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THIRD NORTHERN UGANDA SOCIAL ACTION FUND (NUSAF 3)

INTEGRATING A GENDER EQUALITY LENS



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SUMMARY

The NUSAF project (P149965) was implemented from 2016 – 2021 and the project closed in June 2021. A follow-up operation is under preparation that has expanded geographic scope and expansion of disaster risk financing interventions. It is expected to launch in 2024. NUSAF 3 sought to provide effective income support to and build the resilience of poor and vulnerable households in Northern Uganda. The project made use of social safety nets to invest in the livelihoods of poor households, and it specifically included a disaster risk financing (DRF) subcomponent that scales up protection in response to disaster shocks. Uganda’s population is predominantly rural (84 percent of the total population) and it relies heavily on rain-fed farming. The rural population consists - for the most part - of smallholder farmers who are subject to several production constraints and have limited capacity to cope with recurrent climatic shocks. This makes them very vulnerable to food shortages and malnutrition and makes exposed regions in Uganda chronically food insecure.

The project had four components:



Component 1: This component included two subcomponents: labor-intensive public works (LIPW) and DRF. The LIPW subcomponent supported temporary/seasonal employment opportunities for poor and vulnerable households. The DRF subcomponent supported an anticipatory trigger mechanism with a three-month lead time to scale up LIPW in the Karamoja region of Uganda. The region is one of the most disaster-prone areas, and one of the poorest areas, in the country.



Component 2: This component provided livelihood investment support and included two subcomponents: the Improved Household Investment Support Program and the Sustainable Livelihood Pilot. These subcomponents support the livelihoods of vulnerable households to enable them to increase their productive assets and incomes.



Component 3: This component provided strengthened transparency, accountability, and anti-corruption (TAAC) activities implemented by the Inspectorate of Government to improve transparency, accountability, and anti-corruption efforts in Northern Uganda, both for the project and for other services.



Component 4: This component provided project implementation support and developed social protection operational tools that are envisioned in the draft Uganda Social Protection Policy (USPP).

Gender analysis was central to all project activities, including community engagement processes, decision-making, and identification of livelihood projects. All project planning, targeting, and implementation committees included both men and women. This case study focuses on gender considerations and gender actions relevant to the DRF subcomponent of the project.

