

Disability Inclusion Helpdesk Report No: 149

Query title	Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) Analysis – Uganda (Waste Management, Pollution and Health within the Agriculture Sector)
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Query	The Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) have requested a Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) Analysis to be conducted in Uganda, with a specific focus on waste management, pollution and health within the agriculture sector. This will inform the Health and Pollution Action Plan on the ODA Environmental Pollution Programme, alongside internal decisions for the next few years.
Enquirer	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

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Introduction

The Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs (Defra) have submitted a request to the Disability Inclusion Helpdesk, to undertake a Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) Analysis in Uganda. The GEDSI analysis has a specific focus on waste management, pollution and health within the agricultural sector, in rural and urban Uganda. The aim of the analysis is to inform the Health and Pollution Action Plan on the Official Development Assistance (ODA) Environmental Pollution Programme and upcoming internal decisions. The key audience for this analysis is internal DEFRA staff, and key stakeholders that DEFRA work with.

This GEDSI analysis will answer the following research questions, taking an intersectional approach:

1. Who are the most marginalised, vulnerable, or socially excluded people and groups in Uganda's urban and rural areas and what are the key drivers of inequalities—including within the waste management and agricultural sectors. How do intersecting identities and forms of discrimination intensify their exclusion and disadvantage?
2. How are these excluded groups affected by the adverse health and environmental impacts of air, waste, and chemical pollution in Uganda's urban and rural communities, and what are the implications of this exclusion on their well-being and livelihoods

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3. What are the risks, including safeguarding and SEAH risks, to working with these groups or addressing drivers of inequalities? How are these risks best mitigated?
4. Who are the key stakeholders to engage on GEDSI with? What are the barriers and entry points to stakeholder participation, input and leadership that our programme should consider in Uganda?

Methodology

This research took place between August to November 2025. The research team included one lead researcher based in the UK and one senior technical expert based in Australia who provided oversight throughout the process. The research involved the following pieces of qualitative research:

- **Primary research:** This included key informant interviews with two experts who work within non-governmental organisations such as organisations of people with disabilities (OPDs) or community-based organisations (CBOs). These organisations focus on a range of thematic areas such as livelihoods for women working in waste and recycling, sustainable resource management, environmental advocacy, livelihoods, natural resource management, gender justice, food security, agriculture, land rights, community development, youth engagement, and people with disabilities. These participants were based in Uganda. The interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams and lasted around one hour each.
- **Secondary research:** This included an in-depth literature review. The research team identified published and unpublished resources on the topic, evidence reviews, policy documents and other analyses, and used a mixture of grey and academic literature. Following standard Helpdesk practice, the secondary data had to fulfil the following criteria to be included:
 - **Focus:** Global level data and evidence, including country case studies, on disability and organised crime, in line with the research questions.
 - **Key words:** Gender, disability, LGBTQI+, rural, urban, GEDSI, GESI, agriculture, agriculture sector, health, pollution, air pollution, waste management, chemical pollution, livelihoods, social exclusion, marginalisation, vulnerable communities, vulnerability, poverty
 - **Time period:** 2015 – present
 - **Language:** English
 - **Publication Status:** Publicly available and unpublished material shared with the research team by Defra and KII participants.
 - **Geographical focus:** Uganda, Rural and Urban levels

Limitations

- > Due to the nature of this research, it was challenging to find experts on the topic, and there was limited willingness to participate in the research, so it was difficult to arrange more than two key informant interviews. As a result, the researchers had to rely mainly on evidence and findings from the literature review as well as the limited interviews conducted.

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- > There was a reasonable amount of literature focusing on gender and disability within the agriculture and waste management sectors. However there was very little evidence (including from literature and KIs) on how LGBTQI+ people, older people and indigenous people experience the waste management and agriculture sectors.

Introduction to Uganda

Uganda is located in East Africa, surrounded by Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Sudan and Democratic Republic of Congo. The population in Uganda is 50.01 million, with approximately 13.70 million living in urban areas and 36.31 million living in rural areas ([World Bank Data, 2025](#)).

Until 1967, Uganda operated as a quasi-federal state with five subregional monarchies and districts under a central government. The 1967 constitution abolished the monarchies, creating a republic led by an elected president and a cabinet drawn from the unicameral National Assembly. In theory, the judiciary, legislature, and executive were meant to function independently but in coordination. In practice, however, the balance of power among these branches shifted significantly under different presidents. During Idi Amin's rule (1971–79), all representative institutions were dissolved, and following a series of military coups in 1985, the constitution was suspended. The 1995 constitution, still in force with amendments, established the president as head of state, government, and the armed forces, supported by a prime minister and cabinet. Currently, Yoweri Museveni is the President of Uganda (since 1986), and Robinah Nabbanja is the Prime Minister (since 2021). Nabbanja is the first female Prime Minister in Uganda. Legislative power lies with a unicameral Parliament, mostly elected for five-year terms. Remaining seats in Parliament are reserved for one female representative from every district and representatives of special interest groups, such as youth, army, labour and people with disabilities. The constitution protects cultural rights, and a 2005 referendum ended the “no-party” system, restoring multiparty politics and leading to elections the following year ([Britannica, 2025](#)). Uganda is also divided into districts, with each district being administered by an elected chairperson and district council, who have judicial and political powers to manage local affairs.

While Uganda is a low-income country, its economy has been resilient despite rising fiscal deficits, public debt and slow pace of reforms, with growth accelerated to 6.4 between 2024 - 2025 ([World Bank, 2025](#)). Uganda has ample arable land, meaning its economy predominantly comprises of agriculture, accounting for 24% of GDP in 2023/24 ([FOA, 2025](#)) and employing about 72% of the labour force. Uganda also has sizable deposits of minerals such as gold, copper, cobalt, iron, and rare earth elements, and its top foreign exchange earners include gold, coffee and tourism, and crude oil (ibid). The most recent poverty estimate from the Uganda National Household Survey 2019/20 is 20.3%, equating to approximately 8.7 million people, which is a decrease from 21.4% in 2016/17. However, 42.2% of people (18.1 million) are under the international poverty line of US\$2.15 per day per capita ([World Bank Group, 2023](#)). At a global level, 8.5% (700 million people) are living under the international poverty line, showing 2.5% of those are from Uganda.

Waste Management and Agriculture Sectors in Uganda

Uganda is facing a significant increase in volumes of rubbish generated, making solid waste collection one of the most critical services in cities like Kampala. However, it is significantly

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underfinanced and suffers from poor quality waste management and coverage, leading to knock on impacts for society and the environment. The sector is decentralised, and involves local governments and increasing public-private partnerships for the management cycle (collection, recycling, disposal). Uganda is increasingly struggling with waste management, especially in Kampala, as population growth and urbanisation accelerate. Waste volumes in the city are projected to rise sharply, from about 3,206 tonnes per day in 2015 to an estimated 4,739 tonnes per day by 2030. *"The waste generation rate in Uganda is estimated at the range of 0.4 - 0.6 kg/person/day. About 28,000 tons of municipal waste from Kampala was disposed of in the landfill every month. This waste consisted on average (by weight) of 92.1% organic material, 1.8% hard plastic, 0.1% metals, 1.3% papers, 3.0% soft plastic, 0.6% glass, 0.5% textile and leather, and 0.6% others"* ([Komakech et al., 2014](#)). Kiteezi was the only functioning landfill, and was over capacity, taking in roughly 1,200 tonnes of waste from Kampala each day, with no effective systems for reuse or treatment. Because it relies on open dumping, the site posed major environmental and public health hazards, including methane-related fires, soil pollution, and leachate contaminating nearby water sources ([UN Environment Programme, 2023](#)). In 2024, there was a landslide at the site and it was formally closed immediately after ([Schlindwein, 2025](#)).

