30% of the group members being female. It is these groups that are advanced soft loans of up to Uganda shillings 12.5 million (approx. USD 3300) without any requirement for collateral as security. The terms of the loans require the Youth Interest Groups to repay the loan within 3 years. It was also specified that the loans were free of any charge or interest-free if repaid within one year, but any repayments after the initial stipulated first year

[7] Report accessed on 10 June 2024 at https://mepd.finance.go.ug/documents/MFP/MFP-FY202223.pdf.

[8] Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP) - Summary Update of Programme Implementation Report (Accessed on 10 June 2024 at https://mglsd.go.ug/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/YLP-IMPLEMENTATION-PROGRESS-REPORT-Jan-2021.pdf)

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incurred a 5% service charge per annum (MGLSD, 2021). The Youth Livelihood Programme report also stated that a total of funds amounting to Uganda shillings 207.248 billion out of an approved budget of Uganda shillings 314.672 billion (MGLSD, 2021) had been disbursed.

The business model of the YLP requires the youth groups to identify an income-generating activity of their choice and prepare a plan that is presented for vetting at the lower local levels in the local government structure. The vetting process involves the local community and leaders at the Subcounty and District levels. Once the loans are approved, they are disbursed directly to the beneficiary youth group. The money that is paid back by the youth groups is ploughed back into the revolving fund to benefit other youths.

The literature reviewed above sheds light on the anti-poverty Goal 1 in both the MDGs and SDGs. We will now proceed to lay out the framework to eradicate poverty in Goal 1 of the MDGs and SDGs.

THE MDGS AND SDGS AS AN ANTI-POVERTY FRAMEWORK

MDG Goal 1 was to "*eradicate extreme poverty*", while SDG Goal 1 was to "*End poverty in all its forms everywhere*". Whereas Goal 1 in the MDGs sought to eradicate the worst form of poverty, called extreme poverty, the shift changed in the Sustainable Development Goals to end all forms of poverty. The United Nations General Assembly Resolutions A/RES/55/2 and A/RES/70/1 on the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals respectively, provided a framework for fighting poverty by way of setting targets, which were intended to draw the world closer to the desired global goal of eradicating poverty. It is these targets that are the focus of this section of the paper.

Millennium Development Goal 1 had three targets:

- Target 1A required the reduction of persons earning less than USD 1.25 by 2015. This target's reference to USD 1.25 a day as a measure of extreme poverty that is pegged to the United States dollar was set by the World Bank in the 1990s. It represents a measure known as the International Poverty Line (IPL), which constitutes the average value of the national poverty lines of the 15 poorest countries (Jolliffe and Prydz, 2016). The IPL at the time of the Millennium Declaration was USD 1.25 a day, but it later progressed to USD 1.90 a day by 2011. In the 1990s it was estimated that half of the developing countries' population lived on less than USD 1.25 a day, but by 2014, this number had dropped to 14% of the population according to the International Conference on Population and Development, (ICPD, 2008)
- Target 1B, was to get decent productive employment. Employment is key in the fight against poverty, it is also imperative that the work is decent. The report[9] of the International Labour Organisation[10] itemised the pillars of decent work as: 1) Rights at work, 2) fostering employment, 3) Expansion of social protection, and 4) resolution of conflicts (MacNaughton and Frey, 2015). The World has from the formation of the International Labour Organisation been alive to the need for good working conditions, as listed in the preamble of

[9] International labour Organisation (ILO) International Labour Conference, Report of the Director-General: Decent Work -June 1999 (Accessed on 14 June 2024 at www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/ilc/ilc87/rep-i.htm)

[10] The International labour Organisation is the United Nations specialized agency that focuses on work and poverty as social justice issues. It was established in 1919 as part of the League of Nations in the Treaty of Versailles ending World War

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the International Labour Organisation[11] instrument. It is known that when a country takes deliberate steps to increase decent employment opportunities, it can experience general poverty reduction. It is thus important to address unemployment rates among the youth to tackle the high unemployment rates in a country (UNDP, 2010).

