Meeting the International Poverty Targets in Uganda: Halving Poverty and Achieving Universal Primary Education

Rosemary McGee*

One of the world’s poorest countries, Uganda is also among the most impressive in terms of its recent record of economic growth, and one of the most advanced in terms of developing its own national poverty reduction strategy. Before the International Development Targets (IDT) were widely publicised, the Government of Uganda developed its own Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), which aims to ‘enable Uganda to eradicate mass poverty from its society not later than the year 2017’ (MFPED, 1997: v). Given the existence of widespread poverty in Uganda, a nationally-devised and -owned poverty reduction strategy, and considerable bilateral and multilateral donor involvement, the question of whether the IDTs will be met there is of great interest.

This article reports on research which addressed this question and attempted to identify the key challenges which need to be overcome if the targets are to be met. First, a brief background is provided on the scope and methods used in the Uganda country study, and key features of the Ugandan policy context are highlighted. An overview is then given of the findings for all seven IDTs covered in the study, with special attention to two of them: the economic wellbeing target, because of its relatively greater prominence as compared with the others, and the education target, because the Ugandan case offers some important lessons in this field. The article goes on to analyse what will be needed for these two targets to be met. The conclusion draws some specific and general lessons from the Uganda case.

The study was carried out by a multi-disciplinary team of mainly Ugandan researchers. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used. Secondary quantitative data were gathered from official surveys and used to determine a

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poverty elasticity coefficient by means of econometric estimation. For human development indicators the elasticities derived in the global study (Hanmer and Naschold in this volume) were used. These provided the basis for projections of the IDT indicators over the period from the baseline year 1990 (or nearest year for which data were available) to the target year 2015 or 2005, as appropriate. Only the economic wellbeing target and the health targets (infant, under-five and maternal mortality) proved amenable to quantitative treatment, because of data constraints, the absence of significant relationships between variables, and the purely qualitative way in which some of the targets are specified (such as those relating to reproductive health and the environment). In particular, the education target did not need to be modelled for reasons explained below. No significant relationship was found between the gender equality target and GDP per capita, it could not therefore be modelled (for further details of the methodology used to calculate the elasticities, see Hanmer and Naschold in this volume; McGee et al., 1999).

The qualitative component of the research involved reviewing secondary sources and interviewing key informants on the current status and past trends of the IDT indicators, existing policies and conditions, and factors likely to affect attainment of the IDTs. During the course of the research a workshop was held in Kampala, at which Ugandan academics, decision-makers and NGO staff were invited to discuss and provide feedback on the preliminary findings. Their comments and insights were then incorporated into our analysis.

The Ugandan policy context

Poverty levels in Uganda are currently higher than they were in the 1960s, a fact attributed to ‘bad government’ and civil strife in the 1970s and ’80s distorting capitalist development, the marginalisation of small farmers and a growth in rent-seeking, monopolistic and corrupt behaviour (Brett, 1998). Economic performance over the past decade has been impressive, driven largely by agricultural liberalisation and the promotion of agricultural tradeables, with real GDP growing at over 6% per annum and macroeconomic stability greatly increased (Appleton, 1998; MFPED, 1998a; World Bank, 1993, 1995). Yet despite this recent record, the focus on macroeconomic stability and adjustment was initially exclusive, to the extent that in the mid-1990s policy-makers were deemed to have not yet addressed the issue of poverty reduction, despite its inclusion in donor agendas (Udsholt, 1995). Analysts have noted ‘a growing consensus both in civil society and within various parts of government that untargeted agricultural growth has not benefited the poorest groups’ (Goetz and Jenkins, 1998:3). President Museveni was re-elected in 1996 on the strength of his poverty eradication platform, and swiftly set in motion two vital and high-profile processes: the Poverty Eradication Action Plan and the Universal Primary
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Education initiative.

The PEAP’s central elements (summarised by Goetz and Jenkins, 1998: 3) are:

- to maintain existing macroeconomic policy to support economic growth and also provide macroeconomic incentives to enable the poor to participate in the growth process;

- to focus public expenditure on increasing economic opportunities for the poor, particularly in agriculture;

- to provide basic social services (education and health care) to the masses;

- to develop the capacity to respond rapidly to economic crises; and

- to promote transparency and accountability.

Rather than proposing policy innovations, the Plan focuses on relatively simple and realistic policies, emphasising the need to improve the efficiency of institutions, regulatory systems and generally the delivery of all services and benefits to the poor (Brett, 1998). Although developed and overseen by the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MFPED), it is a ‘strong example of mainstreaming poverty eradication in national development planning’ (Goetz and Jenkins, 1998:15), specifying targets in a range of sectors — many of them akin to the IDTs — as well as establishing the overall policy framework. It requires all line ministries and district governments to reorient their spending towards the poor by means of reforms in sectoral policies and investment plans, heralding improved poverty information systems and heightened public sector efficiency and accountability in addressing poverty. Donors are supporting it firmly (DFID, 1999a; Brett, 1998).