The agriculture sector is the cornerstone of Uganda's economy, employing over 70% of people and contributing to 42% of Uganda's total export earnings in 2023/24 ([FOA, 2025](#)) and 90% of the country's foreign exchange earnings ([FOA, 2025](#)). Uganda produces a wide range of agricultural products including coffee, tea, sugar, livestock, fish, edible oils, cotton, tobacco, plantains, corn, beans, cassava, sweet potatoes, millet, sorghum, and groundnuts. Commercialisation of the agriculture sector is restricted by barriers to fertilisers and quality seed, as well as limited irrigation systems, which leave production highly exposed to climate shocks and pest outbreaks. Growth is further restricted by poor packaging capacity, inadequate storage, weak post-harvest handling, limited access to agricultural credit, high transport costs, a lack of reliable rural feeder roads, an inefficient and complex land tenure system, and gaps in modern farming knowledge([International Trade Administration, 2023](#)). Many Ugandan producers also struggle to meet the sanitary and phytosanitary requirements needed to export to Europe and the United States, while products such as poultry, sugar, and milk continue to face export barriers in Kenya, a key regional market ([International Trade Administration, 2023](#)).

Marginalisation and Social Exclusion by Population Group

In both rural and urban areas of Uganda, there are many different forms of social exclusion and marginalisation of particular groups, driven by harmful social norms, attitudes and behaviours, policies and practices. This section provides a deeper look into various marginalised and excluded groups in Uganda's rural and urban areas and an understanding of the drivers of this inequality. It also explores how the marginalised population groups experience the waste management and agriculture sector. It will also explore how these groups are disproportionately affected by health and environmental impacts of air, waste and chemical pollution.

Gender equality

Uganda has made some progress in advancing gender parity and narrowing the gender gap, particularly with economic participation and opportunities and parliament

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positions, and has numerous policies in place to support gender equality. Uganda has signed onto or ratified various international initiatives that support and champion gender equality, such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1985, and the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. Additionally, there are various policies that also seek to empower women and girls and reduce gender inequalities, such as the 2006 National Equal Opportunities Policy, which seeks to eliminate discrimination and promote equal opportunities for all; the 2007 Gender Policy, which incorporates a gender perspective into all planning and implementation programmes; and a National Strategy for Girls' Education to promote public and private partnerships that promote girls' education ([Afrobarometer, 2024](#)). Additionally, the 1995 Uganda Constitution guarantees equality of men, women and other marginalised groups before the law and provides for their rights. The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MoGLSD) has developed a National Policy on Elimination of Gender-Based Violence (GBV). With these policies in place, Uganda has seen some advancement in gender parity and narrowing of the gender gap. For example, 40% of all business owners are female, making Uganda one of seven countries in the world that has achieved gender parity in entrepreneurial activity. Additionally 49% of Ugandan women have access to some form of financial service (with men at 57%). Women hold 46% of local government positions, 33% of parliamentary seats, and 43% of cabinet positions ([UNDP, 2024](#)).

Despite this progress, gaps remain in terms of the inclusion of women and gender equality. For example, while women have a reasonably high level of representation in political leadership, their level of influence is lower than men due to structural barriers to gender equality, and their participation is not reflected at the Women's Economic Empowerment, Collectives and Gender Integration in Uganda's sub-national level. UNDP (2024) summarised these barriers as: entrenched social norms and practices; policy implementation gaps; rising gender inequality in economic empowerment; limited financing for the institutional framework for gender mainstreaming; unequal capacities in adaptation to disasters; and the gender-dimensions of a high youth population.

- > **Entrenched social norms and practices:** Uganda remains a patriarchal society in which certain beliefs, norms, behaviours and practices continue to exclude and undermine women and girls in society. As highlighted in the third National Development Plan (NDP III), these norms include imbalances in power relations between men and women within public and private spheres, gender stereotyping, male bias and embedded gender roles, widespread acceptance of violence within the household, and issues around men exerting power and control over women because of perceived rights – from the ongoing tradition of 'bride price' payment and the persistence of early marriage for girls under 18, to limitations on land rights for women and sons being given preferential treatment and opportunities within families (UNDP, 2024).

- > **Policy implementation gaps:** Uganda has established numerous gender-responsive legal, policy, and institutional frameworks, but enforcement remains weak due to inadequate funding, limited human resources, insufficient gender expertise, and a lack of gender-disaggregated data within Ministries, Departments and Agencies. As a result, women's legal status and economic capacity remains constrained, and gender equality achievements largely reflect formal rather than substantive equality. Whilst there have been advances in gender balance in local councils and dedicated community development departments, reaching one third women's representation, Local Governments continue to struggle with gender-responsive

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planning and budgeting due to limited technical capacity and revenue. WROs, once active advocates for gender equality, have also been restricted by reduced donor funding, staff turnover, and restrictive state regulations on their operations and registration.

> **Rising gender inequality in economic empowerment:** despite the abovementioned figures showing advances in addressing inequalities in employment for women, gender inequality in economic empowerment and outcomes remains a concern, according to a UNDP Uganda report (2020). This report highlighted that women, youth, elderly, people with disabilities and chronic conditions were most at risk of extreme poverty and overburden of unpaid care work following the Covid-19 pandemic, with the Ugandan Finance Ministry reporting that the level of Ugandans who were poor increased from 18.9% to 20.3% after Covid-19. Productivity has remained low, especially in the agriculture sector which employs most of the workforce. Young women and girls are excluded from accessing job opportunities, with the unemployment rate being 20% for young women and 14% for young men.

> **Unequal capacities in adaptation to disasters:** During climate-related and human-induced disasters, gender inequalities in access to decision-making, services, and economic opportunities tend to worsen. In regions like Karamoja, women bear the burden of food production and caregiving during droughts and floods, while men focus on livestock and income security. Displacement and conflict-related crises further expose a lack of gender-sensitive approaches in peacebuilding and recovery, resulting in unequal access to essential services such as energy, water, education, and healthcare.

Women are less likely than men to complete higher education or to hold higher paying jobs, in part because families commonly prioritise boys' education over girls' ([Afrobarometer, 2024](#)). For example, while the 2017 UNESCO Institute of Statistics showed that primary school completion rate for girls (54%) was slightly more than boys (52%), there was a larger reduction for lower secondary school completion for girls (25%) compared to boys (28%), and even more for the gross enrolment in tertiary education (6% for boys and 4% for girls) ([UNESCO, 2024](#)).

Work still needs to be done to reduce gender-based violence in Uganda, which remains a top women's rights issue that the government and society want to address ([Nakayiza, 2024](#)). A [National Survey on Violence \(2021\)](#) reported that 95% of Ugandan women had experienced physical and/or sexual violence, with GBV listed as the cause of 168 deaths in 2020. This figure is likely much higher in reality, given hesitancy around reporting GBV due to risk of backlash or reprisals; 7 out of 10 women who had suffered sexual violence did not seek help or told anyone, and fewer than 1 in 10 women sought assistance after experiencing violence from the police, instead preferring to remain silent or turn to family members ([UN Women, 2021](#)).