- Target 1C, provided for the reduction by half of all persons suffering hunger by 2015. Many people still suffer from hunger. It is estimated that one in eight persons worldwide suffer from hunger. Malnourishment by way of failing to get the required calorie food intake is also still a problem, though it reduced from 23% in the 1990s to 15% by the 2010s (United Nations, 2011).

Sustainable Development Goal 1 has seven targets:

- SDG target 1.1 seeks to eradicate poverty in all its forms everywhere by 2030. This target endeavours to ensure that no person in the world is living on less than USD 1.25 a day. This target encourages United Nations member countries to ensure that all persons in their jurisdictions earn an income that is higher than the IPL of USD 1.25 a day. This target calls for the lifting of all persons to a point of earning more than USD 1.25 a day, which is a departure from the target in the Millennium Development Goals that advocated for a mere reduction by half the people earning less than USD 1.25 a day by 2015.
- SDG target 1.2 calls for the reduction by half of the people living in poverty in each nation, as defined within that nation. This target enjoins states to reduce poverty by half, based on each state's definition of poverty within its borders. This target takes cognisance of the fact that the IPL of USD 1.25 a day is based on an average of the 15 least poor countries. This means that the richest countries, whose population may already be earning more than USD 1.25 a day, also have a duty to define their national poverty lines and work towards lifting half of their populations above their nation's national poverty line. This target is also sensitive to the fact that some states use different poverty indicators within their countries, and therefore calls upon those states to ensure that half of their population is lifted above the poverty indicators used by that state. An example is the Kingdom of Bhutan, a state in the Himalayas, which emphasizes a happiness index as a quality-of-life measure (Scoones, 2015). This target would therefore, require the Kingdom of Bhutan to see to it that its population lives with higher index scores as defined by its happiness index as a measure applied in that state.
- SDG target 1.3 advocates for the setting up of social protection systems by 2030. The fight against poverty requires the set-up of social protection programs as a measure to help people reduce the impact of shocks. It is therefore

[11] The preamble of the International Labour Organisation states that "Whereas universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice; And whereas conditions of labour exist involving such injustice, hardship and privation to large numbers of people as to produce unrest so great that the peace and harmony of the world are imperilled; and an improvement of those conditions is urgently required; as, for example, by the regulation of the hours of work, including the establishment of a maximum working day and week, the regulation of the labour supply, the prevention of unemployment, the provision of an adequate living wage, the protection of the worker against sickness, disease and injury arising out of his employment, the protection of children, young persons and women, provision for old age and injury, protection of the interests of workers when employed in countries other than their own, recognition of the principle of equal remuneration for work of equal value, recognition of the principle of freedom of association, the organization of vocational and technical education and other measures" (Accessed on 13 June 2024 at https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:62:0::NO:62:P62_LIST_ENTRIE_ID:2453907:NO)

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imperative that a state promotes and supports social protection programmes. It is vital to point out that the public sector also has a key role to play in the achievement of this target by implementing work programmes that are responsive to social and economic problems faced by the people (UNDP, 2010).

- SDG target 1.4 aspires that by 2030, people have access to basic needs and also enjoy equal rights to economic and financial resources, including microfinance. Access to the factors of production such as land is a key requirement in framing a strategy to fight poverty because financial institutions often seek land as collateral to access loans. For the poor, the remedy is to develop microfinance models that can reach the rural poor in rural areas. The more successful microfinance models targeting the poor, such as the Grameen model, pioneered by Muhammad Yunus in Bangladesh, employ eligibility criteria that restrict eligibility to households holding under half an acre of land or who have assets whose value is equivalent to an acre of land (Basu and Srivastava, 2005).

This target also requires the government to formulate policy and encourage microfinance outreach to the rural poor at the grassroots. There are different world-renowned models that have served millions of people, that are worth consideration in the fight against poverty.

