



Overcoming Poverty: Accounting for Stagnation and Upward Mobility in Central Uganda

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Abstract. Poverty in Uganda has been the subject of extensive scholarship and policy attention. Subsequently, several poverty alleviation programmes/ projects have been implemented in the country over the last five decades. Although successive surveys have reported notable improvements in the quality of life, there is evidence that many households are still *stagnating* in poverty. Why? How come the poverty alleviation programmes/ projects that are enabling some households to transit poverty are not working for the households stagnating in poverty? This study delved into these questions, taking the case of Central Uganda. The findings were that the households that are stagnating in poverty suffer from a broad syndrome of disadvantage, which affects their capacity to transit from poverty. However, it was also found that, despite their indisputable challenges, many of them are stagnating in poverty because they don't feel that they are poor. Differences were noted between their view of poverty and the traditional view of poverty (by which they are characterized as poor). It was concluded that poverty alleviation programs/ projects have not transformed them because the interventions delivered under the programmes/ projects are based on the traditional view of poverty. Thus, it is recommended that those designing/ implementing these programs/ projects synchronize their view of poverty with the views of the poor whose poverty they are working to alleviate.

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Introduction

Over the last five decades, poverty in Uganda has been the subject of extensive scholarship and policy attention. Subsequently, there is an enormous body of literature on the subject. This literature occurs in two broad categories: scholarly and reports on poverty alleviation projects and programmes. In both categories, the literature is highly diverse. In the scholarly category, the literature is diverse because it hails from a multiplicity of authors aligned to different disciplinary traditions. The reports on poverty alleviation projects and programmes are also diverse because there have been very many poverty alleviation projects and programmes, which have been implemented in diverse settings. Notwithstanding, poverty remains a daunting problem, pointing to need for new research on the subject. Obviously, this research should complement, rather than duplicate, past research. Therefore, in conceptualizing new research on the subject of poverty in Uganda, reference to existing literature is germane.

In general, literature on poverty has occurred on three broad thematic areas: 1) meaning of poverty (dealing with definitions and measurements of poverty and related concepts); 2) incidence of poverty (including the causes, nature and effects of poverty); and 3) responses to poverty (including the conception, implementation, contributions and failures of poverty alleviation projects/programmes).

Meaning and Incidence of Poverty

Review of the literature on the meaning of poverty (and wealth) leads to two main conclusions. First, that the definition of poverty is controversial and dynamic—changing across time and space. Second, that poverty has been commonly defined in terms of access to a ‘basket of resources’. The literature indicates that the causes and effects of poverty are diverse and relative to context. Thus, discussion on the causes and effects of poverty should be tied to context (in terms of both time and place). In Uganda, related literature indicated that, at the time of our study, poverty was thought to be due to thirteen main factors, namely;

1. Vulnerability (Vicious Cycle of Poverty)
2. Low Levels of (formal) Educational Attainment
3. Lack of income diversification
4. Lack of Market
5. Poor health
6. Regional Imbalance in Disfavour of Rural Areas
7. Unfavourable Economic Policy Environment
8. Dysfunctional Social and Cultural Practices
9. Political instability, insecurity and displacement
10. Gender Disparity
11. Dysfunctional Land Tenure Practices
12. Corruption

13. Laziness

Vulnerability

As a cause of poverty, vulnerability has been found to lead to poverty at various levels and in various ways. At the community level, poor communities are usually infrastructure poor and, therefore, disconnected from development activities and lucrative markets (Abuka et al, 2007). At household level, the poor are also 'productive-asset' poor, so they cannot participate in gainful economic activity (Deninger and Okidi, 2003). At individual level, the poor often lack the capital and skills that are necessitated for participation in gainful economic activity. The poor, especially those that live in rural areas, also lack information, which leads to their exclusion from productive activity and markets, thereby bonding them in poverty (Lawson et al, 2003). There is a reciprocal relationship between vulnerability, disease and poverty. Poverty leads to poor health and, consequently, further poverty (Abuka et al, 2007). According to Bird et al (2003) the elderly, internally displaced persons, people with disabilities, etcetera have limited access to productive resources, which excludes them from economic activity leading to poverty. Livestock diseases and pests also cut back on agricultural productivity, leading to lower farm incomes. Here, it is noteworthy that vulnerable households have very limited capacity to cope with these and similar shocks on their resources and production activities. Shocks at the family level (e.g. death of household heads, accidents, divorce, etc.) especially affect vulnerable people's livelihoods (Bird and Shinyekwa, 2003; Lawson et al, 2003). Also, at national level external shocks (arising out of climatic change, price fluctuation, calamities, etc.) lead to production and income failure (Bird et al, 2005) but mostly for the vulnerable.