Gender equality in Waste Management and Agriculture Sectors

Waste Management

As Uganda's population grows and consumption rises, waste generation increases, placing significant strain on cities and municipalities already struggling to manage waste safely and sustainably. This challenge has direct links to gender inequality, as long-standing gender roles shape who handles waste, how they participate in the sector, and what opportunities they can access. The "gender and waste nexus" highlights how women, traditionally responsible for household waste, often end up in the lowest-paid and least secure positions in the informal waste economy, while men dominate better-paid, decision-

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making roles. When waste systems are formalised or modernised, women are frequently left out of the process and lose access to income, social protection, and skills development, even though they hold valuable knowledge about waste minimisation and sorting. Addressing these imbalances requires shifting social norms, collecting gender-disaggregated data, providing training, and elevating women's leadership so that their expertise can contribute to more equitable, effective, and sustainable waste management ([DIWWAS, 2025](#)).

Gender inequality within the waste management and plastics recycling sectors in Kampala pose key challenges to Uganda achieving a number of Sustainable Development Goals. A gender technical assessment of these sectors in Uganda found that gender inequalities are both causes and effects of key issues within the sector (and in other sectors like employment, education, and politics) ([ALLCOT, 2021](#)). The study found that gender issues are most prominent in Kampala compared to other districts and have a particular impact on people from a lower socio-economic background. Waste management and plastics recycling activities are undertaken by some of the most marginalised groups in Uganda, with 80% of the waste pickers in Kampala being women (which is higher than the average global rate of 70%). The study found the common socio-economic variables among women working in Waste Management and Plastics Recycling are characterised by social exclusion, extreme poverty, lack of education, early marriage, early motherhood and de facto female headed households. Most women are participating in the lowest part of the value chain and in activities that have a negative impact on their wellbeing: for example, women working in the Kiteezi landfill reported suffering social exclusion from their families and friends because of the shame attached to their work. Additionally, the environment is extremely dangerous for all workers, as shown from the landslide that killed at 21 people and displaced over 1000 people in 2024 ([Winter, 2024](#)).

Waste management and plastics recycling work is largely undertaken within the informal sector, which provides few labour protections and presents high risks to safety and wellbeing (ibid). Most women working in solid waste management occupy low-paid, unstable positions. They are rarely formally recognised or contracted as employees, leaving them without essential labour protections such as paid maternity leave or time for nursing. Pregnant workers are also often required to continue night shifts and handle dangerous tasks ([DIWWAS, 2025](#)). Dignifying Women in Waste Sectors (DIWWAS) (2025, n.p) summarised the key risks that women face in the waste management sector in Uganda, including:

- > “Lack protective equipment and many suffer illness or injury, but being unable to work means not being paid;
- > Not being part of insurance or savings schemes;
- > Harassment by employers and law enforcement agencies and disrespect from communities are a regular part of their life.
- > Street sweeping or cleaning of shops and offices often takes place at night or the early morning, and working in the dark leaves them vulnerable to harassment or abuse.
- > Lack access to toilets while they are working, and have not place to rest for a break, making it even more difficult during menstruation or pregnancy, especially when dealing with heavy workloads”

These poor working conditions and inequalities for women remain overlooked, because of the

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low bargaining power and participation in policy, programming, planning and decision-making by national departments, municipalities, recycling companies or other employers. While the Government have developed a 3R strategy (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle), women's issues have not been adequately addressed during implementation by national departments, development partners, cities and municipalities or NGOs working in the sector. GEDSI is also not reflected within this strategy. Additionally, coordination between organisations focused on women's or labour rights and those working in the waste management sector has been minimal or entirely lacking (ibid).

Women's low-status roles within the waste management sector are both reflective of and compounded by broader gender inequalities, such as women's insecure land and tenure rights, limited participation in decision making, lack of basic education and access to markets and capital. For example, due to unequal gender roles and stereotyping, men and women often hold different and distinct positions, such as women being hired for detail-oriented tasks like sorting plastics, cleaning plastics, and waste weight inventory. Women are highly unlikely to be in technical or managerial positions, but rather occupy the lowest-paid and most easily replaced positions ([UN Environment Programme, n.d.](#)). This trend is also reflected in many sector-specific CBOs. For example, the Kiteezi landfill site comprised nearly 1000 members in the workforce that are mostly women, yet the top three officers are male, with women not invited to be part of any leadership role (ALLCOT, 2021).

Many women are restricted in their career growth and leadership options because the 'buy-in-bulk' business model of waste management. Despite women's valuable experience within the sector, they possess limited bargaining power because the 'buy in bulk' model means they are reliant on brokers for transport, negotiation, and market access (ibid). Women have expressed interest in advancing within the waste management and plastics recycling value chains, including holding these broker roles, but face barriers to gaining the necessary knowledge of business models or enterprise development. These conditions highlight the need for projects and policymakers to create gender-responsive initiatives that strengthen women's roles and economic opportunities in the waste management sector (ibid).

Unmanaged waste remains a major social and environmental challenge across Uganda, however, most interventions focus on urban areas ignoring growing issues in rural areas. Rural gender perspectives are often overlooked in solid waste management, even though women are frequently excluded and denied opportunities from solid waste work due to assumptions about physical strength and entrenched gender roles in both household and public spaces. To address this, future waste policies must apply a gender lens, supported by public education to challenge stereotypes and by collecting gender-disaggregated data to design more equitable and sustainable solutions ([DIWWAS, 2025](#)).

There is a lack of targeted projects to advance gender equality within the waste management sector. Although the government has signed numerous international agreements in recent years, progress on integrating gender considerations into environmental programs remains limited. The [ALLCOT, \(2021\)](#) study explored the gender issues within the waste management and plastics recycling sector in Uganda, and found no strong gender-focused initiatives across Uganda's waste management sector. While some Ministry of Water and Environment projects attempted to increase women's participation by including women in consultations, gender concerns were not meaningfully addressed or incorporated into the final project designs. However, supporting women in the sector in

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Uganda is a growing area of focus for the civil society organisation DIWWAS. DIWWAS is a network of women who boost the role of women in solving waste management problems, enhancing women's participation and advancing gender equality in the sector. They do this by creating opportunities for women to establish their waste businesses, pushing for gender considerations in local government planning and processes, promoting the safety of women in the sector, strengthening women's agency to be recycling champions, designing waste system solutions based on gender-inclusive research, and right-sizing technology and facilities for women. A positive outcome from DIWWAS' work supporting the participation of women includes *'increased efficiencies at work, providing more time with their families, to care for themselves, and be active in their communities. They also have newfound confidence to share their ideas with others, form relationships with their peers, and trust themselves.'* ([DIWWAS, 2025, n.d.](#))

Agriculture Sector

Gender inequalities in the agriculture sector are compounded for marginalised groups, including rural women, youth, and indigenous communities. These populations often experience intersecting forms of discrimination related to ethnicity, age, disability, and socioeconomic status, which further restricts their participation in agricultural value chains and limits their access to resources and opportunities. [ODI \(2021\)](#) conducted research on youth (aged 18 – 29) in the agriculture sector, and the challenges young women face because of their age and gender. The study found that young people face serious challenges in agriculture, such as limited ability to accumulate assets and resources, which is exacerbated for young women who have less access to extension services, transport, and relevant information. This contributes to less profitable crops and cultivation.