Muhammad Yunus created an independent microcredit institution called Grameen Bank, whose aim is to alleviate poverty among the rural poor through microcredit. The bank employs a criterion that targets the poor by restricting eligibility for microcredits to households holding under half an acre of land or who have assets whose value is equivalent to an acre of land (Basu and Srivastava, 2005). The Grameen model offers credit without a requirement for collateral and the bank carries its business to the doorsteps of the clients at the village level, rather than requiring them to appear at the bank branches.

The operational aspects of the credit given by the Grameen Bank require borrowers to form groups of five members each, six groups form a centre, and ten centres are under the care of a bank worker who is supervised by a branch manager (Jain, 1996). The members of a centre (Six groups of five members per group) meet the Grameen bank worker every week at a fixed time. Regular attendance at the centre's weekly meetings is emphasised and used as a criterion of loan eligibility (Jain, 1996). The loans are first advanced to two members of the group members, their prompt repayment opens up the opportunity for the other members to also access funding. In that way, the model leverages peer pressure as social collateral to encourage loan repayment. It should be noted that the loan repayments are made in small weekly instalments to make it easy for poor households to pay in small amounts from their daily incomes (Basu and Srivastava, 2005). The bank also uses incentives to encourage its borrowers to save a percentage of the loan amount per week, these accumulated savings act as an indicator of the borrower's transition towards poverty eradication.

The SHG (Self Help Group) Bank Linkage model was started by social-development NGOs in India, involving partnerships between banks with government and other development partners. The government was persuaded to remove legal obstacles to the operation of the model meant to give microcredit to groups of the rural poor. The Model requires the Self-Help Group (SHG) to save in a group deposit account with a participating rural-based commercial bank or cooperative. The bank lends the SHG at a low interest rate (about 12% per annum) using the SHG savings as collateral, the SHG then lends to its members at a slightly higher interest rate (about 24%) determined by the SHG. The obligation to pay the bank loan is on the SHG, which makes members accountable to each other as

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they save, borrow and repay collectively (Basu and Srivastava, 2005). The banks can lend the SHG up to four times the group savings, and the repayment track record of the SHG attracts higher loan amounts in subsequent borrowing rounds (Basu and Srivastava, 2005).

The Grameen Model and SHG Bank linkage model are examples of Microcredit financing models that have been successful in getting much-needed financing to the rural poor. These models require consideration by any state that desires that by 2030, all persons have access to financial resources.

- SDG target 1.5 calls for the building of resilience of the vulnerable and poor persons by 2030 to vulnerability caused by climate-related events as well as shocks resulting from social economic and environmental disasters. Disasters are a reality in the world (Khan *et al.*, 2022). All disasters, be they social, economic or environmental, tend to impact communities depending on the community's level of resilience. Resilience has been defined as the ability of a community to cope with the effects of natural and social disasters (Benavot, Williams and Naidoo, 2024). Target 1.5 of Sustainable Development Goal 1 enjoins states to build the resilience of vulnerable and poor persons to disasters in order to march towards the desired goal of eradicating poverty everywhere by 2030.

Natural disasters can cause uncertainty, which is one of the key causes of financial instability in developing countries. It is, therefore, important for states to mitigate any uncertainty that can result from natural disasters by keeping the populace knowledgeable of ways to cope with the disasters when they occur. Information dissemination has been fronted as one of the ways to build resilience. An informed community is more likely to foresee and manage shocks from disasters (Benavot, Williams and Naidoo, 2024), thereby reducing vulnerability. Khan et al., (2022) contend that disaster resilience can be improved through improved Medicare services, training on the use of the latest technologies and setting up early warning systems (ibid. 2022). This target requires the states to fund social services, massively disseminate information to people and leverage the use of technology as a means of being more prepared to manage disasters when they occur. The less vulnerable a community is to social, economic and natural disasters, the more likely the community will be on track to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 1.