Low Levels of (formal) Educational Attainment

Low levels of educational attainment, especially among household heads, lead to poverty (Deninger and Okidi, 2003). An apparent reason for this is that gainful employment is usually difficult among people with lowly or no formal educational attainment. Incidentally, majority of these people are in rural areas, which appears to account for the tendency for poverty to be more evident in there. Incidentally, according to Uganda's Poverty Status Report (2001) (Ministry of Finance Planning and Economic Development [MoFPED], 2001), the current illiteracy rate for Uganda is 37%, the highest in East Africa (Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development [MoGLSD], 2003). Moreover, Strauss and Thomas (1995) note that, in many instances, people with low levels of education are less likely to send their children to school. Even in instances where they send them to school, they usually fail to support them with the resources they require let alone provide them with an educationally supportive home environment. It may also be noted that most youth that do not have skills, so they spend most of their time drinking and are thus not involved in any gainful economic activity. Often, they cause insecurity as a result of their joblessness and drug abuse (Bird and Shinyekwa, 2005).

Lack of Income Diversification

Over reliance on agriculture has also been identified as a cause of poverty. On the contrary, Uganda Martyrs University [UMU] needs assessment report of 2009 suggests that, instead, reliance on agriculture is what is offering the rural poor a livelihood. In fact, the latter goes further to suggest that efforts at the emancipation of Uganda's rural poor from poverty should focus on agriculture (particularly targeting smallholder farmers). The findings/ views of Deninger and Okidi (2003), among others, explain this contradiction away. According to the duo, poverty in Uganda is also due to “external shocks” on households’ livelihoods. They explain that even if the national policy of liberalisation has helped to increase household incomes, changes in the returns to any commodity on which households predominantly rely lead to poverty. For instance, the slump in world coffee prices has begun to undermine Uganda’s positive record of economic growth. This means that poverty is not as due to overreliance on agriculture as it is due to the way the farmers engage in agriculture. In particular, the real correlate of poverty in this regard is reliance on the production of a few, or one, commodity or even engagement in subsistence agriculture. Actually, the poor are most likely to be subsistence farmers. Incidentally, because of subsistence holding, application of modern farming techniques in agricultural production is limited (Mwine, 2009; MoGLSD, 2003; Lawson et al, 2003).

Lack of Market

Even where the poor, especially those in rural areas, are able to produce, their produce does not access lucrative markets. This is in agreement with the UMU national development needs survey (2009), which identified difficult access to lucrative markets as one of the impediments to the overcoming of poverty among many Ugandan communities (especially those that are rural). Nonetheless, these views point more to the underdevelopment of communication infrastructure (in particular roads) than they do to the lack of market per se. Communication infrastructure is underdeveloped, which disconnects rural areas and hampers the modernisation of agriculture among other sectors (Abuka et. al, 2007; Lawson et al., 2003).

Poor Health

Health status correlates directly with the incidence of poverty. This is in consonance with Deninger and Okidi (2003). For instance, MoLGS (2003) observes that the HIV/AIDS epidemic continues to place a huge burden on households’ resources and endangers productivity. A clear explanation for this relationship is that households that have chronically ill members spend time that they would have used to engage in economic production on caring for these chronically ill members of their households. Moreover, sick people (especially those affected by HIV/ AIDS) commonly sell their property (to pay hospital bills).

Regional Imbalance in Disfavour of Rural Areas

Poverty is especially evident in the rural areas (Abuka et al, 2007). According to MoGLSD (2003), for example, the Northern region has 65.8% of its people living below the poverty line, compared to the more urbanised central region (20.3%). Related literature shows a number of reasons for this status quo. First, there are significantly lower levels of formal educational attainment in the rural areas (Lawson et al., 2003). Second, rural areas are disconnected, by poor communication infrastructure, from the more lucrative markets. Third, the more lucrative activities (and employment opportunities) tend to be concentrated in the urban areas. Fourth, majority of the rural areas do not have electricity, which repulses the more lucrative activities from them. This cuts back on the possibility of the modernisation of agriculture in which the poor are involved. Fifth, many of the dysfunctional socio-cultural practices tend to be more evident in the rural areas (Lawson et al, 2003).