Within agricultural households in Uganda, more women are engaged (88%) than men (78%), yet women face greater challenges than men as a result of discriminatory gender norms ([ODI, 2021](#)). Gender-based discrimination restricts women's access to key resources such as land, labour, equipment, and financial assets. They also tend to shoulder a disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work and are frequently excluded from leadership and decision-making roles at all levels ([FAO, 2020](#)). Women-occupied roles are frequently insecure, low-paid, or lacking formal social protection, which increases the risks of poverty and exacerbates risks of exploitation. For example, forced and early marriage of girls/daughters is used as a coping mechanism for economic hardship and poverty (*ibid.*). Research suggests that if women had equal access to productive resources as men, farm yields could potentially rise by 20%–30% globally ([FAO, 2011](#)). However, research by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) highlights the unequal distribution of land in Uganda, where women frequently hold smaller plots or lack secure land tenure. This disparity limits women's participation in agricultural activities and reinforces their economic vulnerability and reliance on male members of the household ([Nantale, 2024](#)).

In Uganda, farming work is divided along gender lines, shaped by cultural and economic norms. In agriculture and household work, men and women are expected to perform tasks considered suitable for their gender. Men typically engage in heavy work such as land clearing, ploughing, construction, and mechanised farming, while women are responsible for lighter activities like planting, weeding, feeding livestock, and small-scale income-generating work such as tailoring or hairdressing. Beliefs that women are physically weaker reinforce this division, and women often face a double burden of farm work and unpaid care and domestic work. As a result, men can spend more time on farming and leisure, while women have limited capacity to engage

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in income-generating activities, education, or other pursuits ([ODI, 2021](#)). This division of labour often limits women's access to land, credit, agricultural inputs, and extension services, and their contributions to farm production are frequently undervalued. Research by IFPRI and UBOS shows that these inequalities also reduce women's influence in household decision-making and reinforce broader patterns of economic and social marginalisation ([Nantale, 2024](#)).

Women lack decision-making powers within households. Men are the primary decision-makers within households, particularly regarding land use, farm proceeds, and investments. Women often have limited influence over how farming income is allocated, with men taking the larger share and selling higher-value products and women handling lower-value crops or small livestock. This lack of control reduces women's capacity to reinvest in farming, achieve financial independence, hire labour, negotiate prices, or access markets. Men also have greater ability to mobilise family labour, whereas women's limited resources and household responsibilities hinder their capacity to do so, further reinforcing inequalities in agricultural productivity and income ([ODI, 2021](#)).

Women engaged in subsistence farming experience higher rates of sexual and physical violence. Research has shown that women working in agricultural settings, particularly subsistence farming, are at an elevated risk of sexual violence ([Awor et al., 2025](#); [Gblahan and Ayodapo, 2013](#); [Adams, 2018](#)). The isolated nature of many subsistence farming areas can heighten women's vulnerability by restricting access to social networks and protective measures. Economic inequalities and power imbalances within agricultural communities can create opportunities for perpetrators to exploit these vulnerabilities. Limited financial resources, low incomes, and minimal social support further increase women's dependence on others, making them more susceptible to exploitation and abuse. Additionally, social norms around decorum and safety restrict women's mobility and participation in public agricultural work ([ODI, 2021](#)). Concerns about gender-based violence, exposure to men, or reputational risks prevent women from traveling far or farming distant plots. As a result, women often undertake self-employment activities close to home, such as food production or local brewing, which can be combined with unpaid care and domestic work. Men, in contrast, are more mobile, traveling to markets or trade centres and negotiating with buyers, reinforcing the gendered division of labour and limiting women's opportunities to expand their agricultural or commercial activities. These findings highlight the need for interventions specifically designed to support women in subsistence farming, including programmes that provide training, resources, and support to improve their safety, economic independence, and participation in decision-making processes.

Forced and early marriage of girls/daughters is used as a coping mechanism for economic hardship and poverty. Early marriage and childbearing remain prevalent in Uganda, particularly in the Northern region, with many girls marrying before 18 and some before 15. Social norms favour early marriage for girls while boys are not expected to marry young. Practices such as bride price and levirate marriage further reinforce these norms. Early marriage and childbirth limit girls' educational attainment, restrict economic opportunities, and constrain participation in commercial farming. Women who marry or give birth before 20 are more likely to work in subsistence agriculture and less likely to hold professional or managerial positions, perpetuating gender inequality and restricting young women's capacity to engage in productive agricultural activities ([ODI, 2021](#)).

Norms on ownership, control and utilisation of land and ownership of non-land assets create challenges for young women. Land ownership is heavily skewed towards men, with women rarely inheriting land from parents or husbands. Young men are more likely to own

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land than women, and ownership generally increases with age for men but less so for women. Limited land access restricts women's ability to secure their agricultural enterprises, use land as collateral, or fully benefit from farming activities. While a few educated parents support daughters in acquiring land, such cases are exceptions, and prevailing norms follow customary patrilineal practices that disadvantage women. Men usually control valuable productive assets, including livestock, oxen, and agricultural tools, while women's ownership is mostly limited to smaller livestock or co-owned resources through their husbands, sometimes shared among co-wives. Cultural norms discourage women from independently controlling assets, with concerns that earning money may make women "uncontrollable." Parents also preferentially invest in sons' productive activities. Although programs like Youth Forward Initiative have improved women's access to non-land assets, gendered norms continue to restrict women's ability to fully control these resources or make independent decisions about their use ([ODI \(2021\)](#)).

Women have very little financial autonomy, due to harmful norms. Access to credit and financial services is challenging for smallholder farmers in rural Uganda, but women face particular barriers due to harmful gender norms. They often lack collateral, relevant information, and access to formal credit, which tends to favour large-scale male farmers. Financial institutions frequently require a husband's consent to open accounts, despite legal provisions, limiting women to informal savings and microfinance schemes with small, short-term loans and high interest rates. Young women face additional disadvantages, as under-18s require guardian permission to access formal finance, and lack of land ownership restricts collateral for larger loans. Some programmes improve access to savings and loans, but women are often limited to small amounts that constrain agricultural investments ([ODI \(2021\)](#)).

A KII participant noted that in West Nile, women and children are disproportionately affected by challenges in the agriculture sector, largely due to cultural norms and structural barriers. Land is communally owned, and when women marry, they leave their family homes without securing land of their own, which often leads to dependence on their husbands and can heighten the risk of domestic violence. Although women carry out most of the agricultural labour, often working manually in small gardens without mechanised tools, men frequently leave for town to pursue petty jobs, leaving women and even their children to shoulder the workload. Low productivity is exacerbated by erratic rainfall patterns, especially in refugee settlements where rain is increasingly unreliable, causing women's efforts to result in poor yields. Social issues such as the rise in teenage mothers during COVID-19 and the low levels of education among girls, driven by families prioritising marriage over schooling, also limit women's economic opportunities. Greater investment in mechanised farming, irrigation systems, and improved waste and manure management, along with efforts to ensure women's equal access to these investments, could significantly ease the burden on women, enhance production, and support climate resilience. Additionally, more equitable resource allocation, improved access to loans and markets, and stronger empowerment initiatives are needed to ensure women can participate fully and productively in agriculture (KII participant, 2025).