In 1998 the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment Project (UPPAP) was launched, in recognition of the fact that the PEAP consultation exercise had been restricted to Kampala and to elite groups, leaving out the vast rural majority (91% of the population) (Goetz and Jenkins, 1998: 13; UPPAP, 1999b). Supported by DFID and other donors, this is generating abundant qualitative data on poverty in nine mainly rural Districts, and feeding into policy processes poor people’s perceptions of poverty, service delivery, governance issues and the appropriateness and impact of government policies (UPPAP, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c).

After the PEAP, the second most important initiative of Museveni’s current administration is the target of Universal Primary Education (UPE) by 2003, launched in early 1997. Under the UPE policy the state assumes the costs of enrolment and teaching and part of the costs of school construction; households are to meet other costs (uniforms, books, school meals and contributions to
construction and maintenance). Subsequent to the UPE’s introduction, a regulatory framework for the scheme was developed, restricting beneficiaries to four children per family, instituting automatic promotion from year to year of all pupils regardless of achievement, setting out relationships between central and local government and school staff and parents, and stipulating parameters for school governance, financing and expenditures. National standards of 55 pupils per teacher, 55 pupils per classroom and one book per pupil were established.

That our research in Uganda encountered a striking lack of interest or even awareness of the International Development Targets is perhaps understandable, given the comprehensive scope, strong national ownership and committed donor support for the government’s own poverty reduction policies and targets, especially the PEAP and the UPE. This research therefore sought to relate the IDTs to the corresponding targets established by the government (MFPED, 1997).

Will the IDTs be met?

Economic wellbeing

Recent poverty trends, over the period for which data are available, are shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>50.3</td>
<td>49.2</td>
<td>45.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>59.4</td>
<td>54.8</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>49.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Region</td>
<td>44.7</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>28.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Region</td>
<td>59.5</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>64.2</td>
<td>53.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Region</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>54.3</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>42.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Region</td>
<td>71.4</td>
<td>66.1</td>
<td>62.6</td>
<td>65.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows Gini coefficients for Uganda, as a measure of overall inequality in consumption per capita.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Uganda</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Urban</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1992/3</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.334</td>
<td>0.435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993/4</td>
<td>0.358</td>
<td>0.305</td>
<td>0.385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994/5</td>
<td>0.375</td>
<td>0.329</td>
<td>0.414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995/6</td>
<td>0.379</td>
<td>0.338</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In order to explore the relationship between poverty, income growth and other possible explanatory variables in Uganda, economic wellbeing was modelled following the methodologies used in Hanmer et al. (1999) and further developed in the article in this volume. This model took the poverty headcount index as the dependent variable, and a range of independent variables to capture the government’s policy stance, sources of growth, and labour intensity in the economy (see the article in this volume for more details of the indicators used to capture these variables). Attempts to construct a similar multivariate model specific to Uganda were frustrated by the absence of sufficient country-level data for most of these variables, so the bivariate model developed in Hanmer et al. (1999), using only income per capita (proxied by real consumption expenditure per capita) as an independent variable, was used to estimate the poverty elasticity for Uganda by the econometric method. The poverty line used is the official national one calculated by Appleton (1998), which is approximately equal to $1 a day per capita in constant, 1985 PPP dollars, and thus roughly equivalent to the dollar-a-day line used in the global and other country studies. In view of the short period for which data are available (1992/3 to 1995/6), we used regional rather than national-level data to maximise the number of observations, which resulted in sixteen observations altogether (one per region for each year between 1992/3 and 1995/6 inclusive). The results of the modelling exercise are shown in Table 3.

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1. The principal sources used for data and for analysis of poverty in Uganda over recent years are Appleton (1998), MFPED (1998a) and MFPED (1999a). These data are from the Integrated Household Survey (1992/3) and the subsequent Monitoring Surveys (1993/4, 1994/5, 1995/6). At the time of the research, some data from the 1996/7 Monitoring Survey had been analysed, although not the national poverty headcount.
Table 3
Results from estimating poverty elasticity using econometric method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Estimated coefficient</th>
<th>Standard error</th>
<th>t statistic</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>r²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>9.01</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>14.50</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real mean</td>
<td>-0.59</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>-8.09</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consumption per capita</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The poverty elasticity obtained using real mean consumption per capita is thus -0.59, meaning that with a 1% rise in per capita GDP (proxied here by consumption expenditure), the poverty headcount will fall by 0.59%. While lower than that obtained in the global study, which was -0.82 for sub-Saharan African countries with a Gini coefficient of <0.47 (Hanmer and Naschold, 1999), and lower too than the elasticity of -0.87 estimated by Sen for Uganda using the analytical method and the dollar-a-day poverty line (World Bank, 1994), ours is in the same range as these.