Unfavourable Economic Policy Environment

This factor appears prominently in the literature. Nonetheless, few of the authors citing it explain the correlation. Nduhukhire-Owa-Mataze (1999) substantiates this; the macro-economic policies that African countries have adopted are pro-rich, as a result of imperialist policy impositions by the IMF and World Bank. Citing Julius Nyerere, he notes that African countries are forced to undertake reforms that benefit a tiny minority of persons and regions and, above all, deprive these governments the opportunity to undertake pro-poor interventions, thereby creating massive poverty and hopelessness for majority of the countries in Africa. He adds that poor terms of trade lead to the perpetuation of poverty. This is supported by Bird (2005), who notes that removal of subsidies and changes in terms of trade have led to rises in the cost of agricultural inputs yet farm gate prices have not kept pace with these rises.

Dysfunctional Social and Cultural Practices

Communities with higher alcohol consumption rates turn out to be poorer (Abuka et al, 2007). Other authors have noted other social and cultural practices that reinforce poverty in Uganda. For example, Bird (2005) identifies polygamy (which leads to high expenditure on maintaining a large family, domestic violence and divorce etc., which variously affect productivity) while Lawson et al (2003) identify bride price and drug abuse (a factor that causes poverty in several ways). Moreover, Lawson et al (2003) add that conservative adherence to these social and cultural beliefs and practices also hold some people in poverty. For instance, some of these beliefs and practices are responsible for the very high fertility rate (7.1) (MoLGSD, 2003), which has been associated with high dependence ratios.

Political Instability, Insecurity and Displacement

The political upheavals that beset Uganda during the 1970s and early 1980s led to severe decline in productivity, thereby leading to poverty (MoLGSD, 2003). Indeed, majority of the chronically poor households in Uganda live in parts of the country that have been affected by insecurity (Lawson et al, 2003). Incidentally, insecurity has occurred in many forms that affect productive economic activity, including losses of land through displacement, loss of property and livestock etc.

Gender Disparity

Among women, poverty arises out of the fact that they are accorded less access to land and control over other assets by men. They also have limited participation in decision making (Daxbacher, 2004). Men also curtail women's movement (Bird et al, 2005). All these constraints affect the ability of women to participate in productive economic activity, which leads to both their own poverty and that of their households.

Dysfunctional Land Tenure Practices

Small land holders predominate agriculture in Uganda (Ellis and Bahigwa, 2001; UMU, 2009). This affects the productivity of the agricultural sector and the possibility of its modernisation. Indeed, a significant portion of the poor are those with small holdings (Mehrotra and Delamonica, 2007). Traditional communal systems of land ownership and parcelling of pieces of land within the framework of large extended and polygamous families has also led to land fragmentation, which affects agricultural mechanisation and industrialisation.

Corruption

Corruption erodes observance of the principles of democracy, thereby undermining the legitimacy of political leaders and government to cooperate with and support the people out of poverty. Theft of public resources limits accumulation of resources, development of social overhead infrastructure and provision of social services, thereby leading to increases in poverty (Bird et al, 2005; Lawson et al, 2003). Here, it is noteworthy that a host of authors report a high incidence of corruption in political and corporate governance in Uganda, the inference being that the vice is entrenching poverty in the country.

Laziness

Bird and Shinyekwa (2005) observe that, in some instances, people are overtly lazy and think that they cannot overcome poverty. They sell even the little they have and spend the proceeds on hedonic practices like polygamy, drinking, etc. In a related manner, some people/communities sit back and wait on others to provide for their needs.

Responses to Poverty and Knowledge Gap

Uganda's poverty reduction strategy papers affirm that there have been numerous efforts to address the causes and consequences of poverty identified in the foregoing section (see, for example, MoFPED, 2001). These efforts have been implemented by a cross section of governmental, private sector, charitable, civil society, multinational and diplomatic organizations. The efforts have occurred at national, regional, local and household levels and have been influenced by relevant international instruments and conventions (like the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals) as well as the country's political agenda. Subsequently, value judgments about the merit of these efforts are not easy to reach. Even then, at the household level, successive surveys have reported notable improvements in the quality of life (see, for example, Uganda Demographic and Health Survey, 2011 [UBOS, 2011]). Notwithstanding, there is evidence that many households are still stagnating in poverty, meaning that they have not been impacted by the responses implemented against poverty.

