



UGANDA

A TRADE UNION FOCUS ON THE SDGs

#HLPF2024

WORKERS DEMAND A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT

WORKERS NEED DURABLE RESPONSES TO MULTIPLE CRISES

The government of Uganda introduced stimulus packages and measures in response to the multiple crises to address environmental and structural issues and spur green, resilient, and inclusive growth. Agricultural and natural resource resilience have additionally been embraced as post-pandemic recovery measures. The government incentivises farmers and producers to adopt sustainable land management and climate-smart agriculture practices, which have been mainstreamed into national development plans. For example, community conservation initiatives, such as tree planting, have increased access to tree products for household use and income generation for communities.

Furthermore, a new multi-sectoral development strategy coordinating the actions of both state and non-state actors and using the parish as the focal point has been introduced. The Parish Development Model aims to create a socio-economic transformation by moving the 39 per cent of households currently in the subsistence economy into the money economy. It aims to do so by organising them into farmer or community groups and supporting them to set up viable enterprises and improving yields, quality, bulking, processing and marketing.

ARE TRADE UNIONS AT THE TABLE?

Uganda integrated the SDGs into its National Development Plan III (2020/21 - 2024/25) which focuses on enhancing key growth opportunities, strengthening private sector capacity to drive growth and create jobs, the social well-being of the population and the role of the state in guiding and facilitating development.

The office of the prime minister coordinates the SDG implementation efforts of all stakeholders, including the government, UN agencies and civil society. The budgeting and financing of implementation is overseen by the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, while the National Planning Authority has developed a progress assessment model for the implementation of the SDGs in both the medium and long term.

Trade unions state that there has been an improvement in the implementation of the SDGs in Uganda, as the government has increased efforts to enhance the

social well-being of citizens and launched new partnerships and collaborations with various stakeholders. Nevertheless, trade unions report that the resources allocated to delivering on Agenda 2030 are limited and have been affected by budget cuts.

Trade unions report that they are not included in government information sessions on SDG implementation that are set up with various stakeholders. As trade union representatives are not regularly invited to consultations held within the framework of the stakeholder platform on the SDGs, their perspectives remain absent from government reporting on these issues. However, the tripartite social dialogue covers topics related to the SDG Decent Work agenda, as well as topics such as rights and standards at work, job creation, social dialogue, social protection, child labour, human trafficking and gender equality.

TRANSPARENCY



Regular access to limited information

CONSULTATION



There are information sessions but no interaction

SOCIAL DIALOGUE



There are individual contributions from social partners to the national government.



IS THE (DECENT) WORK GETTING DONE?

With regards to **SDG 1 (no poverty)**, indicators for **target 1.1 (eradicating extreme poverty)** are worrying, as 42.2 per cent of the population were living below the extreme poverty line in 2019. In addition, the proportion of the country's workers and their families living on less than US\$1.90 per person per day stood at 34.9 per cent in 2022. Trade unions attribute this to the lack of a national minimum wage, high levels of informality and rising inflation. With regards to **target 1.3 (nationally appropriate social protection systems)**, in 2020, only 2.8 per cent of the population benefitted from any type of social security benefit, with only 11.2 per cent of persons above retirement age receiving a pension.

On **SDG 5 (gender equality)**, further efforts are required to reach the objective set by **target 5.4 (recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work)**, as in 2018, women spent nearly twice as much time per day on unpaid domestic and care work (15 per cent of the day) as men (8 per cent). With regards to **target 5.5 (women's full and effective participation)**, the proportion of seats held by women in parliament increased from 17.9 per cent in 2000 to 33.8 per cent in 2023. While the budget for 2020/21 foresaw an increase in gender budgeting and funding for gender-based violence, trade unions report that this remains insufficient.

Significant improvements remain to be made on **SDG 8 (decent work)**. Progress on **target 8.3 (support decent job creation)** is urgently needed, as informal employment outside of agriculture remained extremely high at 95.2 per cent in 2021. Additionally, the rate of vulnerable employment stood at 54 per cent in 2021 (46.5 per cent for men and 64 per cent for women). On **target 8.5 (full and productive employment and decent work for all)**, the unemployment rate stood at 11.9 per cent (10.4 per cent for men and 14.1 per cent for women) in 2021 and underemployment at 9 per cent – a result of a lack of full-time jobs and increasing casualisation. At 48.3 per cent, the gender pay gap is also highly worrying. NEET indicators for **target 8.6 (reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training)** stood at 13.8 per cent in 2021 – higher for young women (17.8 per cent) than for men (9.4 per cent). Indicators for **target 8.7 (eradicate forced labour and the worst forms**

of child labour) are concerning, showing that 39.5 per cent of children aged 5-17 engaged in child labour in 2021, likely due to the increased vulnerability of households in the wake of the pandemic. With regards to **target 8.8 (protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers)**, the national frequency rates of fatal and non-fatal occupational injuries stood at 7.5 per cent (9.6 per cent for men and 4.8 per cent for women), due in part to the lack of sufficient numbers of trained labour inspectors. In 2020, 15 violations of labour rights were noted – 12 in law and three in practice.

On **SDG 10 (reduced inequalities)** and **target 10.4 (progressively achieve greater equality)**, it appears that this target is further off than before. In 2019, 10 per cent of the highest income earners controlled 34.5 per cent of GDP (up from 32.9 per cent in 2012), while the lowest 20 per cent controlled 6.1 per cent of GDP (down from 6.4 per cent in 2012). Worryingly, the labour share of GDP dropped from 42.6 per cent in 2017 to 40.5 per cent in 2020. The national minimum wage, which has been fixed since 1984, is inadequate in meeting the current costs of living and contributes to this drop. On **target 10.7 (migration and mobility)**, since 2020, social partners have been involved in a dialogue on the incorporation of provisions on migration into employment policy.

On **SDG 13 (climate action)** and **target 13.2 (integrate climate change measures into policies)**, worryingly, trade unions have not been involved in a dialogue on achieving a Just Transition.

On **SDG 16 (peaceful, inclusive societies)**, Uganda is far off reaching **target 16.10 (protect fundamental freedoms)**, as workers' rights are systematically violated. Trade unions report that there has been an increase in casualisation and outsourcing, the non-recognition of trade unions at workplaces, low pay, extended working hours, unfair termination, sexual harassment, child labour and lack of provision of personal protective equipment.

TRADE UNION ASKS TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

Trade unions call on the Ugandan government to:

- Include trade unions in stakeholder consultations on the implementation of SDGs.
- Expand social protection measures. Ensure access to affordable health care, education, and universal pension systems, as well as welfare services through adequate financing mechanisms.
- Guarantee the participation of social partners and other concerned stakeholders in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of social protection programs.
- Stimulate measures to ensure the transition from the informal to the formal economy.
- Review the education curriculum to invest in technical and vocational education and training.
- Introduce a national minimum wage that reflects workers' cost of living.
- Ensure that the national budget is used to create quality, sustainable and climate friendly jobs.
- Introduce legislation on equal pay for work of equal value.
- Recruit more labour officers and provide upskilling courses for existing inspectors to improve their capabilities in labour administration and inspection.
- Strengthen the dialogue to promote collective bargaining and adherence to collective bargaining agreements.
- Defend poor and vulnerable groups from the adverse effects of natural and man-made disasters through predictable and sustainable intervention measures.



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