However, the limited number of years on which our estimation of the poverty elasticity is based implies that confidence in any projections derived from it must be limited. The PEAP encompasses a set of policies which, if fully implemented, could ensure that aggregate increases in GDP raise the incomes of the poor proportionately more than those of the non-poor. The poverty elasticity can thus change over time. We therefore present a future scenario using the poverty elasticity from the global study which captures the effects of pro-poor growth in a low income equality environment.

Projections for the two elasticites are presented under three different economic growth scenarios:

- best-case scenario: real per capita consumption growth continuing at 3.84% per annum, which is the average for the four years from 1992/3 to 1995/6;

- staggered scenario: real per capita consumption growth rising to 4% per annum by 2000, and then declining by 0.5% every two years until reaching a low of 2% in 2008, and continuing thus until 2015;

- worst-case scenario: real per capita consumption growth of half the recent level, at 1.92% per annum until 2015.

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2. Given the depths of economic crisis which Uganda has experienced in the past, the worst-case scenario may seem optimistic, but it was derived from discussions with Ugandan economists and decision-makers, on the basis of their expectations.
Table 4
Poverty headcount, actual and projected

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Actual headcount 1993</th>
<th>Projected headcount 2015 - Past trends (1)</th>
<th>Projected headcount 2015 - Pro-poor growth (2)</th>
<th>Incidence of poverty in 2015 as % of poverty in 1993 (Target = 50) (1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Best case</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staggered case</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worst case</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needed to meet IDT</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results are shown in Table 4. This shows that, on the basis of past trends, under none of the three growth scenarios will absolute poverty be halved by 2015, although the best-case scenario comes close. To achieve the IDT, if the poverty elasticity remains constant, a growth in consumption expenditure per capita of around 4.9% per annum from now until 2015 would be needed. In contrast, if Uganda achieves pro-poor growth, absolute poverty is halved by 2015 in all growth scenarios.

Education

As a result of the UPE policy, net primary school enrolment increased from 53.1% in 1990 to 94.2% in 1998. Enrolments of girls and rural children — those with the highest illiteracy rates — have risen especially. Thus, without making any projections, it looks very likely that full enrolment will be met by the more ambitious date of 2003 set by the government, well in advance of 2015. However, there is a vital distinction between the attainment of universal enrolment and the universal provision of education, with a further important distinction between attaining universal enrolment in the short term and sustaining it over time — as would be needed if the IDT, rather than the more imminent government target, were to be met. The impressive enrolment data mask some issues of education quality which are of serious concern. As Table 5 shows, primary completion rates are low, and the great majority of drop-outs happen at mid-cycle, when pupils are supposed to have mastered only basic literacy and numeracy. Evidence from the UPPAP suggests that households are increasingly disillusioned with the quality of schooling as the UPE influx increases pressure on an ill-prepared school system (UPPAP, 1999b).
Table 5
Completion education rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completion rates for full cycle, P1-P7 (%)</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion rates for mid-cycle, P1-P4 (%)</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Researcher’s calculations, based on Ministry of Education and Sports, various years

Notes: Full cycle completion rate is the ratio of new enrolment in Primary 7 in current year to total enrolment in Primary 1 of 7 years previously. Mid-cycle completion rate (P4) is the ratio of new enrolment in P4 in current year to total enrolment in P1 of 4 years previously. It should be noted that this table only gives information on two cohorts for each year — that finishing P7 and that finishing P4 — not on each cohort for each year.

Questions arise, therefore, as to why so many pupils drop out, and as to whether those enrolling under the UPE will remain in school long enough to receive a primary education and leave school literate and numerate. These questions are analysed in more detail below.

Gender equality

Lack of data on secondary school enrolment limited us to looking at the primary level for this target. The primary relative gender gap has narrowed from 79 in 1990 to 88 in 1997 and there is evidence that the government’s UPE policy has fostered the enrolment of girls who would not otherwise have attended school (see UPPAP, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c). The gender gap might close by 2005. However, analysis of primary completion, repetition and drop-out rates reveals that girls’ drop-out rates and — to a lesser degree — repetition rates are higher than those of boys and their completion uniformly lower (Ocheng, 1999). Thus, the difference between primary enrolment and the provision of primary education arises again: gender parity in enrolment does not guarantee parity in completion rates. Still less does it guarantee equal performance, or equal access to secondary education which, being largely private and fee-paying, forces parents to choose...
between children even more than at primary level. Reasons for higher female 
repetition and drop-out, and lower female completion, are many and are rooted in 
the unequal gender relations in the society and the economy (Ocheng, 1999; 
Baine, 1999).  

