

Poverty and human development in Northern Uganda

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- Meeting the Millennium Development Goals in Uganda will hinge on meeting the goals in the North of the country, which has been falling behind the rest of the country in terms of development progress mainly because of the protracted, but now ended, civil war. This brief note is prepared for the Development Partners Group for Northern Uganda Recovery and Development (NURD) to highlight issues around which districts in the Northern region are more affected by poverty. Since poverty is a dynamic phenomenon of multiple dimensions, the presentation relies on a range of data sources and definitions but it is far from exhaustive and purely descriptive in nature rather than analytical. In order for the NURD group to get a deeper understanding of the situation in the North, a more detailed analysis could be conducted drawing on some of the data sources and definitions used here. For purposes of the analysis here the Northern districts are as listed in Table 1.
- The nationally representative surveys such as those used for income poverty analysis are not large enough (mainly for reasons of cost) in terms of their sample size to generate meaningful estimates of poverty at district level. To overcome this problem UBOS has been using a relatively new technique in poverty analysis, which allows for “small area estimates” of poverty at district and even sub-county level by combining survey and census data. The columns A to E in Table 1 present data from the most recent such exercise using the 2004/2005 Uganda National Household Survey and the population data from the 2002 Census (column A), where the reference is for rural areas (separate estimates are also computed for urban Kampala but they are not reported here). Following standard practice poverty estimates are computed using the official region-specific poverty lines and household expenditure (generally expenditure is preferred over income for this type of poverty analysis) adjusted for age-composition of the household.
- The first thing to note is that among the four regions of the country, the Northern region as a whole, had by far the highest rural poverty headcount (i.e. the share of rural population living in households below the poverty line): 65% compared to the national average of 31% (column B). There were about 7.5 million rural poor people in the country out of which more than 3 million lived in the North (column E). While the region was home to about 23% of the country’s total rural population it had 42% of all its poor. Moreover, the poverty gap is also greater in the North compared to other regions (column C). This means that the rural poor of the North are deeper in poverty (further below the poverty line) compared to the other

regions. The Eastern region also has a higher rural poverty headcount and poverty gap compared to the national average and the Central and Western regions.

- In all of the 12 Northern districts for which data is available more than half of the rural population lived in poverty. In Moroto and Nakapiripirit it was almost nine out of ten. There is a clear correlation between rural poverty headcount and poverty gap aggravating the degree of poverty in the worst affected districts. However, given differences in population sizes between the districts it is instructive to compare the poverty headcount and the absolute number of poor in the same district. This way, while Arua had the second lowest poverty headcount (54%) because this district is the largest in terms of rural population it had the highest number of poor people in absolute terms (more than 400,000), more than twice the number of Moroto (162,000) which had the highest poverty headcount. This information is important to bear in mind when designing poverty reduction programmes as targeting the district with the highest poverty rate may not end up reaching the largest number of poor individuals.
- Data for the standard measure of inequality, the Gini-coefficient, is also included in the table (column D) as sometimes “reducing inequality in the North” is stated as an explicit development policy objective. However, the data shows that the actual level of inequality in the North is the lowest of the four regions and much lower than the national average. This is not surprising since the key contributing factor to inequality is not so much the low incomes of the poor but rather the incomes of the better-off and the rich. When most people are poor inequality therefore also tends to be lower. What should worry policy makers and planners is therefore not so much inequality *within* the Northern region but *between* the Northern (and to a lesser extent the Eastern) region and the rest of the country. Analytical studies have shown that the level of between-region inequality in Uganda is high compared to neighboring countries.
- The poverty figures presented so far uses household expenditure as a measure for welfare. In order to broaden the perspective on the performance of the regions and districts in the North other measures of deprivation and welfare are also included in Table 1 in column F-J. It is clear that the North performs poorly on all of these additional measures as well: Life expectancy is lower (column F), adult literacy is lower (column G) and the GDP index (column I) is much lower than any of the other regions. Accordingly the composite Human Development Index for the North (column J) is more than one-fifth below that of the Central region where the average life expectancy at birth is 7 years higher and adult literacy 20 percentage points higher.
- When it comes to the performance of individual districts there are some noteworthy results. Kotido for instance, performs among the worst when it comes to adult literacy, gross

enrolment (column H) and GDP but is second best when it comes to life expectancy. Nevertheless, the overall HDI for Kotido is the second lowest compared to all districts, which is particularly important to note as no income poverty data was available for that district due to lack of data. Conversely, in Kitgum the GDP index is the second highest of all the districts but life expectancy is lowest with just 29 years compared to the national average of just over 50 years. Gulu's and Yumbe's ranking on the HDI are lower than their ranking for poverty incidence but for different reasons. For Gulu the HDI is pulled down by lower life expectancy for Yumbe it is the GDP that is lower.