There are organisations and initiatives set up to support gender equality in the agriculture sector. Oxfam provides women farmers with training, education, and access to resources to improve productivity and income. The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) implements programmes to strengthen women's land rights, improve access to credit, and support participation in decision-making. Other projects focus on creating women's farming

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groups, facilitating access to markets, and promoting gender-sensitive extension services. By targeting the structural barriers women face, these initiatives help increase their economic independence, enhance productivity, and contribute to more equitable and sustainable rural development. Women's groups, cooperatives, and networks play an important role in mobilising, advocating for rights, and influencing agricultural decision-making, contributing to more equitable governance ([Nantale, 2024](#)).

There are opportunities for empowering women in Uganda's agriculture sector. These are growing through efforts from policymakers and practitioners to reduce gender disparities and promote inclusive rural development ([Nantale, 2024](#)). Women's entrepreneurship and agribusiness are key pathways, with access to markets, value chains, and business training enhancing economic agency and leadership. Participating in value-added activities such as food processing, packaging, and marketing allows women to generate income, build assets, and improve household welfare. There is value in gender-sensitive extension services, training, mentoring, and peer learning to improve skills, adopt sustainable practices, and enhance resilience. Additionally, there is importance in investing in women's education, health, and nutrition to strengthen their confidence, decision-making, and productivity. Overall, empowering women in agriculture requires integrated economic, social, and political strategies that enable them to contribute fully to sustainable and inclusive rural development.

Disability inclusion

There has been contestation on what the accurate number of people with disabilities in Uganda is due to the use of different methodologies and stigma leading to underreporting. In the 2014 population and housing census report, it was found that 12.4% of people had a disability, whereas the Uganda Functional Difficulties Survey 2017 estimated 16.4%. The most recent census in 2024 released by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) suggested that only 5.7% of the population have a disability. This finding has been challenged by people with disabilities, who argue that this is a significant underestimate and could negatively impact future planning for programmes ([NTV Uganda, 2024](#)). A recent household survey in 2020 found that 8.5% of Ugandans have a disability, through using both the Washington Group Questionnaire Short Set for adults and Child Functioning Module¹ for children aged 2 – 17 years. The survey found that prevalence of disability increases sharply with age; 40% of people over 65 years old have a disability, and 57% of people over 80 years old. However, the largest number of people with disabilities are below 15 years old at approximately 35% ([Kett, 2020](#)). In the 2014 census, the disability prevalence was higher for women (15%) than it was for men (10%) and higher in urban areas (15%) than rural areas (12%). While there is little variation on the type of impairments for children with disabilities, more adults have visual impairments or mobility impairments. Among adults, common functional difficulties include vision (7.1%), walking/climbing (7.8%), and hearing (2.5%, with 0.2% deaf). Psychosocial or intellectual difficulties affect 9.4% of adults and 7.6% of children aged 5–17. For children aged 5–17, 19% of disabilities are congenital, 10% are caused by malaria, and 7% result from home accidents ([UNFPA, 2021](#)). Unfortunately, this research could not find accurate and reliable data that is more recent.

There is a strong legislative basis for disability inclusion in Uganda. The Constitution

¹ These question sets are recommended by FCDO through their disability inclusion strategy.

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of the Republic of Uganda, Article 35 states that ‘*people with disabilities have a right to respect and human dignity, and the State and Society shall take appropriate measures to ensure that they realise their full mental and physical potential*’. The Constitution formulated the Persons with Disabilities Act 2020, a key instrument in driving and providing the rights of people with disabilities. The government initiated a variety of social protection programmes, aimed to improve the wellbeing of people with disabilities and other marginalised or vulnerable communities, including the Special Grant for Persons with Disabilities, and have committed to mainstreaming disability inclusion within programmes through effective participation and engagement ([Tumwebaze, in Kett, 2020](#)).

Despite the positive legislative environment, people with disabilities face discrimination, disadvantage and exclusion from participation in Uganda. The [2018 UBOS National Labour Force Survey](#) for 2016/17 found that 22% of people who are unemployed have a disability (which could be an underestimate given the challenges in collecting accurate data on disability), indicating that people with disabilities have less opportunity to participate in formal employment ([d’Unienville, 2017](#)). 1.3% of the formal sector is made up of people with disabilities (UBOS, 2018). Poverty rates in households where a person with a disability lives are 30% higher, which was also significantly increased during the Covid-19 pandemic. People with disabilities face barriers to education, with knock-on effects for employment and full participation in society; 55% of people with disabilities were literate compared to 75% of people without disabilities ([UNFPA, 2021](#)). The standards of living for people with disabilities is often very low due to barriers to employment and the additional costs to meet the needs of the household member with disabilities. Households with a person with a disability spend 39% more on household expenses than households without a disability, corresponding to UGX 16,500. This makes it harder to build savings, increases vulnerability to shocks. On average, households with children who have disabilities spend about 31% more on education-related expenses compared to those without children with disabilities. The cost increases with the severity of the child’s impairment—families of children with significant functional challenges typically spend around 50% more. These additional costs, which come on top of regular school fees, often make it difficult for many families to afford schooling for their children with disabilities ([Kett, 2020](#)).

Women and girls with disabilities, in all their diversity, face additional barriers and an increased risk of violence due to gender inequality ([UNDP, 2024](#)). Although many laws and policies prohibit discrimination against people with disabilities, women and girls with disabilities continue to experience abuse and marginalisation from families, communities, and even state institutions. UNDP noted that this is particularly the case for women and girls with disabilities who live with HIV/AIDs, are sex workers, refugees or widows. [UNFPA \(2021\)](#) noted that 47% of people with disabilities are more likely to experience violence compared to people with disabilities at 39%. 36% of female children with disabilities aged 5-17 and 58% of female adults with disabilities have experienced some form of physical or sexual violence. Another study found that while violence against primary school children with and without disabilities was extremely high, girls with disabilities report slightly more physical and considerably more sexual violence than girls without disabilities ([Devries et al., 2014](#)). Access to justice and legal services remains difficult for many people with disabilities; there are a low number of court cases that represent people with disabilities, especially cases involving sexual exploitation of women with disabilities. There is a lack of accessibility and procedural accommodations in courts, which further compounds the lack of access to justice ([National Council for Persons with Disabilities, 2022](#)).

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People with disabilities face significant stigma and discrimination in Uganda, which fuels their exclusion and restricts their ability to participate fully in society. The [National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda \(NUDIPU\) collaborated with TRAC FM \(2019\)](#) on a six-month campaign to collect people's views on people with disabilities, using various media tools such as radio talk shows, vox pops and poll questions across ten sub-regions in Uganda. The study found that people with disabilities face stigma and discrimination, and are often treated as 'special' or 'different' or needing special care, and often struggle to socialise or participate in their communities, families, within work or at school. People without disabilities' perceptions can often be seen as patronising or prejudicial, whereby across 14,455 responses, 51% of people felt people with disabilities need special care. Whilst only 27% of the 14,445 respondents reported viewing people with disabilities as the same as everyone else, 91% of people reported that people with disabilities were just as productive or more productive than people without disabilities. 4% of people viewed people with disabilities as cursed or a bad omen, indicating that despite progress there are lingering prejudices.

Stigmatisation of people with disabilities can lead to children with disabilities being hidden away from the community and segregated within their families. Specifically, young girls with disabilities are more vulnerable to sexual abuse and early pregnancy because of opportunistic men who target them due to socialised negative perceptions of people with disabilities ([Kett, 2020](#)).