In any case, it must be remembered that the gender IDT is actually about 
gender equality and the empowerment of women, to be demonstrated by 
eliminating disparities in education. Relative gender gaps in schooling are only 
intended as an indicator. The PEAP identifies low school enrolment of girls, the 
lack of land rights and scarcity of employment for women as constraints to 
women’s empowerment (MFPED, 1997: 26; 58), and commits the government to ‘[improving] women’s political and economic empowerment’ (p. 50). While 
progress has been made in women’s political empowerment since the PEAP’s 
launch, the same cannot be said for their economic empowerment: what poverty 
reduction has occurred recently appears to have further marginalised women 
rather than benefited them, and they are still effectively denied many economic 
rights (MFPED, 1999a: 7–8; 33). Whatever parity there may be in school 
enrolment, the broader goal of women’s empowerment and gender equality in the 
wider sense will not be achieved by 2005. The far-reaching social transformation 
implied in significantly increasing gender equality will include changes in the 
legal framework and long-standing cultural customs and institutions such as 
widows’ rights, bride wealth and the gender division of labour, and will take 
decades to accomplish.  

Infant, under-five and maternal mortality  

Lack of time-series data on the relevant variables thwarted attempts to construct 
Uganda-specific models for modelling the health targets. We therefore used the 
model developed by Hanmer and Naschold (in this volume), assuming elasticities 
and inputting Ugandan data. Three future scenarios for the health sector were 
constructed, with various levels of health service availability and HIV/AIDS 
infection rates; and the same three economic growth scenarios were used for these 
projections as for the economic wellbeing projections.  

Findings indicate that only one of these health IDTs might be achieved, even 
under the most optimistic health and growth scenarios considered plausible: the  

3. For infant and under-five mortality the independent variables are real income per capita, HIV 
prevalence among women attending ante-natal clinics, adult literacy rate, number of physicians per 
thousand population. The primary school enrolment rate was found to be insignificant as an 
independent variable and was discarded. Income inequality could not be included because of the 
limited number of observations available at the global level. For maternal mortality, the independent 
variables used were percentage of births attended by trained personnel, HIV/AIDS infection rates, and 
adult literacy rates. For results of the model specification tests see Hanmer and Naschold article in 
this volume.
reduction of maternal mortality by three-quarters. That would only occur given an increase in the percentage of births attended by trained personnel from the current level of 33.8% to 80% by 2015 — a challenging target in itself. Table 6 shows projections of IMR, U5MR and MMR under different scenarios, and Table 7 shows projected rates as percentages of base rates (for IMR and U5MR, the target is met if the percentage is 33 or below; for MMR the target is met if the percentage is 25 or below).

Table 6
Projections of IMR, U5MR and MMR under different health and economic growth scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Growth scenario</th>
<th>Best case</th>
<th>Staggered</th>
<th>Worst case</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Infant mortality</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No health gains</td>
<td>122 58.68</td>
<td>122 61.68</td>
<td>122 65.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better health</td>
<td>122 50.28</td>
<td>122 53.27</td>
<td>122 56.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIDS pandemic</td>
<td>122 85.34</td>
<td>122 88.33</td>
<td>122 91.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Under-5 mortality</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No health gains</td>
<td>167.2 97.78</td>
<td>167.2 103.33</td>
<td>167.2 109.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better health</td>
<td>167.2 78.16</td>
<td>167.2 83.71</td>
<td>167.2 90.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIDS pandemic</td>
<td>167.2 124.34</td>
<td>167.2 129.89</td>
<td>167.2 136.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maternal mortality</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same AIDS, hits birth attendance target</td>
<td>498 120.04</td>
<td>498 120.04</td>
<td>498 120.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same AIDS, misses birth attendance target</td>
<td>498 484.53</td>
<td>498 484.53</td>
<td>498 484.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The government’s own health targets are more ambitious than the IDTs, and are therefore less likely to be achieved. Our findings for Uganda support the global study findings for sub-Saharan Africa: Hanmer and Naschold report that infant, under-five and maternal mortality targets will not be met in the region, even given improvements in the availability of health services. Were the necessary data

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4. A rate of 80% of births being attended by a doctor, nurse or trained midwife has been selected as a subsidiary IDT (Hanmer and Naschold in this volume). The maternal mortality IDT would only be met, then, if this subsidiary IDT were met and under the most optimistic growth scenario.
available, the use of a Uganda-specific model might affect these results, but would be unlikely to generate positive findings, since current Ugandan levels of health provision and HIV/AIDS infection suggest a bleak outlook.

Table 7

2015 projected IMR, U5MR and MMR rates as percentages of 1990 levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Growth scenario</th>
<th>Best case</th>
<th>Staggered</th>
<th>Worst case</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Infant mortality</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No health gains</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better Health</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIDS pandemic</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Under-5 mortality</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No health gains</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better Health</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIDS pandemic</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maternal mortality</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same AIDS, hits birth attendance target</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same AIDS, misses birth attendance target</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: In the MMR case, since GDP per capita was found not to be a determinant of this variable, the results are the same under each of the three scenarios.

**Environment**

A National Environmental Action Plan has existed since 1995. Efforts to implement it are ongoing. They include attempts to harmonise and better coordinate the activities of a range of connected institutions, and initiatives aimed at changing attitudes and behaviour which threaten environmental sustainability. Prospects for meeting the environment target are relatively good, although the high level of dependence on international donors for environmental programmes needs to be reduced, local ownership of natural resources and environmental strategies needs to be enhanced, political interests must be over-ridden and the capacity of decentralised government for overseeing environmental protection measures must be built up.