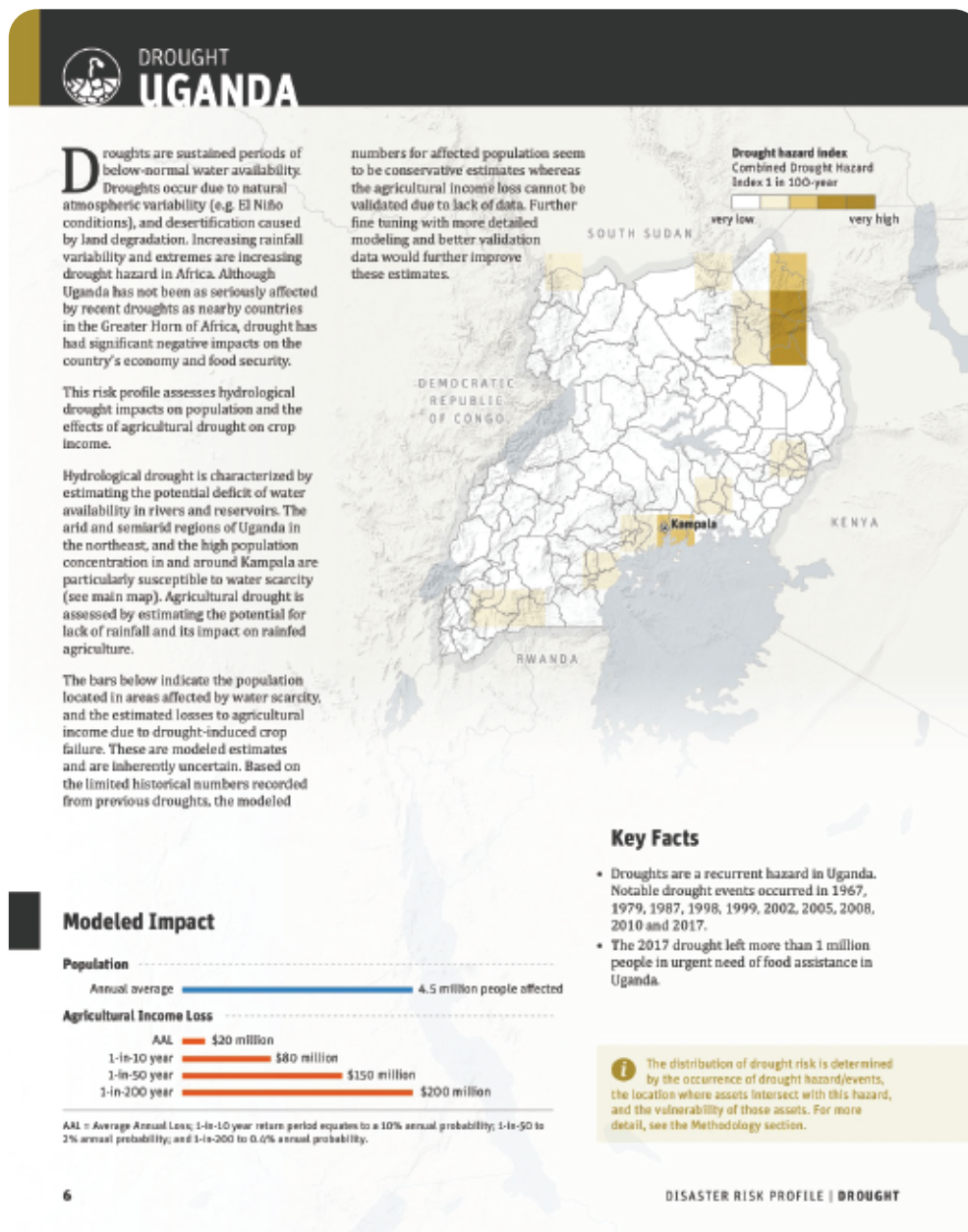


INTEGRATING A GENDER EQUALITY LENS: THE “HOW”

Step 1: Analysis

Uganda has made significant strides toward socioeconomic transformation over the past three decades, but the country’s growth trajectory remains uncertain with stalled structural transformation and persistent poverty and gender disparities. There are persistent disparities in poverty rates by location, with rural areas and the northern and eastern regions exhibiting the highest poverty rates. The correlation between climate shocks and poverty is significant.

Figure 1: Disaster Risk Profile for Uganda



Source: World Bank, [Disaster Risk Profile: Uganda](#) (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2019).

The population is predominately rural (84 percent of the total population) and relies heavily on rain-fed farming, a livelihood that is increasingly vulnerable to climate change impacts. As a result, rural households are very vulnerable to food shortages and malnutrition: 30 percent to 40 percent of households experienced shocks during the past decade, with rural and the poorest households the most affected. These shocks frequently resulted in a decline in income and assets. Overall, this vulnerability increases the poverty rate to an estimated 50 percent.

Gender disparities in employment opportunities and human capital development remain high and exacerbate poverty. Opportunities to access productive employment are lower for women, who are overrepresented compared to men (67 percent of women against 50 percent of men) among the unpaid workers.

Northern Uganda is particularly vulnerable, with more than 80 percent of households relying heavily on low-productivity subsistence crops—and the vulnerability of those crops is exacerbated by other stresses such as land degradation and insecurity. These effects are expected to increase as climate change creates further challenges and imposes severe losses and hardships on the poorest communities.

For the overall project, a gender analysis (with a focus on both men and women) was undertaken to inform gender responsive priorities. Strategies deployed included participatory identification of community-based resource persons and mentors to facilitate identification, support, and protection of the rights of the poor. Participatory poverty and vulnerability analysis at the community level was also undertaken to ensure the poorest segments of the community could access the project's benefits. Some of the key factors that informed pro-poor targeting pertaining to economic and social status included powerlessness in decision-making; limited or no access and control over resources at household and community levels; disability (such as, physical, due to age/illness); low literacy; disparities in access and control of productive resources, in particular, land and farm inputs; and the impediment of persistent cultural barriers, in particular, those limiting women and young people's engagement in key development initiatives.



Step 2: Design: Linking Analyses to Project Actions

Component 1 supported LIPW activities and piloted a DRF mechanism to scale LIPW in the event of droughts in Northern Uganda. The DRF trigger design was anticipatory, with about a three-month lead time in response to drought. Once a predefined trigger was reached, LIPW activities were scaled up and coverage extended to additional beneficiary households. The ability to automatically scale up LIPW is expected to prevent households' consumption from dropping after drought periods and to protect their livelihoods and assets, leading to a more rapid post-crisis recovery. This DRF trigger mechanism, which was piloted in Uganda's Karamoja region, became live in July 2016. A full scale-up of LIPW activities was triggered in the first year of operation when Karamoja suffered an El Niño-driven drought. In view of the successful implementation of the DRF mechanism, DRF activities were expanded to 11 districts neighboring Karamoja, in the Teso, Elgon, and Acholi subregions. The overall project was used to respond ex-post to additional risk events, including water stress and landslides, but the trigger mechanism was not expanded to cover those shocks.