- SDG target 1.6 encourages significant mobilization of resources from a variety of sources, to enable developing countries to implement programmes and policies to end poverty in all its dimensions. This target emphasises the need for mobilisation of resources if SDG Goal 1 to end poverty everywhere, is to be achieved. Muigua (2021) called for a review of domestic mobilization, with a view to enhancing the resources available for programmes that are necessary for the pursuit of the SDGs. Funding remains one of the biggest challenges faced by developing countries to the attainment of the SDGs (Richards, 2021). One of the outcomes of the 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda[12] was the commitment to support governments in mobilising revenue if the world is to stay on course to achieve the 2030 agenda for sustainable development. Sustainable

[12] Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda) held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 13–16 July 2015 and endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 69/313 of 27 July 2015.

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Development Goal 17 also supports this target by calling for partnerships on a global stage to mobilise resources to fund the necessary government programs and projects formulated for the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals.

- SDG target 1.7 calls for the creation of sound pro-poor policies focused on poverty eradication. A policy is a set of ideas that guide decision-making to achieve an objective. A government ought to first formulate a policy to guide decision-making among the different stakeholders working together to achieve an objective. Without a well-thought-out policy, a nation may take a longer time than it should have to achieve set objectives. This target, therefore, requires nations fighting poverty to first formulate policies geared towards poverty eradication. The mainstreaming of poverty eradication in national policies would enable the states to fast-track the realisation of the agreed development goals (United Nations, 2022).

The different states have independence in formulating policies they deem necessary according to their respective proprieties in the fight against poverty within the global framework as was emphasised in the outcome resolutions of the 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda adopted by the resolution[13] of the United Nations General Assembly that:

> *"We will respect each country's policy space and leadership to implement policies for poverty eradication and sustainable development, while remaining consistent with relevant international rules and commitments"* (United Nations, 2015a).

In the fight to eradicate poverty, a state must also be mindful of other sector policies that could have the effect of pushing the poor further into poverty. Pawar (2023), in his Journal article titled *"Poverty, Policy and the Poor"*, provides an example of monetary policy during inflationary pressures hurting the poor. The author states;

> *"Rising prices and the cost-of-living crisis are hurting the poor and vulnerable the most. It is a deeply disturbing monetary policy and market logic that to reduce inflation, the employment rate needs to go up. What happens to those unemployed people, their families and children? Who bears the cost of their stress, mental health issues, stigma, weak purchasing power, isolation and social exclusion? Why can't there be an economic and market system in which all able and willing people can work and earn their livelihood?" (Pawar, 2023)*.

Like all developing countries, Uganda faces several challenges in aligning with the different targets under Sustainable Development Goal 1 (SDG 1), which aims to end poverty in all its forms everywhere. Despite efforts, Uganda's poverty reduction rate has been slow, and the country is said to be off-track in achieving SDG 1; the country's inequality gap has increased, with the Gini index rising from 41 in 2012 to 42.7 in 2019, which can negatively impact poverty reduction efforts; inadequate support and supervision at the local government level; a weak multi-sectoral implementation Planning; funding constraints, with the limited financial resources and over-dependency

[13] Resolution 69/313 adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 27 July 2015. Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda) (accessed on 13 June 2024 at https://www.icnl.org/wp-content/uploads/A_RES_69_313.pdf).

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on central government funding hindering the implementation of development programmes; the country's growing debt burden as well as the eminent challenge of climate change and environmental factors, which may increase income inequality and exacerbate poverty, thereby jeopardizing efforts to achieve the SDGs, especially SDG 1, just as it was the case with the MDG1, a decade ago.

Addressing these challenges will require a multi-faceted approach, including policy reforms, increased investment in poverty reduction initiatives, and strengthened partnerships between government, civil society, and the private sector. It is thus important that governments undertake a review of different sector policies with a view of integrating therein policies that are sensitive to the challenges of the poor, with a view of achieving poverty eradication. This action would be in line with the target of SDG1.

Critical Evaluation of Uganda's YLP

This part of the paper analyses the Uganda Youth Livelihood Programme within the framework of the targets itemised as necessary for the attainment of Goal 1 in the MDGs and SDGs. The analysis covers four broad areas: Supportive government policies; Programme loan management; number of YLP beneficiaries; and YLP fund adequacy.