Negative attitudes and perceptions restricts the access of women with disabilities to key services, including education and health, and justice. One study found that in rural Luuka district, individuals with disabilities encountered challenges related to autonomy and awareness, restricted access to health information and financial resources, and reliance on caregivers when making healthcare decisions, which collectively contributed to feelings of disempowerment on the demand side. On the supply side, widespread discrimination and negative attitudes among health workers were reported. Shortages of health personnel and delays in service delivery adversely affected access to care, leading to suboptimal outcomes. Many healthcare facilities lacked adequate accessibility features, further exacerbating barriers to effective health provision ([Ssemata et al., 2024](#)).

Disability in Waste Management and Agriculture Sectors

Waste Management

The literature on disability inclusion and exclusion within the Waste Management sector in Uganda is very limited. The following information has been derived from KIIs and anecdotal evidence. There was no mention within the literature or KIIs of how people with psychosocial, intellectual or cognitive disabilities are included or excluded from the waste management sector, or the types of barriers they may face in participating, indicating a priority area for future research.

It is likely that people with disabilities face many similar barriers to working in the waste management sector as they do in other sectors. As shown above, approximately 22% of people who are unemployed have a disability, many whom also face stigma, limited access to job opportunities, and are 30% more likely to live in poverty than people without disabilities ([d'Unienville, 2017](#)). Persistent stereotypes and limited understanding mean some employers may wrongly believe that people with disabilities are unable to perform their

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roles effectively, leading to assumptions that do not reflect their actual abilities. A KII participant noted that people with disabilities are also excluded from participating in the waste management sector due to restrictive assumptions around what people with disabilities are/are not capable of. These social attitudes are driven and reflected by local authorities, which typically fail to support sector accessibility. People with disabilities also encounter numerous environmental and structural barriers that restrict their access to fair and meaningful employment. For instance, when public transportation is inaccessible, they may be excluded from jobs that require daily travel, reducing their employment options. Improving employment opportunities for people with disabilities therefore requires action on multiple fronts, such as updating legal and organisational frameworks, offering guidance and training to employers, ensuring workplaces are accessible, and promoting education and awareness about disability (KII Participant, 2025).

The physical barriers can severely limit how people with disabilities can engage in employment opportunities within the waste management sector A KII participant noted that people with mobility impairments or physical disabilities are rarely engaged in employment within waste management sector because of the poor infrastructure. They explained that landfill sites are not developed well enough to accommodate people with these disabilities and very little effort from local authorities or the government is being made to make these worksites accessible. These issues are significantly more prominent in urban areas than rural areas, because far less waste is generated in rural areas.

While there is very little being done at a government level to meaningfully engage people with disabilities in the waste management sector, one organisation (Eco Brixs) is seeking to address this challenge ([Challenge Fund for Youth Employment, n.d.](#)).

Founded in 2017, the organisation tackles plastic waste while creating income opportunities by paying local Resource Recovery Agents for the plastic they collect and recycling it into products such as bricks and fence posts, using the revenue to sustain the cycle. By partnering with a nationwide network of collectors, many of who belong to the new Ugandan Recycling Association, Eco Brixs provides jobs for young people and prioritises marginalised groups, with people with disabilities making up a significant share of its workforce and management roles. Eco Brixs ensures at least 50% of collection centre managers are people with disabilities or single mothers, partnering with the Masaka Disability Union to recruit people with disabilities.. They also provide training in financial management, stock management, book keeping, and money management to equip them with essential business skills, alongside training on plastic segregation, sorting, quality checks, weighing and packing. Eco Brixs provide startup capital for people with disabilities managing collection sites, which helps them to pay collectors and recycle funds. As a result, 15 people with disabilities have been recruited as full-time staff and now have access to social security benefits; a part time interpreter has been hired to provide services to people with disabilities; and Eco Brixs have offered UGX26 million in startup capital for people with disabilities to help them start and manage collection centres (ibid).

Improper waste management has negative effects for residents' wellbeing and safety.

A study that explored the several priority problems with solid waste disposal in the Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement in Uganda found negative impacts on community spaces due to a lack of waste disposal awareness and education, poor domestic waste disposal, lack of tools for waste disposal management and lack of capacity in management of industrial waste ([Elrha, n.d.](#)). The study noted that people with visual impairments face further difficulties in ensuring they do not come into contact with hazardous waste.

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Environmental problems that arise from poor waste management pollutes the environment, including crops, water and air, and leads to unpleasant odours and unsafe living conditions for those who live nearby. There are also higher risks of disease transmission, especially with water contamination, which can significantly affect people with disabilities who already experience limited access to health systems.

Agriculture Sector

The agricultural sector is an important source of employment for people with disabilities in Uganda. One study by [Palladium \(2017\)](#) found that people with disabilities are actively participating in agricultural market systems across Northern Uganda and demonstrate a high degree of economic empowerment, such as 81% owning land, 43% being sole owners, 83% owning houses and 63% being sole owners, and 69% owning assets such as mobile phones. The study found that people with disabilities in Northern Uganda have different experiences and levels of involvement in agricultural markets, shaped more by attitudes, society, and demographics than by disability type. Gender roles are less strict here, with women actively growing cash crops. A 2017 study with 388 young farmers with disabilities in Uganda found that most young farmers with disabilities were men, aged 20 to 29, married, and have finished primary school [Agole et al \(2017\)](#). Many of these young farmers were born with their disability and have moderate to serious difficulties in daily life. The most common disability for those aged 20 to 29 was losing a limb.

People with disabilities also experience exclusion from the agriculture sector because of the barriers they are faced with, which are similar to the waste management sector. A KII participant noted that in the agriculture sector, people with disabilities often face the assumption that they cannot participate in farming, despite many successfully doing so. This is especially the case for women with disabilities who rely heavily on agriculture for their livelihoods. Most people with disabilities in rural settings lack access to formal education, and those with opportunities are sometimes discouraged by the belief that farming requires mobility they may not have. Organisations representing people with disabilities are trying to challenge these misconceptions by highlighting examples of successful farmers with disabilities and raising awareness both within communities and among people with disabilities themselves about their rights and ability to participate in agriculture (KII participant, 2025).

Whilst people with disabilities face common challenges to other small farmers, including barriers to accessing seeds and improved land preparation techniques, they face additional barriers associated with perceptions and a lack of accessibility. People with disabilities face similar challenges to other small farmers, like barriers to seeds, inputs, improved land preparation techniques and extensions. Other barriers include difficulty reaching markets and getting accessible information. Weak connections with other market players make people with disabilities less prominent, which limits their chances to sell products and earn steady income, discouraging investment in better farming inputs and leading to low yields.

One study by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (2023) explored the lived experiences of young men and women with disabilities in Uganda and their access to education and vocational training and employment in the agricultural sector. The study included a mix of participants with various disabilities (including physical, visual, hearing, psychosocial, and intellectual impairments), aged between 15-35 years,

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based in urban and rural parts of Uganda. The study found that youth with disabilities faced financial, environmental, and social barriers throughout their education and into employment, with inaccessible learning environments, costly and often unsuitable vocational training, and widespread stigma undermining their confidence and opportunities. While family and peer support helped some navigate school, many struggled to secure work due to discrimination, inaccessible workplaces, and limited access to assistive products or personal networks. A number engaged in income-generating activities such as tailoring, small businesses, or agriculture, yet in the agricultural sector they were frequently perceived as incapable, particularly those with physical or visual impairments, and encountered obstacles such as difficulty obtaining loans and land. Although some promising initiatives offer training in agricultural and business skills, refugee youth with disabilities continued to face additional challenges, including documentation issues, language barriers, and low awareness of services. Experiences were further shaped by intersecting identities, where young women with disabilities reported heightened risks of violence, stigma, and restricted opportunities, while those with more extensive support needs or visible impairments faced deeper exclusion. Despite aspirations for better futures, most youth were constrained by financial limitations and systemic inequalities.