**Summary of attainability of IDTs and government goals**

Table 8 summarises the prospects of the IDTs being met and, where applicable, the corresponding goals set by the government.
### Table 8
Summary of attainability of the IDTs and government goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IDT, indicator and corresponding GoU goal</th>
<th>Baseline status in Uganda (1990 or as near as data permit)</th>
<th>Status if achieved</th>
<th>Attainable?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic wellbeing</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicator: Poverty headcount</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GoU: Reduce absolute poverty from 45.6% to below 10% of population by 2017 at latest</td>
<td>55.6% (1992)</td>
<td>27.8% (2015)</td>
<td>IDT: Yes – with pro-poor growth. GoU: No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Universal Primary Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicators:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary enrolment rate (net, as % of relevant age group)</td>
<td>53.1% (1990)</td>
<td>100% (2015)</td>
<td>GoU: Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of original cohort enrolled in first grade (P1) who reach last grade (P7)</td>
<td>36% (1990)</td>
<td>100% (2015)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GoU: Increase access to primary education from current level to universal by 2003</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender equality</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicators:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relative gender gap (ratio of girls’ gross enrolment to boys’)</td>
<td>79% (1990)</td>
<td>100% (2005)</td>
<td>IDT: Depends on interpretation of IDT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Recommended indicator for this IDT, Combined primary and secondary enrolment ratio for girls as % of same for boys, not available)</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>GoU: No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GoU: Improve women’s economic and political empowerment: Eliminate gender disparities in access and performance throughout education sector by 2003</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Infant and under-5 mortality</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicators:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GoU: Reduce Infant Mortality Rate from 97 per 1000 (1995) to 68 by 2004

GoU: Reduce Under-five Mortality Rate from 147 per 1000 (1995) to 103 (2004)

Maternal mortality
Indicator: Maternal Mortality Rate (per 100,000 live births)

GoU: Reduce maternal mortality from 506 per 100,000 to 354 by 2004

Reproductive health
Indicator: Contraceptive prevalence rates (currently married women)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>1989</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any method</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern methods</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliveries by trained personnel</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Environment
There should be a national strategy for sustainable development, in the process of implementation, in every country by 2005, so as to ensure that current trends in the loss of environmental resources are effectively reversed at global and national levels by 2015

GoU: Implement NEAP

Sources: Poverty data from MFPED (1998), education data from Ministry of Education and Sports (various years) and researchers' calculations; health data from Statistics Department (1989) and Statistics Department (1996).

Notes: The PEAP actually states that for 1993/4, 66.3% of Ugandans lived in absolute poverty (based on an absolute poverty line) and 86.2% in relative poverty (based on a relative poverty line). These figures predate the analysis reported in Appleton (1998) and MFPED (1998), based on an absolute poverty line. This absolute poverty line and the corresponding poverty figures are now accepted as official and were used throughout this research.
What will it take to halve poverty and achieve universal primary education?

Overall, then, the prospects for meeting the IDTs are mixed, and the prospects for meeting most of the PEAP quantified targets are dim. The prominence attached to each target varies. The environment IDT may well be met but is of relatively low priority to government and donors; the health targets are important to both sets of actors but are unlikely to be met; the gender equality target is unlikely to be met and has not been prioritised. This section focuses on the economic wellbeing and education targets, as those receiving most prominence in government and donor circles, and having some chance of attainment near — if not by — the target date.

Halving poverty

In the current climate of considerable optimism as to Uganda’s prospects, based on its remarkable growth during the 1990s, Ugandan analysts do not find implausible the consumption expenditure growth rate of 4.9% per annum which would be needed for the economic wellbeing target to be met if the poverty elasticity is low. However, it must be remembered that the recent impressive trends reflect the very low basis from which Uganda started, and are unlikely to continue unchecked for much longer (hence our introduction of the 'staggered’ scenario, representing a gradual decline in growth). Moreover, there is always the prospect of shocks (drought, a sharp fall in world coffee prices, or an intensification of the civil conflict in Northern Uganda) which would reverse the trend.

On a more positive note, the pro-poor growth scenario is a real possibility as the PEAP’s analysis of key areas for action in the macroeconomic and productive sectors largely coincides with the policy-determined factors which were identified by the global study of the current research project as conducive to lower levels of poverty (Hanmer and Naschold in this volume). The PEAP implementation