YLP Complementary Government Policies

The attainment of the goal to eradicate poverty is hinged on the government formulating policies that facilitate the fight against poverty as advocated in SDG 1.1. The question to ask in our analysis is whether the Ugandan government has come up with sufficient policies to support the Youth Livelihood Programme as a youth-focused driver to fight poverty.

The Ugandan government formulated the National Youth Policy of 2016[14], which in support of the YLP emphasised the need for the creation of jobs for the youth. The Minister of Finance in the Budget speech of 2024[15] confirmed that the Youth Livelihood Programme has benefited 263,897 youths and created over 1,250,000 indirect jobs (MoFPED, 2024). Despite these positive steps and the wonderful attributes of the Uganda National Youth Policy, there are no tailor-made YLP supportive policies in the agriculture or trade sectors yet the majority of projects in the Youth Livelihood Programme are carrying out projects in the agricultural sector (32%), Trade (29%), Services (23%), and Industry (6%) (MGLSD, 2021).

In Uganda, the Land belongs to the people. This offers an opportunity whereby the government of Uganda can formulate a policy of giving land to youth groups participating in the YLP in order, to empower the youth to obtain land, which is a factor of production. If this is done, the government would in the process, be eradicating poverty in youths (SDG target 1.1), ensuring the youths enjoy social protection (SDG target 1.3), promoting access to basic needs (SDG target 1.4) and enhancing resilience (SDG target 1.5).

The Uganda Land Commission[16] has in the past purchased land from landlords for redistribution to

[14] The Government of Uganda focused on Sustainable livelihoods, Employment promotion and Enterprise Development in the National Youth Policy 2016 emphasizing both wage and self-employment. (Accessed on 6 June 2024 at https://www.upfya.or.ug/wp-content/files/National_Youth_Policy_Popular_Version.pdf)

[15] Uganda Budget Speech for the Financial Year 2024/2025. Delivered at the 2nd Sitting of the 4th Session of the 11th Parliament of Uganda on 13th June 2024 at Kololo Independence Grounds (Accessed on 20 June 2024 at https://www.finance.go.ug/media-center/news-and-updates/budget-speech-fy-202425)

[16] https://ulc.go.ug/

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the poor, but there is no policy that focuses on acquiring land for distribution to youth participating in the Youth Livelihood Programme as a means of supporting the youth with projects in the agriculture sector. In this regard, the Government has failed to formulate sectoral policies that are focused on supporting the success of the YLP.

YLP Loan Management

The YLP is backed up by a fund that is used to give revolving loans to youth groups. The continuity of this fund is based in part on the loan management by the persons interfacing with the youth in their respective groups. In Uganda, the implementation of the YLP is the duty of the community development department staff in the Local government structure starting from the national, district and ending up at the sub-county at the grassroots.

The Community Development departments were established in FY 2007/2008[17] within the local government structure to aid with the mobilization of communities for development. In the YLP, the community development officers are responsible for mobilization, beneficiary selection, project approval, monitoring, supervision and recovery of funds (MGLSD, 2021).

The qualifications and job description of the staff managing the YLP to recover the funds lent to the youth groups are key to the success of the revolving fund. It is important to compare with other jurisdictions, by considering the type of staff used in those countries to manage and resolve funds lent to the poor. In India and Bangladesh, the SHG (Self Help Group) Bank Linkage model and the Grameen model, respectively, are used to manage funds lent out to the poor. The staff used in India and Bangladesh are linked to a bank, which implies that banking systems of managing credit and reducing risk are applied. It is no wonder that whereas the Grameen Bank, by 1995 recorded a 90 % loan recovery rate (Khandker, Khalily and Khan, 1995) In Uganda, as of 2021, the loan recovery[18] rate was 52 % (MGLSD, 2021). If the recovery rate continues to dwindle, it would lead to the depletion of the fund, thereby threatening future capitalization through resource mobilization (SDG target 1.6), as no funder would like to fund a badly managed fund. The targets in SDG 1.1 and SDG 1.2, aiming to halve poverty would also be unachievable, all because of the managers of the loan fund. The YLP would therefore benefit if the staff interfacing with the youth groups are from a bank or are backed by a bank so that the recovery of the revolving loans is maximised by applying loan recovery techniques in a manner like that used in the Grameen Bank model in Bangladesh.