There are many programmes and initiatives being run to support people with disabilities within the agriculture sector in Uganda. For example, the Northern Uganda Transforming the Economy through Climate-Smart Agribusiness Market Development (NU-TEC MD) project is working to increase people with disabilities employment with agribusinesses. This project is supporting people with disabilities to *“find employment, given there is a current lack of understanding on the needs of people with disabilities, inadequate workplace adaptations or simply employer discrimination. The project partners with agribusinesses to implement new business models that are more inclusive and connects the businesses to Light for the World, an international charity that trains the government, private sector, and development programs how to open their doors to people with disabilities. To date, 18 agribusinesses in northern Uganda have attended these trainings.”* ([Natukunda, 2019](#)). Oasis Agribusiness (U) Ltd is one agribusiness working with 86 farmers who have disabilities in Alebtong District, northern Uganda. The business provides high-quality rice seeds to these farmers and teaches them good farming methods. The farmers then share what they learn with others. When it's time to harvest, Oasis buys the rice crops from the farmers. This approach helps the business grow, improves crop quality, gives jobs to people with disabilities, and helps them become leaders in their communities. Oasis Agribusiness (U) Ltd has created an SMS system to share market information with small farmers, including those who are hearing-impaired. The company is now working to make the platform better by adding voice SMS so that farmers with visual impairments can also use it.

Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC)

LGBTQI+ people in both urban and rural Uganda live in hostile and unsafe environments, constantly facing threats of physical and emotional violence, persecution and violations of their human rights. It is estimated that there are approximately 390,000 LGBTQI+ people in Uganda, who face severe exclusion from society, including social ostracism, threats and violence, and intense social pressure to change their SOGIESC ([Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2022](#)). LGBTQI+ people face severe abuse,

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where they were publicly exposed, tortured, beaten, detained, and outed, and many endured physical, sexual, and psychological harm (SRT, 2023). Over 60% of diverse SOGIESC Ugandans have experienced torture by another person ([Dalton, Weatherston and Butler, 2020](#)). These violations also include evictions, forced removal from their communities, blackmail, job loss, and interruptions in access to health care. Media outlets often sensationalised stories involving suspected LGBTIQ+ people, sometimes even calling for their elimination. At the same time, politicians, including the Health Minister, along with religious leaders, promoted discriminatory narratives that heightened the risk of further attacks and deepened the social and economic hardships experienced by LGBTI individuals. A 2020 study found that three quarters of LGBTIQ+ people in Uganda feel very unsafe, exacerbated by how the media construct SOGIESC as a threat to society ([Dalton, Weatherston and Butler, 2020](#)).

The widespread mistreatment of LGBTIQ+ people worsened following the introduction of the Anti-Homosexuality Act in May 2023, with some noting that violence and discrimination against LGBTIQ+ individuals escalated as soon as the bill was proposed ([Freedom House 2024](#); [SRT, 2023](#)). The Ugandan Government have been instrumental in creating this hostile environment for LGBTIQ+ people, by passing legislation such as the Anti-Homosexuality Bill of 2023, which criminalises, with penalties of imprisonment, life imprisonment and even death, consensual same-sex relations; the promotion of homosexuality, including activities that seek to normalise homosexuality; and imposes reporting obligations on anyone who knows or suspects someone being engaged in homosexuality. Parents are also expected to report their children. The Bill also states that any form of “aggravated” homosexuality will result in the death penalty, alongside criminalising same-sex marriage ([Advocates for Human Rights, 2023](#)). This harmful legislation contributes to pervasive and long-lasting effects, creating a backdrop of homophobic and transphobic discriminative social norms that place the LGBTIQ+ community at risk of many different issues ([Asylum Research Centre, 2023](#)).

Under the Registration of Persons Act of 2015, intersex minors are allowed to amend their birth certificates, provided they have undergone sex-altering surgery. However there is no specific law that regulates or protects gender identity and gender expression ([UK Visas and Immigration, 2025](#)).

[Human Rights Watch \(2024\)](#) reports that even prior to the introduction of the Anti-Homosexuality Act, LGBT people in Uganda often faced discrimination, harassment, and even physical assaults. SRT (2023, p7) noted that *‘violations and abuses escalated and continue to escalate, compounded by social and traditional media sensationalising arrests of LGBTIQ+ and parading people to humiliate them before the public. Local authorities and security agencies such as the Police have also conducted raids of LGBTIQ+ housing shelters and civic organisations’*.

As a result of the wide ranging social exclusion LGBTIQ+ people face in Uganda, the majority live in poverty and face barriers to education, employment and key services. They struggle to access employment, meaning 65% of LGBTIQ+ live below the poverty line of \$1.90 per day, and many live in extreme poverty and are financially marginalised. Because of the abovementioned negative social norms and discrimination towards LGBTIQ+ people, they struggle to access key services, such as education, housing, employment, healthcare and justice.

LGBTIQ+ people face persecution from police and barriers to justice. LGBTIQ+ people

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often face arbitrary arrests, police brutality and lack of access to justice because of fear of reporting and lack of protection provided, given there is deep phobic behaviour and reactions within the justice system (Dalton, Weatherston and Butler, 2020). According to Human Rights Watch, the police have "*carried out mass arrests at LGBT pride events, at LGBT-friendly bars, and at homeless shelters on spurious grounds,*" and have "*forced some of those detained to undergo anal examinations*" ([Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2024](#)). Due to the restrictive legislation and widespread discrimination, protection is unlikely to be available for LGBTQI+ people. While the Uganda Police Force (UPF) have a Police Human Rights Policy to ensure human rights-based approach is present in policing, and there is a Professional Standards unit to monitor officers for human rights transgressions and establish trainings to sensitise officers to various gender issues, the State lists no specific programmes to educate police officers about discrimination or combat police violence against LGBTQI+ people ([Advocates for Human Rights, 2023](#)).

LGBTQI+ organisations have been banned by Ugandan Authorities, as they are accused of ‘promoting homosexuality’, which is criminalised with the Anti-homosexuality Bill, 2023. Even before 2023, civil society organisations that were advocating and supporting for the rights of LGBTQI+ people were operating in very restrictive legal and civic spaces. [Human Rights Watch \(2024, n.p.\)](#) noted that ‘*After the law came into force in May 2023, local groups reported that LGBT people in Uganda were experiencing increased attacks and discrimination by both officials and other people. These included beatings, sexual and psychological violence, evictions, blackmail, loss of employment, online harassment, and denial of health care based on their perceived or real sexual orientation or gender identity*’. Activists began legal proceedings to challenge the law, given it is one of the harshest curtailing of LGBTQI+ rights, it violates fundamental human rights and there was no meaningful public engagement to pass this law, however the judges upheld the provisions in the law and limited any financial support to LGBTQI+ organisations ([Human Rights Watch, 2024](#)).