The government of Uganda's key priorities for the overall project focused on

- **Peril** - specifically drought, because it was the biggest risk with the highest economic cost in Uganda.
- **Location** - specifically Karamoja, given the acute and chronic levels of poverty in the region, as part of its broader policy framework for rehabilitation in the north; and
- **Shifting away from ex-post food aid** to ex ante support for food security and community development in the form of seasonal public works programs and cash transfers.

The LIPW activities were gender sensitive and climate smart. They considered the special needs of women and included a requirement that at least 40 percent of LIPW participants must be women. To achieve the target, some LIPW activities were to take place close to villages and appropriately meet the needs of women. Through their representation on community committees, women were fully involved in decision-making, including in selecting the types of public works activities to be adopted and their locations.

Unconditional transfers were made available to households that did not have able-bodied men and women in LIPW activities; this accommodation ensured coverage of pregnant women (beginning in the sixth month of pregnancy), lactating mothers (for the first 10 months after giving birth), and female-headed households with no other available adult labor.

Lists of the beneficiaries for public works and unconditional transfers were unified to better enable individuals to change their status and to ensure that households received a single stream of support from public works and/or that they received unconditional support. This was particularly relevant for pregnant women, who are transferred from public works to unconditional transfers in the sixth month of pregnancy and remain in that category until ten months after the birth of their child.

DRF-related activities benefited 58,166 households, which exceeded the number of beneficiaries the project had targeted for the first two years of its implementation—and more than 60 percent of those beneficiaries were women. Community members identified many of these women as beneficiaries because they were extremely poor. The income earned by women participating in LIPW allowed those women to purchase food and clothing and to pay school fees, thereby economically empowering them and benefiting their households.

A village artisan reported that “most women use the money they have received from NUSAF for paying school fees of children”.

Another participant in a FGD (focus group discussion) of women in Napak during the second evaluation said that “NUSAF has really helped us: before, we were moving to those Western places—Lango, Teso, [and] Kampala—looking for money, but now NUSAF has brought the money to help us. Now we can even pay school fees”.



Photo Credit: Kwaku Griffin / Pexels

Step 3: Monitoring and Evaluation: Include Sex-Disaggregated Indicators to Help Track Impacts on Women

To track gender progress across the overall project, monitoring was done through annual surveys using the following indicators:



Number of female beneficiaries participating in labor-intensive public works programs



Number of female beneficiaries of the project



Number of female beneficiaries of safety net programs



Number of female beneficiaries of the livelihood income support

The indicator relevant to the DRF subcomponent is the first indicator listed above. The other indicators monitored the sex-disaggregated target for other interventions – highlighting a strong commitment to monitor gender equality under NUSAF 3.

Following the scale-up of the DRF mechanism in 2016–17, two types of studies were undertaken to understand its effectiveness: a midterm review and a process evaluation. The midterm review was commissioned to examine how successful the first DRF trigger was on delivering timely assistance to beneficiaries in Karamoja. The review revealed that for many of the beneficiaries, especially the women, access to food, the ability to educate their children and protecting their livelihoods during times of shocks were major indicators of improved household livelihood options, because of the DRF intervention.

Knowledge Nuggets



Establishing scalable safety net programs that are gender sensitive and inclusive requires a cross-disciplinary engagement from both the World Bank and the government. The NUSAF 3 project drew on expertise from three Global Practices (i.e., Social Protection and Jobs Global Practice; Finance, Competitiveness, and Innovation Global Practice; Social, Urban, Rural and Resilience Global Practice), as well as one Cross-Cutting Solutions Area (Climate Change), to deliver one comprehensive World Bank solution. From the government side, the project required interministerial engagement, with teams working together from the Office of the Prime Minister; the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development; and the Ministry of Gender, Labor, and Social Development.



It is critically important to apply a gender lens when developing the systems, processes, and procedures of a scalable safety net (including registration, targeting, grievance redress, payment mechanism, and so on), as was done in NUSAF 3. Through community committees, women were actively involved in selecting the types of public works activities to be adopted and the locations of those activities. In addition, through NUSAF 3, in circumstances in which women were unable to provide their labor coverage was extended and nonconditional direct payments were made available for pregnant women (beginning from the sixth month of pregnancy), lactating mothers (for the first 10 months after giving birth), and female-headed households with no other available adult labor.