YLP Beneficiary Numbers

The youth aged 18 – 30 in Uganda as of 2016 totalled 7.7 million, constituting 22.5 % of the national population (MGLSD, 2016). It is not clear how many of the 7.7 million Ugandan youth are poor, or fall into the targeted group that is eligible to participate in the YLP, but a comparison of 7.7 million youth to the 263,897 youths (MoFPED, 2024) that have benefited under the Youth Livelihood Programme, shows that the programme has only benefited about 3.4 % of the Ugandan youths. This means that very few youths are benefiting from the YLP, which implies that the Government of Uganda ought to boost the

[17] See Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Department of Community Development (Accessed on 20 June 2024 at https://mglsd.go.ug/community-development/)

[18] A total of UGX. 39.102 billion had been recovered out of the UGX. 75.175 billion.

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programme to reach more youths, if the objectives of the YLP are to be met, otherwise the programme falls short of the aspirations in the targets in SDG target 1.1 and 1.2 set out in the SDG Goal 1 to end poverty everywhere.

YLP Fund Inadequacy

SDG target 1.6 emphasises the need for resource mobilization to fund poverty eradication programmes. In Uganda, only 66 % of the Youth Livelihood Programme budget of Ugx 314.672 billion has been funded. The Summary Update of the YLP Programme Implementation of 2021 shows that it was only in the FY 2013/14 that the budget was fully funded (100%), but in the years that followed, the state was not able to fund the YLP budget[19] (MGLSD, 2021). The resultant effect of the budgetary shortfalls is the failure to fund some youth projects and the redundancy of the YLP secretariat to the detriment of the success of the only programme that was exclusively focused on Ugandan youths.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Republic of Uganda committed itself to the MDGs and the successor SDGs to end poverty in all its forms everywhere. In 2014, the Ugandan government launched the YLP, whose objective was to empower targeted youths by enhancing their employment opportunities and improving their income generation potential. This paper sets two objectives; to determine the anti-poverty targets in goal one of the MDGs and SDGs, and to scrutinise the YLP within the framework of the targets of Goal 1 in the MDGs and SDGs. In the analysis above, it is clear that the Youth Livelihood Programme has recorded some success by benefiting 263,897 youths and creating over 1,250,000 indirect jobs (MoFPED, 2024). The programme also has shortfalls when considered from the perspective of the targets that were set up under Goal 1 in the MDGs and SDGs, these shortfalls are manifested by the fact that the Youth Livelihood Programme has benefited a decimal 3.4% of the youth population and the revolving fund is slowly getting depleted due to poor loan recovery from the youth groups.

It is therefore recommended that the government of Uganda learn from the Grameen model in Bangladesh which by the 1990's was recording a 90 % loan recovery rate, by using bank-related managers to manage the fund as would be done in a banking sector where emphasis is put on the reduction of risk. Secondly, since land in Uganda belongs to the people, the Government can ensure that youth groups participating in the YLP are given free land. Lastly, there is a need for more policies that are bent on supporting the YLP to be formulated in the agriculture, trade and banking sectors. The implementation of the recommendations would save the YLP revolving fund from depletion and aid the success of the YLP, which in turn would aid Uganda in fulfilling its commitment to work for the attainment of Goal 1 in the MDGs and the successor SDGs.

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[19] In 2014/15 only 90% of the YLP budget was funded, In 2015/16 only 74% of the YLP budget was funded, In 2016/17 only 44% of the YLP budget was funded, In 2017/18 only 59% of the YLP budget was funded, In 2018/19 only 72% of the YLP budget was funded, In 2019/20 only 87% of the YLP budget was funded and in 2020/21 only 59% of the YLP budget was funded (UGANDA - MGLSD, 2021)

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