In general, related literature links the stagnation to the *traditionally* known causes of poverty (discussed in the foregoing section). However, in a context where knowledge of these causes has formed the basis for interventions and some households are transiting from poverty, this literature does not satisfactorily account for the stagnation. How come the poverty alleviation programs that are enabling some of the *poor* households to transit poverty are not working for the stagnating households? Review of related literature led to the conclusion that, hitherto, this question had not attracted satisfactory scholarly attention. Taking the case of Central Uganda, this study undertook to respond to the question—trusting that, although stagnation despite implementation of poverty alleviation projects/programs may not be surprising, accounting for the stagnation may enhance the effectiveness the poverty alleviation programs. Therefore, respondents from households that were characterized as *transiting* from poverty and respondents from households that were characterized as *stagnating* in poverty were asked to account for the situation of their households, to identify differences to which the stagnation of the latter might be attributable.

Method

Design

The study was carried out following a cross-sectional survey design. This was based on questionnaire and interview and involved collection of quantitative and qualitative data. Through enabling collection of all the data required for the study at a given point in time, the design was particularly suited to the subject of poverty, since variables relating to poverty usually change across time.

Study Area

Data were collected from 323 households. These were drawn from four administrative districts in Central Uganda. Geographically, these districts are diverse, exhibiting various land forms, natural resources and economic activities. The districts are dualistic: they have urban and rural areas; developed and underdeveloped overhead infrastructure; as well as *poor* and *rich* households. All these tend to be mixed up, so the area was particularly amenable to the objective of identifying the correlates of upward mobility from and stagnation in poverty, since it had *both* households transiting from and stagnating in poverty. It may also be noted that all the districts were cosmopolitan and governed under a decentralized political framework in which responsibility for social services is shared between local and national authorities. In all these regards, the four districts typify the other parts of Uganda except those that are just recovering from conflict (like Acholi land) and socio-political exclusion like Karamoja region. In each of the districts, the enumerators collected data following an eclectic approach through which they surveyed households in urban, semi-urban and rural areas (Table 1).

Table 1. Distribution of Households Surveyed

Variable	Categories	Count	Percentage
District	Masaka	86	27
	Mityana	79	24
	Mpigi	75	23
	Wakiso	83	26
	<i>Total</i>	<i>323</i>	<i>100</i>
Neighbourhood	Rural	150	46
	Semi-urban	111	34
	Urban	62	19
	<i>Total</i>	<i>323</i>	<i>100</i>
Duration of residence in area	Less than 5 years	19	6
	5 to 10 years	44	14
	Over 10 years	260	80
	<i>Total</i>	<i>323</i>	<i>100</i>

Table 1 indicates that a cross-section of households was involved in the study. Majority (69%) of these had lived in their neighbourhoods for over ten years. This period is long enough for the households to have experienced the circumstances (endowments and constraints) of their neighbourhoods, so plausibility can be reasonably expected of the data elicited from the households on the correlates of mobility from and stagnation in poverty.

Population and Sample

There was no information on the number of households in the study area, so the team did not know the population. Nevertheless, 14 members of the research

team were assigned to conduct interviews in 30 households, so the study targeted a sample of 420. Responses were obtained from 323 households, representing a response rate of 77%. In each of the four districts, the households that were involved in the study were selected randomly. However, care was taken to ensure that the households were selected from a wide area including urban, semi-urban and rural neighbourhoods.

Instrument and Data Quality

Data were collected using a semi-structured questionnaire. The instrument was divided into three sections: 1) household identification particulars; 2) status of household (regarding wealth and poverty); and 3) factors accounting for stagnation in and upward mobility from poverty. The questions in the first and second parts of the instrument were close-ended while those in the third part of the instrument were open-ended. The questions on the status of the household regarding poverty and wealth touched on attributes of households' level of welfare. These were aimed at creating a dichotomy of households transiting from and stagnating in poverty. The attributes of household welfare were selected using conclusions from literature related to the indicators of wealth and poverty in our study area. The third part of the questionnaire touched on the meaning of wealth and poverty and the correlates of upward mobility from and stagnation in poverty.