- According to the national survey figures overall levels of poverty have fallen in Uganda from 56% in 1992/1993 to 31% in 2004/2005. While progress has been rapid across the country it has been unevenly distributed with the Northern region generally experiencing a lower rate of poverty reduction than other regions. This can be interpreted as another manifestation of growing division and inequality in the country along geographical boundaries. An earlier small area analysis (comparing poverty levels in 1992 and 2002) revealed a great deal of variation in terms of performance of Northern districts, counties and sub-counties, with some experiencing large scale increases in poverty levels and others large decreases. In other words, even within the Northern region the poverty reduction experience is mixed.
- Poverty is a dynamic phenomenon and there is considerable movement in and out of poverty in Uganda. According to new "panel" data (i.e. the same households are interviewed over two or more time periods) from the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF) nearly a quarter of the population moved out of poverty and 12% slipped into poverty between 2004 and 2008. These "transitory poor" are central to our understanding of *vulnerability* to poverty, which is a reflection of the risk of being poor sometime in the future. A total of 40% of individuals were living in poor households in both survey periods and thus deemed "chronic poor". Less than a quarter of the population was classified as *not* living in poverty in one or the other survey. While district level data is not available from NUSAF, Karamoja is shown to be the sub-region which had the highest share of chronic poor and where less than 10 percent were not poor in either of the two periods. The share of chronic poor was more than twice as high in the rural areas of the North compared to urban areas.

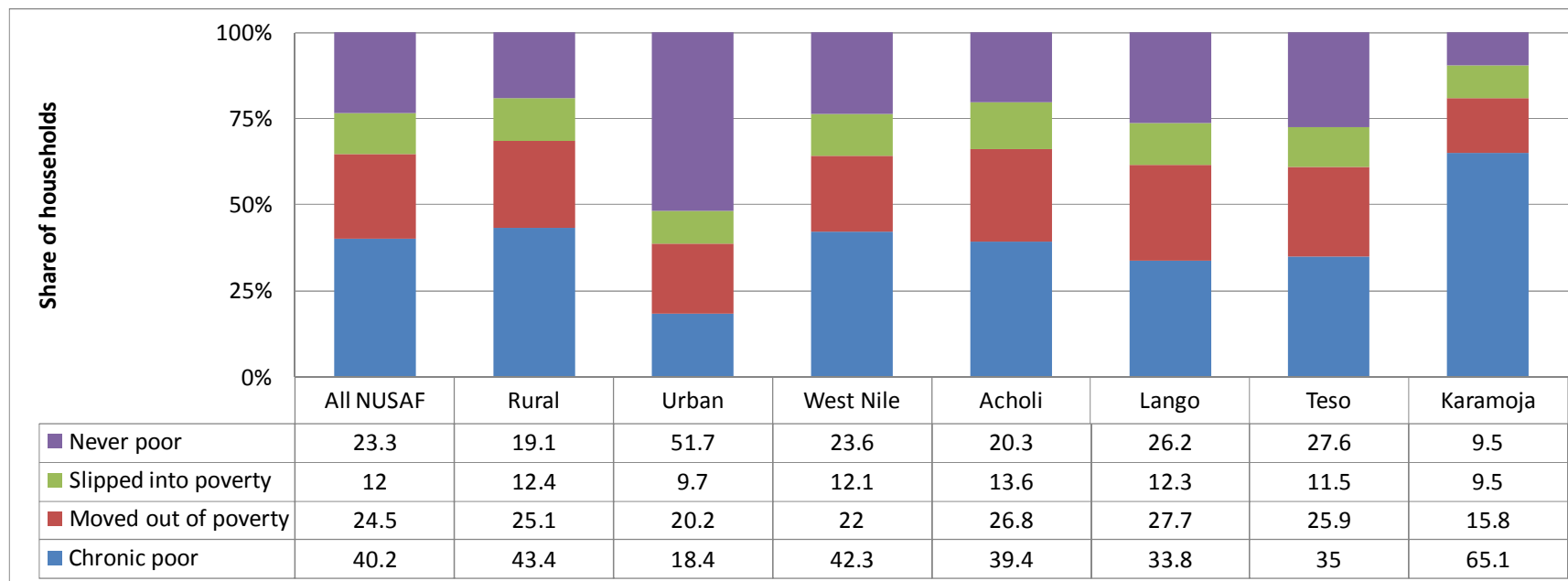
Table 1: Measures of poverty and human development in Uganda and the Northern districts