5. These are:
• the maintenance of low levels of inequality, because if a given level of national income is distributed more equitably fewer people will be in poverty;
• a more open economy, because if a country pursues open trade policies it can make better use of its comparative advantage, abundant labour;
• investment which grows faster than the labour force, because developing economies are under-resourced with capital compared to labour, but need a certain minimum of capital to operate efficiently, hence increasing output and therefore factor income and reducing poverty;
• capital which is used efficiently, because getting the maximum output from a given stock of capital is important when capital is scarce (from a poverty reduction perspective, this is capital which complements labour-intensive production techniques);
• productivity in agriculture rising faster than productivity in the modern (industry and services) sector, because in African economies agricultural development can make a
process is moving Uganda along these lines. Income inequality is being tackled through objectives relating to balanced growth, poverty disparities, the improvement of women’s economic and political empowerment, taxation and public expenditure. The economy is opening up as a result of the PEAP’s trade policy, investment, inflation and exchange-rate measures. Those PEAP objectives concerning the main economic activities of the poor and investments from which the poor benefit (access to rural markets, access to land, food security, agricultural productivity enhancement, employment and labour, rural credit and financial services, micro and small enterprises) constitute a raft of broad-based growth measures, such that the kind of economic growth achieved will channel maximum benefits to the poor. If this is the case we can be optimistic about the prospects of halving poverty in Uganda by 2015 even if growth slows down in future, though the government’s more ambitious target of reducing absolute poverty to less than 10% by 2017 is not likely to be achieved.

PEAP implementation in all areas — macroeconomic, productive sectors, basic services and social sectors — has been reviewed recently, both at the level of poor communities (by the UPPAP — see UPPAP 1999a, 1999b, 1999c) and at the level of policy-makers and institutions (see MFPED, 1999a). These reviews have highlighted a number of areas where progress has been slow and extra effort will be needed:

The key challenge to poverty eradication efforts in the next few years is to bring the benefits of growth to the poorest 20 per cent...Progress on regional disparities...needs to be speeded up....Across the country, persisting insecurity represents the single greatest threat to the prospects for eliminating mass poverty, along with human rights violations, widespread corruption and other departures from recognized standards of governance...It is...critical to find more effective ways of making war on corruption and abuse of power, starting with more and better information on people’s entitlements and how to claim them...Especially for the poorest 20 per cent, the key challenges include devising more direct measures to assist households and individuals to improve their livelihoods...Availability, access and quality remain very poor in the public health sector...[Health] management needs to become more concerned with improving access and outcomes...The declaration of UPE has been welcomed by many poor people, but only on the understanding that a catastrophic decline in standards will not be the result...Education will probably remain too costly for the poorest, unless special attention is given to increasing access, through a reduction of the household costs...A monitoring system [is needed] that connects the production of information with its actual uses in the drive to eradicate mass poverty in Uganda. (MFPED, 1999a: xiv–xviii)

greater impact on poverty than the modern sector.
Thus, while the analysis and the policy design are right, implementation continues to pose major challenges, as do risk factors external to and uncontrollable by national actors. But the very existence of a national strategy which mainstreams poverty eradication through all sectors and areas of policy bodes relatively well for significant poverty reduction in Uganda in the coming twenty years, if not by 2015.

Universal primary education

Commentators on efforts worldwide to achieve the Jomtien target of Education for All (EFA) by 2000 are unanimous that EFA (or Schooling for All, SfA) is not the same as universal primary enrolment, but implies ‘a school system in which all eligible children are enrolled in schools of at least minimally acceptable quality’ (Colclough, 1997: 2). In assessing international commitments to basic education, whether the Jomtien target or the IDT, several other dimensions need to be assessed in addition to enrolments: completion, attainment, quality and relevance (McGrath, 1999). In terms of indicators, as well as the net primary enrolment ratio to capture access and participation, it is posited that two other aspects need to be captured: retention in school, measured by progression to grade five; and achievement, measured by the literacy rate of 15–24-year-olds (World Bank, 1999b: 36). Myriad constraints in both the policy and the practical realms are known to limit progress towards UPE and gender equality in education, as identified by DFID in its latest education policy statement (DFID, 1999b: 17). To add to the complexity, even when supply-side constraints to EFA have been resolved by means of policy, financial and administrative initiatives, demand-side issues remain which, if not addressed, can thwart achievement of the EFA goal: ‘the supply of education will not necessarily create its own demand’ (Bennell, 1999: 2). The heavy focus on enrolment and enrolment indicators in the Uganda UPE falls short of current wisdom on the topic, perhaps reflecting the populist nature of the initiative, at least in its early stages.