Feedback on the validity of the instrument was sought from a researcher with a track record of research on poverty and related areas and two reviewers from the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS)—one of the flagship institutions involved in research on poverty and development in Uganda. The first draft of the instrument was revised in line with the reviewers' suggestions. The instrument was pretested on 30 households in villages from two of the districts in the study area. The data collected were entered and the intended analysis procedure was simulated. The data analysis plan was revised as was found necessary. Cronbach's internal consistency coefficient for the second part of the instrument was established at .81.

Procedure

The research team was divided into four groups and each of the four districts in the study area was assigned one of the groups. The team members were each given a letter of introduction and permission to collect data from the areas selected for the study obtained from the relevant area leaders. The team members were each assigned to conduct interviews with representatives, in principle heads, of at least 30 households over a period of one month. In each of the districts, the interviewers selected households from urban, semi-urban and rural localities. On returning from the field, the team held a meeting to discuss the individual members' field experiences and preliminary observations. The discussion fed into

finalization of the data processing and analysis plan. Thereafter, the data were entered and analyzed and a report drafted.

Analysis

Each completed questionnaire was assigned a serial code number. Thereafter, the code and responses to the questions in the first and second parts of the questionnaire were entered into an SPSS file, where codes and labels for the different responses had been programmed. Thereafter, the responses were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages. The households' scores on the indicators of household welfare were computed into a *household welfare index*. The households were categorized into three groups, namely, rural, semi-urban and urban. For each of the groups, the mean score on the household welfare index was established and the households were categorized into *transiting* from and *stagnating* in poverty thus: household's score on index \geq category mean score on household welfare index = transiting; and household's score on index $<$ category mean score on household welfare index = stagnating. The responses to the questions on the meaning of wealth and poverty; households' self-characterization between wealth and poverty; and reasons for the households' situation were categorized according to descriptive explanations. Each response was carefully considered and tallied among the descriptive explanations developed. If it did not fit in any of the explanations, a new descriptive explanation would be developed. Thereafter, the descriptive explanations were assigned codes and the tallies assigned to them entered. Frequency counts of the tallies were then obtained and the trend of results was exposed.

Limitations

The study relied on self-reported data. This was grounded on the assumption that the respondents were not only cognizant of the reasons underlying their status with regard to wealth and poverty but also honest with their interviewers. There may be need to cross reference the findings (and/ or conclusions) of the study with data collected using indirect approaches like ethnography.

Ethical Considerations

The enumerators disclosed their identity and the goals and scope of the study to their respondents. Subsequently, they secured the respondents' informed and voluntary consent to participation in the study. Anonymity of the respondents was also upheld by ensuring that their identification particulars were not elicited and that the data collected is reported in aggregates.

Findings and Discussion

Status of Participating Households

The households surveyed were categorized into two: *transiting* (from poverty) and *stagnating* (in poverty) (Table 2). The categorization was done using the households' scores on the indicators of household welfare surveyed (i.e. access to healthcare, education, asset ownership, quality of water and sanitation, income, food security and dwelling [section II of data collection instrument]). Each household's status (between transiting and stagnating) was contextualized in a way that its score on the indicators of household welfare was compared to its area's average score. A household was assigned as transiting from poverty if its score was equal to or greater than the area's average and assigned as stagnating in poverty if its score was less than the area's average.

Table 2. Distribution of Households by Status

Neighbourhood	Transiting	Stagnating	Total
Rural	71	79	150
Semi-urban	53	58	111
Urban	40	22	62
Total	164	159	323

Definition of Wealth and Poverty

To gain insight into the correlates of mobility from and stagnation in poverty, the respondents were interviewed on what wealth and poverty mean to them; how they would characterize the status of their households regarding wealth and poverty; and the things to which they would attribute this status.

Overall, wealth was defined mostly in terms of access to the basic requirements of life, income and ownership of assets (Table 3). Lack of these things was taken to imply poverty.

