

RESEARCHERS PRAISE WOMEN INCLUSION PROGRAMMES

By Rhyman Agaba

Government efforts to economically empower women through various wealth creation initiatives, including Generating Growth Opportunities for Women Entrepreneurs (GROW) and the Parish Development Model (PDM) are yielding positive results. Research shows that the initiatives are significantly improving women's participation in business and household income generation. Findings presented during the Annual Research Symposium on Unpaid Care and Domestic Work organised by Uganda Women's Network (UWONET) in Kampala last week, showed that the PDM's deliberate allocation of at least 30% of programme opportunities to women has enabled more women to access resources for enterprise development and financial independence.

The symposium, held at Four Points by Sheraton in Kololo, Kampala on Tuesday, attracted over 70 participants, including government officials, MPs, civil society leaders, researchers, diplomats and development partners.

Susan Achieng, the co-ordinator of women's rights and access to justice at UWONET, said the research assessed how government economic programmes are responding to unpaid care and domestic work, which often limits women's participation in economic activities.

CHALLENGES

Achieng said many women face challenges balancing entrepreneurship with domestic responsibilities such as childcare, cooking, fetching water and household management, tasks that are largely unpaid yet time-consuming.

"The Parish Development Model was found to be very successful because of the quota of 30% that is provided to women so that they can have resources for economic empowerment," Achieng said.

She explained that placing more resources directly into women's hands has strengthened their ability to participate in business activities while also addressing household needs.

The research, conducted



Aciro, the executive director of Uganda Women's Network



Co-ordinator: Achen

WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION

A study presented at UWONET's Annual Research Symposium has found that government wealth-creation programmes such as the Parish Development Model (PDM) and the Generating Growth Opportunities for Women Entrepreneurs project are significantly improving women's economic participation and household incomes in Uganda.

The research, conducted between 2023 and 2025 in Kampala and Gulu, revealed that PDM's policy reserving at least 30% of programme opportunities for women has enabled more women to access financing, start businesses and gain financial independence.

between 2023 and 2025 in Kampala Metropolitan's Nakawa division and Gulu city, found that government economic programmes are increasingly becoming gender-responsive by recognising the realities women face in their daily lives.

Achieng said some women who benefited from government financing were able to hire farm workers and domestic helpers, reducing the burden of unpaid care work and freeing up more time for productive economic engagement.

Others invested in labour-saving technologies such as ox ploughs and solar dryers, which have simplified agricultural work and improved productivity.

The symposium also highlighted broader government investments in

Researchers found that many women used the support to hire domestic workers, invest in labour-saving agricultural technologies and reduce the burden of unpaid care work such as childcare, cooking and fetching water.

The symposium highlighted how unpaid domestic work continues to limit women's economic productivity despite its critical role in sustaining families and communities. Researchers argued that improving access to water, childcare services, education and affordable technologies is essential for reducing this burden and enabling women to fully participate in economic activities.

social services such as safe water access, education and childcare support, which researchers said are critical in reducing the unpaid care burden carried by women and girls.

"When water is closer to households, then the domestic work, which is predominantly done by women and girls, becomes much easier," Achieng noted.

The study further commended government programmes for integrating initiatives aimed at changing social attitudes that discourage women's economic participation.

Researchers observed that some harmful social norms still create resistance when women gain financial independence, sometimes leading to domestic conflict or gender-based violence.

However, initiatives under programmes such as the GROW Project are helping communities and men better appreciate the importance of women's participation in business and entrepreneurship.

PROGRAMME DESIGN

The researchers recommended that all government economic programmes continue embedding care-sensitive approaches during programme design and implementation to ensure women can fully benefit from development opportunities.

They also called for sustained investments in education, water access, caregiving infrastructure and supportive taxation policies to further strengthen women's economic inclusion and national development.

Representing the Government, Dr Angela Nakafeero, a commissioner at the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, emphasised the importance of technology in reducing the burden of unpaid care work.

"There are those appropriate technologies which can be more or less affordable, but the majority of the technology required in terms of reducing unpaid care work is very expensive," Nakafeero said.

She said the Government must invest more in affordable technology, both at household and institutional levels.

"So, allowing technology to come in at affordable prices could include reducing taxes on technologies required for ordinary Ugandans, but also investing into research for us as a country to come up with appropriate technology," she added.

Nakafeero noted that Uganda already has ongoing innovative research in agriculture and household technologies through institutions such as the National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO).

"You don't know how much technology is available that has been generated by NARO as an institution in agricultural development," she told journalists.

She also welcomed the recently amended Employment Act for recognising domestic work as legitimate labour deserving protection under the law.

"We still have an issue in terms of having a basic salary. That's a decision the



Commissioner: Nakafeero

Government has to take, but the mere fact that our laws and policies now recognise domestic work is a very good development," Nakafeero said.

She urged employers to respect the rights and welfare of domestic workers through fair remuneration and humane working conditions.

"And this discussion and advocacy around unpaid care and support work is in the right direction," Nakafeero said.

Francis Odokorach, the country director of Oxfam, said unpaid care work plays a central role in sustaining societies and economies, but remains undervalued.

"Care work sustains families. It sustains communities and economies. When I travel and see how many young Ugandan women are leaving the country to work abroad, most of the work they are going to do relates to care work," Odokorach explained.

He stressed the need for Governments and societies to recognise care work as a critical economic contribution that deserves investment and policy attention.

Other organisations that participated in the symposium included the Platform for Labour Action, which presented findings from a national study on the employment situation in Uganda's domestic work sector.

UWONET also held another session titled, "The relationship between climate change, unpaid care and gender inequality."

EXPLOITATION

The International Centre for Research on Women led discussions on marginalised women's experiences and aspirations regarding social protection in Uganda.

The Uganda Water and

Sanitation Network unveiled findings on the prevalence of sexual corruption in access to water, sanitation and hygiene services, calling for stronger protections for women and girls.

Among the prominent personalities who attended the symposium were former workers MP Agnes Kunihira and former Kyegegwa woman MP Flavia Kabahenda, as well as Rita Aciro, the executive director of UWONET.

Government entities represented included Parliament, the Uganda Bureau of Statistics and the gender ministry.

Participants at the symposium collectively emphasised that reducing unpaid care and domestic work is essential for achieving gender equality, increasing women's economic productivity and accelerating Uganda's broader socio-economic transformation.

WEALTH CREATION PROGRAMMES

The Government has committed more than sh2.49 trillion towards wealth creation interventions in the coming financial year 2026/2027 national budget, which will be read next month.

The funds are aimed creating thousands of jobs, boosting household incomes, supporting enterprise development, strengthening access to affordable financing across the country, and expanding financial inclusion for vulnerable groups like women.

Among other initiatives, PDM has been allocated sh1.084 trillion, GROW has been allocated sh75.95b, Emyooga allocated sh100b, Uganda Development Bank allocated sh442.2b, and the Export Guarantee Scheme under the Investment for Industrial Transformation and Employment programme has been allocated sh180b.