In terms of supply, the financial, administrative and institutional capacities of the schooling system need to be commensurate with the pressures imposed by UPE. Financial capacity reflects four factors: size of school-aged population; costs to households; level of public expenditure on schooling; and average cost per student (Colclough, 1999: 6). In Uganda average unit costs are manageable (ibid: 9). The share of education in the government’s total discretionary budget has increased from 10% in 1990/1 to 33% in 1998/9, with primary education receiving over 62% of this allocation (MFPED, 1999b), a relatively high figure compared to other countries. Donor support is also significant, especially from DFID and the World Bank, in the form of the Education Sector Investment Plan (ESIP) (Ministry of Education and Sports and DFID, 1998). Further funds come from the Poverty Action Fund, set up to channel debt relief ensuing from the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative. However, the requirement that
households meet non-enrolment costs (uniforms, school meals, school materials, part of school construction and maintenance, and the fee for the primary leaving exam) no doubt dampens demand. Furthermore, in Uganda as throughout Africa, the school-age population is growing at the same time as the teaching population — and the pool of adolescent and adult potential teachers — is shrinking, as a result of high death-rates connected with the HIV/AIDS epidemic (Bennell, 1999: 11). As revealed by UPPAP research, pupil:teacher ratios reach 100:1 and even 200:1, far from the target ratio of 55:1; pupil:book ratios are around 6:1 as compared to the target of 1:1; pupils far outstrip the classrooms and furniture available, leading to classes being held under trees and children sitting on dirt floors without desks. The minimal sanitation facilities in schools are inadequate, and some schools have been closed down by health authorities as a result (UPPAP, 1999a, 1999b). Many teachers remained untrained despite considerable efforts to provide in-service training; and the rewards for extra workload created by UPE are perceived as insufficient to maintain staff morale and co-operation (UPPAP, 1999b). Low-qualified, poorly motivated teachers are generally associated with high repetition rates, because of the impact on students’ cognitive achievements (Colclough, 1997: 4).

Supply constraints need to be addressed at secondary and vocational training levels and in the area of employment opportunities, as well as at primary levels. Secondary supply constraints are being addressed by the ESIP in a staggered fashion, but these problems are serious in a country where secondary education is largely private, fee-paying and urban, and where, despite recent economic growth rates, employment opportunities for young people are still sorely lacking. A related matter is the relevance of educational curricula to students’ future livelihoods. Globally, it is doubtful that formal education meets the needs of the informal employment sector (McGrath, 1999: 85); and the evidence on whether it increases productivity in rural livelihoods is ambiguous (Bennell, 1999: 10). Given the highly rural population of Uganda and the significance of informal sector activities overall, it is unfortunate that the policy drive is so heavily focused on formal primary education, neglecting vocational and informal education aimed at young people and adults.

Thus, on the supply side it appears that per capita expenditure remains insufficient, and that even with the substantial resources flowing through the ESIP, still greater donor support and greater debt relief for education purposes are needed — a clamour which echoes those made worldwide in relation to the Jomtien targets (Bennell, 1999). In terms of administrative and institutional capacity, it is plain that the abrupt introduction of the UPE did not allow sufficient priming of education structures and systems; yet national capacity of this kind which is not dependent on aid is essential to sustainable improvements in education coverage. These aspects are being addressed by the ESIP.

Evidence suggests that issues of education quality influence the strength of initial and continued demand for schooling. Decisions as to whether children enrol
and continue in school are made in the household, where some of the direct and opportunity costs are also borne. These costs lead to drop-out. Girls’ drop-out is higher than boys’ in Uganda (Ocheng, 1999), as elsewhere. Research has shown that low household incomes in Africa contribute to low school enrolment and high drop-out (Colclough, 1999: 12). However, it is also known that adverse cultural practices are a stronger determinant of the demand for girls’ education than household poverty (Colclough, 1999; Colclough et al., 1999). The opportunity cost of girls’ school attendance is perceived to be higher than that of boys (DFID, 1999b: 23). This perception might be corrected for if subsidies for girls were applied to reduce some of the direct and opportunity costs to households. Orphaned children (up to 12% of all children in Uganda, according to Opio (1999)) are another category which merits special subsidies to correct for biases in demand: the demand for education for orphans is minimal, since adult carers have little incentive to assume the household costs of educating them. Perceptions of the curriculum as scarcely relevant to future livelihoods, or conducive to good earnings, further depress demand.

It has been predicted globally that ‘without enormous increases in government and donor funding, the DAC target will be as unattainable as the Jomtien EfA target that preceded it’ (Bennell, 1999: 12). The challenge of creating adequate educational capacity for universal primary education is such that only one African country has ever managed it. Compared to other countries, Uganda’s enrolment target is modest and realistic, government commitment high and well-funded, further resources generated by debt relief a distinct possibility, and donor support strong. It is worrying, nonetheless, that whereas declining education quality elsewhere tends to have resulted from economic crisis and corresponding contractionary and adjustment measures, in Uganda the general perception is that education quality has fallen not because of drastic contractionary measures, but because of the UPE policy itself and weaknesses in preparing for and sequencing its implementation. UPPAP findings support the evidence from elsewhere that, unless quality is imposed, demand will decrease, even in the relatively short term. Much therefore depends on the ESIP, which does appear to be a viable education sector support programme, in particular in terms of its strong government ownership and clearly defined sectoral strategy (Colclough, 1997; Ministry of Education and Sports and DFID, 1998). It is not unreasonable to hope that by the conclusion of ESIP in 2003, not only will the government goal of UPE have been achieved but also many of the obstacles to sustained universal education up to 2015 have been ironed out.