Table 3: Meaning of Wealth (%)

	Transiting			Stagnating		
	Rural <i>n</i> = 71	Semi-urban <i>n</i> = 53	Urban <i>n</i> = 40	Rural <i>n</i> = 79	Semi-urban <i>n</i> = 58	Urban <i>n</i> = 22
Access to basics (food, shelter & bills)	59	42	33	40	39	64
Knowledge	1	2	3	-	3	-
Good health	4	5	5	6	8	10
Income 1 (cash)	17	19	28	25	19	18
Income 2 (regular source)	15	13	18	9	7	5
Income 3 (diversified source)	3	9	5	3	7	27
Paid employment	4	8	8	9	10	9
Assets 1 (real estate)	30	36	40	29	43	55
Assets 2 (cars, phones, etc.)	15	17	3	8	10	5
Self-employment	-	-	8	3	7	9
Livestock	15	-	-	11	12	9
Social capital (children, relatives & friends)	3	-	3	1	5	5

Note: Multiple responses

More respondents in the *transiting* category defined wealth as “regular income” than did the respondents in the *stagnating* category. On the other hand, more of the latter defined wealth as fixed assets (notably land) than the former (more of whom considered *cash*, [personal] cars, mobile phones and similar things to be wealth). It is noteworthy that more respondents from the stagnating category defined wealth as (having) “good health” and “social capital”, notably children. Despite these variations, there was notable concurrence on the meaning of wealth between *transiting* and *stagnating* households and between rural, semi-urban and urban households (Table 3). However, notable differences were established between the respondents’ and *our* characterization of the statuses of their households (Table 4).

Table 4: Cross tabulation of Respondents’ and *Our* Characterization of Households

		Self-characterization			Total
		<i>Rich</i>	<i>Neither rich nor poor</i>	<i>Poor</i>	
<i>Our</i> characterization	<i>Transiting</i>	38	51	69	158
	<i>Stagnating</i>	30	25	101	156
Total		68	76	170	314

The main difference between the respondents’ and *our* characterization of the statuses of their households regarding wealth and poverty is that only a few of the respondents we characterized as transiting from poverty concurred with our characterization and vice-versa. Sixty-nine (representing 43%) of the respondents we characterized as *transiting* from poverty characterized themselves as being poor

while 30 (representing 19%) of the respondents our scorecard characterized as *stagnating* in poverty characterized themselves as being rich. Some of the respondents provided reasons for this disparity (Table 5).

Table 5. Reasons Transiting Households cited for Feeling *Poor* and Stagnating Households cited for Feeling *Rich*

Thinking about wealth and poverty, where would you categorize your household among the two? Why?

<i>Transiting Households</i>	<i>Stagnating Households</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In between [poverty and wealth] because there is still need for progress • Middle class...not yet there • Medium rich: transiting from poverty because the household head is working hard • Poor because [household heads] not in formal employment • Poor household because [they] have no capital assets • In between [poverty and wealth] because [the household is] working hard to deal with changes in the environment and prices • [A] Poor household because a lot more is still desired • Middle class because [even if they] have achieved some things, more is yet to be achieved • ...in the middle because [they] still need <i>other</i> things • Poor [because] they have no car and animals [livestock] • In between the rich and the poor; I have what can solve my problems though I can't solve all of them • Medium: I can't meet all my needs however I try to meet some [of the] needs • Midway between wealth and poverty because in as much as I am able to provide for my family, I am not very wealthy in terms of assets • I am moving toward riches because I have food, medical care, can pay [school] fees for my children...I am thinking of buying more land and I have a job so I am working • In between [poverty and wealth] because I can afford most of the daily needs though I still find difficult in getting others [but] I am 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wealthy because he has a job • Wealthy because they have land • Not very poor not rich because [I am] healthy and can work... [I] own a plot and a house • Moderate because gets food and shelter • I am rich because I have life • I am wealthy because I am attending school • I am in between the two because I can look after my family • Not poor because [I] can afford food, rent, etc. • [We are] wealthy because we have a plot [of land] • Rich because can self support [<i>sic</i>] • Wealthy because [he is] working • Wealthy because owns a house and plot [of land] • Wealthy because [he] is healthy and has children • Middle class because can meet the basic needs • Rich because we can meet all [basic] our needs • At least I own a house; I do not consider myself poor • Rich because [I am] not renting • I am wealthy because I have developed good ideas through training • Rich because we are healthy • Rich because they can afford their needs • Wealthy because [they] have land

self employed and hard working	for cultivation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In between wealth and poverty...though I have not invested much, I am able to attend to my family's needs and [I am] doing some investments • Poor because they lack a farm and [the] wife is not working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wealthy because is hard working • Wealthy because I am living [sic]

Correlates of Mobility from and Stagnation in Poverty

The respondents who characterized their households as *transiting* from poverty cited 12 factors for the transition (Table 6).