	Number of individuals (mill)	Poverty headcount (%)	Poverty gap (%)	Gini-coefficient	Number of poor individuals (mill)	Life expectancy (years)	Adult literacy (%)	Gross enrolment rate (%)	GDP index	Human Development Index
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
Moroto	182,689	88.7 (1)	44.9 (1)	0.35 (8)	161,990 (8)	32.9 (3)	13.1 (2)	44 (2)	0.282 (1)	0.216 (1)
Nakapiripirit	149,770	86.1 (2)	40.9 (2)	0.42 (1)	128,922 (10)	51 (11)	21.6 (3)	45.5 (3)	0.382 (8)	0.37 (3)
Kitgum	240007	77.8 (3)	33 (3)	0.36 (5)	186,677 (7)	29.1 (1)	57.1 (7)	142.5 (9)	0.392 (12)	0.439 (5)
Pader	317,499	75.8 (4)	32.1 (4)	0.42 (2)	240,505 (5)	36.6 (4)	52.9 (5)	159.4 (13)	0.329 (4)	0.469 (7)
Adjumani	143,884	68.2 (5)	25.7 (6)	0.36 (6)	98,071 (12)	47.9 (10)	61.7 (9)	77.2 (4)	0.387 (10)	0.479 (8)
Gulu	355,082	67.1 (6)	25.8 (5)	0.37 (4)	238,296 (6)	30.9 (2)	54 (6)	145.4 (11)	0.349 (6)	0.43 (4)
Nebbi	370,919	65.1 (7)	23.6 (7)	0.34 (9)	241,283 (4)	40.3 (5)	61.7 (8)	133.4 (7)	0.404 (13)	0.505 (9)
Yumbe	236,470	62.9 (8)	23 (8)	0.32 (11)	148,811 (9)	46.5 (9)	52 (4)	105.2 (6)	0.32 (3)	0.458 (6)
Moyo	182,205	62.2 (9)	22.4 (9)	0.34 (10)	113,295 (11)	52.7 (13)	69.5 (13)	77.8 (5)	0.334 (5)	0.506 (10)
Lira	663,944	56.1 (10)	19.3 (11)	0.36 (7)	372,406 (2)	41 (6)	65.5 (12)	144.3 (10)	0.389 (11)	0.524 (12)
Arua	741,248	54.2 (11)	19.3 (10)	0.41 (3)	401,534 (1)	45.4 (8)	62.1 (10)	157 (12)	0.377 (7)	0.551 (13)
Apac	676,982	51.3 (12)	16.7 (12)	0.32 (12)	347,292 (3)	41 (7)	63.6 (11)	134.2 (8)	0.385 (9)	0.508 (11)
Kotido	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	51.6 (12)	8.4 (1)	26.8 (1)	0.286 (2)	0.292 (2)
Central	4,836,527	19.6	4.8	0.38	948,927	52.7	80	117.5	0.525	0.637
East	5,868,844	38.4	11.1	0.36	2,253,049	52.7	64	125	0.443	0.582
North	4,838,669	64.8	23.6	0.31	3,134,974	45.9	59	114.4	0.373	0.499
West	5,932,945	19.3	4.5	0.34	1,147,432	48.1	67	113.2	0.478	0.563
Uganda	21,476,985	31.1	8.7	0.408	7,484,382	50.4	69	118	0.466	0.581

Data sources: Columns A – E = 1999-2005 Poverty Maps for Uganda by UBOS, World Bank, IFPRI. Data refer to 2005/6 for rural areas; Columns F- J = Uganda Human Development Report 2007 UNDP. Data refer to various years.

Notes: Numbers in brackets refer to ranks from worst to best score. n/a = no data available. See sourced publications for details on methodology.

Figure 1: Poverty dynamics in areas of the Northern Uganda Social Action Fund (NUSAF), 2004-2008



Data sources: Panel data from presentation by EPRC and Cornell University on Northern Uganda Social Action Fund.