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6. This was Tanzania, for a short period from the late 1970s to early 1980s (Bennell, 1999: 8).
Conclusion

Will the International Development Targets be met in Uganda? For the economic wellbeing, education and environment targets the chances are good, especially if the PEAP’s strategy for poverty reduction with growth is maintained and implementation intensified along the lines suggested in the 1999 Poverty Status Report (MFPED, 1999a). The gender equality target may be achieved in appearance, but not in essence; and for the health targets the outlook is negative. In these times of heightened attention to poverty by donors and their development partners, Uganda is frequently held up as a model country for poverty reduction partnership. The prospect that several of the IDTs will not be met there is thus a sobering one. But whatever the achievement of international development targets, the degree of commitment to poverty reduction observed in Uganda and the process which all development actors are following there, themselves offer useful insights for developing the concepts of partnership and local ownership, and suggest that the national planning and target-setting exercise has mobilised crucial political and public support behind the poverty reduction objective.

Three more specific lessons about the feasibility of meeting the IDTs in Uganda may also be drawn from this analysis. First, the UPE example sounds a cautionary note about target-based development strategies. Universal school enrolment will probably be attained in Uganda by 2003. However, it is possible that declining education quality will deter parents from keeping children in school, thus thwarting the UPE goal in the longer term. Even if UPE reaches 100% and stays there, a few years hence when the first UPE school leavers sit their leaving exams, the policy may look less successful: the attainment of universal enrolment may be seen to have eclipsed the goal of providing an adequate primary education to all Ugandan children. Target-based approaches tend to privilege input (e.g. school enrolment ratios) or output (e.g. numbers of primary graduates) measures over outcomes (enhanced capabilities, educated minds), simply because the former are usually more easily measured and quantified, and register changes over shorter time periods, than the latter. When setting and pursuing targets, desired outcomes need to be kept centrally in view, and progress assessed with reference to them as well as to more easily countable input and output indicators. Otherwise, there is a very real danger of targets distorting policy.

Secondly, the heavy stress on the education target by the Uganda government offers food for thought on the interconnectedness of the IDTs (and of the corresponding PEAP targets). Politically, the President has staked a lot on the UPE, and donors have eagerly responded to the government’s commitment to it with resources in the form of the ESIP. Multiple development benefits ensue from primary schooling: improved productivity in formal and informal sectors, and in agricultural work where opportunities for innovation exist; reductions in fertility; improvements in family health and nutrition; and reductions in infant and child mortality (Colclough, 1997: 4). Hence, this stress might be well-placed and
strategic, in that efforts to achieve UPE will indirectly support the achievement of economic wellbeing and infant, child, maternal and reproductive health targets. However, the sizeable government and donor expenditure on UPE has opportunity costs for spending on health; and our research shows that, in contrast to the education, environment and economic wellbeing IDTs, the health IDTs are virtually unattainable. While the knock-on effects for wellbeing indicators in other sectors of attaining one highly strategic sectoral target are undoubtedly important, so is the attainment of balance between sectoral efforts. Universal access to high-quality primary education for a sick population depleted by HIV/AIDS, living well below the poverty line, does not represent enhanced wellbeing. Conversely, overall wellbeing might have increased in the context of a rising poverty headcount, if health and education indicators had improved. Government and donors, possibly with the help of additional resources from further debt relief, must ensure that the high-profile policy focus on UPE is not to the detriment of the very needy Ugandan health sector.

Finally, the issue of ownership of poverty reduction objectives is becoming ever more important as the international financial institutions include poverty strategies and social policy among their criteria for supporting Southern governments. The way in which donors in Uganda are fitting into, fortifying and resourcing a framework for poverty reduction established by the national government is an example of imaginative and appropriate interpretation of the IDTs at the country level. Whether all governments have the same historic reasons and incentives as the Ugandan NRM government to adopt their own poverty strategies is a moot point. Where they do, the Ugandan example provides a useful model for constructive donor engagement with the national strategy. Where they do not, the gradual fostering of national incentives, broad-based commitment and a home-grown strategy for poverty reduction must take precedence over the attainment of time-bound international targets, if gains are to be sustained.

References


Education and Efforts towards Attainment of Gender Balance’, unpublished paper.
McGEE, R., “Meeting the international poverty targets in Uganda: halving poverty and achieving universal primary education”, Development Policy Review, Vol. 18, 2000, pp. 85-106. PRINSEN, G., TITECA, K., “Uganda’s decentralised primary education: musical chairs and inverted elite capture in school management committees”, Public Administration and. Katwe primary is one of the government schools implementing the Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme. When the initiative started in 1997, as part of a national policy to provide free primary education for underprivileged children, it was a dream come true for most poor parents in the east African state. And the country has been commended for achieving more than 90% of MDG2, which aimed to ensure that all children boys and girls alike complete primary school. Dr Nicholas Itaaga, a UPE expert and a lecturer at Makerere University’s School of Education, says poorer parents still struggle to meet requirements for school. Government figures indicate poverty levels have declined in Uganda, from 24.5% in 2009-10 to 19.7% in 20012-13.