Table 6: Correlates of Transition from and Stagnation in Poverty¹

S/N	Reasons for upward mobility	n	% ²	Reasons for stagnation	n	% ³
1	Education*	12	7	Low level/ lack of educational attainment	5	3
2	Gainful employment*	29	18	Un/underemployment	43	27
3	Inheritance*	11	7	Inherited syndrome of disadvantage	3	2
4	Access to markets*	32	20	Lack of market	27	17
5	Frugality*	54	33	High [consumption] expenditure	58	36
6	Access to productive resources*	37	23	Lack of capital (money, land, etc.)	120	75
7	Social capital*	44	27	Social and political exclusion	16	10
8	Good health*	8	5	Sickness	33	21
9	Hard work	116	71	Livestock diseases**	24	15
10	Serendipity	11	7	Bereavement**	8	5
11	Mobility	5	3	Taxes**	35	22
12	Remittances	22	13	Climate change**	66	42
13				Poor overhead infrastructure**	44	28
14				Inflation**	51	32

¹Multiple responses were elicited

²Calculated as a percentage of 164 (number of households in transiting category)

³Calculated as a percentage of 159 (number of households in stagnating category)

*Contrasts condition of households stagnating in poverty

**Applicable to households transiting from poverty

Eight of these factors are traditionally known to be positively related with mobility from poverty and underdevelopment (cf. causes of poverty discussed above). Indeed, eight of the factors the respondents who characterized their households as poor or *stagnating* in poverty cited for the stagnation of their households contrasted the factors directly. However, five of the factors cited by the households in the

stagnating category, namely, livestock diseases, bereavement, taxes, climate change, poor overhead infrastructure and inflation are also applicable to the households in the *transiting* category. The finding that majority (71%) of the respondents in the *transiting* category cited “hard work” (described in terms of resilience, diligence, innovativeness and diversification) for the status of their households suggests that the households work hard to overcome these impediments. The “hard work” appears to be supported by the households’ members’ educational attainment, involvement in gainful employment, inheritance, access to markets, frugality, access to productive resources, social capital, good health, serendipity, mobility and remittances. However, the finding that majority of the respondents from these households expressed discontentment with the households’ statuses (Table 4) gives credence to the view that although their hard work is supported by these factors, they work hard because they are not contented with their situation (Table 5). Conversely, the stagnating households’ syndrome of disadvantage is compounded by their contentment with their status (Table 4).

Accordingly, our study demonstrates a basic point: despite their indisputable challenges, many of the *stagnating* households are stagnating because they are contented with their situation. This position appears to corroborate Bird and Shinyekwa’s (2005) view that some people stagnate in poverty because they are lazy albeit superficially. Although the finding that households stagnating in poverty were contented with the statuses of their households suggests that these households are complacent, it is *our* scorecard that characterised them as stagnating in poverty. Incidentally, there is disparity between the attributes of our household status scorecard (i.e. access to healthcare, education, asset ownership, quality of water and sanitation, income, food security and dwelling) and some of the things respondents in the stagnating category characterized as wealth (e.g. social capital). It is also notable that these respondents did not simply characterize their households as well-to-do; they possessed the things that they characterized as wealth.

This implies that those fighting to alleviate poverty need to synchronize their definition of poverty with that/ those of the poor whose transition from poverty they are trying to facilitate. On the contrary, review of related literature indicates that the poverty alleviation programmes/ projects that have been implemented in Uganda focused on attributes of poverty/ wealth that are similar to those in our scorecard but incognizant of the possibility that some of the poor whose poverty the programs/ projects sought to alleviate do not take these attributes seriously. This appears to account for the *failure* of these programs/ projects to positively impact the stagnating households. On the other hand, the finding that the stagnating households had access to the things they considered to constitute wealth and that households in the transiting category were working hard to achieve the things they considered to be wealth suggests that involving the poor in the definition of poverty in designing poverty alleviation programs/ projects could enhance the effectiveness of the programs/ projects.

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Disclaimer

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