SOGIESC in Waste Management and Agriculture Sectors

This research did not identify any specific, clear information or official guidelines about LGBTQI+ inclusion in the formal or informal waste management sector and agriculture sector in Uganda. Most discussions about inclusion in this area focus on gender equality and the involvement of women, rather than on LGBTQI+ identities. While international donors and aid organisations promote LGBTQI+ inclusion in development programmes across various sectors including agriculture and waste management, there are limitations and challenges in applying these due to the restrictive legal framework in Uganda towards diverse SOGIESC. Additionally, work places may not collect this information or share this information publicly, due to risk of backlash and causing harm. No information was provided within the KIs on this.

Indigenous People

There are approximately 56 recognised indigenous ethnic groups in Uganda, with the largest being Baganda (16.5%), followed by Banyankore (Bahima and Bairu) (9.6%), Basoga (8.8%), Bakiga (7.1%), Iteso (7.0%), Langi (6.3%), Banyarwanda (Bahutu, Batutsi and Batwa – the latter also listed here separately) (1.6%), Acholi (4.4%), Bagisu (4.9%) and

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Lugbara (3.3%), Batoro (2.4%), Bunyoro (2.8%, though Bunyoro have challenged this figure), Alur (2.6%), Bagwere (1.8%), Bakonzo (2.5%), Jopadhola (1.4%), Karamojong (1.1%), Barundi (0.3%), Basongora (0.05%) and Batwa (0.02%), and Ik (less than 1%). ([Minority Rights Group, 2019](#)). There are 32.1% of people who do not fall within the indigenous ethnic groups. Some of the most marginalised and affected indigenous groups are the Benet, Batwa, the Ik, the Karamojong and the Basongora groups. Uganda's indigenous peoples primarily reside in rural regions of the country, but poverty and lack of opportunities have pushed some to migrate to urban areas, where they often face discrimination.

The Benet community in Uganda are struggling to survive and access basic services like education and healthcare, because they are stateless with no legal identity papers or proof of their citizenship. [UNHCR \(2022\)](#) featured a story of how people within the Benet community have lived in the Mount Elgon region for centuries, however have never been able to gain identity papers or proof of their citizenship. This in turn affects their access to education, health services, and other key services. They are also disconnected from these services because of the underdevelopment of infrastructure, such as roads. There are approximately 12,000 Benet people in Uganda, and they are mainly pastoralists and hunter-gathers. They were excluded by the former colonial government (along with many other indigenous communities in Uganda) in 1930s, and continue to be excluded in the new amendments to the constitution after Uganda's independence in 1962.

The Ugandan Government does not recognise indigenous groups as Indigenous Peoples. The government have not adopted the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, ILO Convention 169, which guarantees the rights of indigenous and tribal peoples in independent States. This means indigenous peoples continue to live in impoverishment, social and political exclusion and with lack of protection ([IWGIA, n.d.](#)). Although Uganda's 1995 Constitution does not specifically protect Indigenous Peoples, Article 32 requires the state to take positive actions for groups who have faced historical disadvantage or discrimination. Originally intended for children, people with disabilities, and women, this article now serves as the main legal basis for supporting Indigenous Peoples. The Land Law of 1998 and the National Environmental Statute of 1995 safeguard traditional land interests and forest use. However, these laws also allow the government to declare any forest area protected, which can override Indigenous customary rights to that land ([IWGIA, n.d.](#)). For example, when the Bwindi and Mgahinga forests were declared national parks in 1991, the Benet's and Batwa's were dispossessed of their ancestral land.

Several Ugandan communities share a history of state-driven land dispossession and human rights abuses linked to conservation areas. These include forced evictions from ancestral lands without consultation or compensation, violence, destruction of property, and exclusion from vital resources, causing ongoing poverty and marginalisation. Ik people face added risks due to their intermediary position between two communities² and insecure land tenure, with 70% of their land lost to conservation efforts. Benet people have also struggled with authorities over land designated as protected in 1926 without their consent. Despite a 2005 Supreme Court order to return their land, this has not been carried out. Batwa people, evicted from their forest homes, now face limited access to food, medicine, shelter,

² Ik people were hunter gatherers, however due to cattle raids from other tribes, including the Turkana, and Pokot of Kenya, the Karimojong of Uganda, Tuposa of South Sudan, they changed to subsistence farming, goat keeping and honey production ([Achieve Global Safaris, n.d.](#))

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education, health care, employment, and land, with no compensation since their eviction. Despite constitutional provisions, many marginalised groups remain excluded from development, deepening their disadvantage ([National information Technology Authority of Uganda, 2021](#)).

Karamajong people have been affected by anti-pastoralist government policies. These policies argued that people should stop moving from place to place with their animals and instead stay in one place to raise livestock. This shows that the push for settling nomadic communities was supported at the highest levels of government. The prevention of free movement of cattle has been challenged by activists because it places pressure on indigenous communities livelihoods, which are also being affected by planned natural resource extraction. [Minority Rights Group \(2018\)](#) found that *‘the poverty and lack of opportunities in the region has pushed some Karamajong to migrate to urban areas such as Kampala, where they typically face exploitation, discrimination and periodic round-ups by security forces. Many end up begging for their survival, particularly Karamajong women and children, who are especially vulnerable to exploitation. There is also evidence in recent years that issues such as alcohol abuse have become more common among urban Karamajong migrants’*.

Indigenous inclusion in Waste Management and Agriculture Sectors

This research did not identify any specific, clear research or guidelines about Indigenous inclusion in waste management sector in Uganda. No information arose in the KIIs on this topic.

Agriculture Sector

In recent years, growing attention has focused on the challenges faced by indigenous people as they work to preserve their cultures, protect their lands, and maintain traditional food systems amid globalisation. These food systems are often rich in biodiversity, environmentally sustainable, and resilient to climate change, while providing highly nutritious foods. Despite this, indigenous communities experience disproportionately high levels of hunger and malnutrition, and the increasing adoption of Western-style diets, characterised by energy-dense but nutrient-poor foods, has contributed to rising rates of obesity, diabetes, and other non-communicable diseases ([Kimani, 2020](#)). Traditional crops, livestock breeds, and long-cultivated landraces are often better suited to local conditions and more capable of withstanding shocks such as drought than modern high-yield varieties. Indigenous varieties and diversified farming systems are also more environmentally sustainable, requiring less water and fewer chemical inputs, while supporting the ecosystem services essential for adapting to climate change. The [Sustainable Diets for All](#) advocacy programme, coordinated by HIVOS Uganda, IIED, and partners, uses evidence including citizen-generated data, to enhance food and nutrition security in Uganda, with a focus on increasing access to diverse, nutritious, and sustainable foods through the protection and promotion of indigenous food systems.

In Uganda and across Africa, indigenous communities play smaller roles in politics compared to other regions, so while the country’s ecological diversity is well-known, the cultural richness of its indigenous people, such as the Karimojong, Ik, Batwa, and Tepeth, is less recognised. These groups have long suffered from policies on conservation, agriculture, forestry, mining, and development. The Indigenous Sustainable Development Exploring indigenous visions for more just, inclusive and sustainable

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development (INDIS) project focused on the Tepeth (Soo) community in Moroto District, Karamoja. The project partners with institutions like Makerere University, the Uganda Land Alliance, the Karamoja Development Forum, the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda, and the Environmental Management for Livelihood Improvement Bwaise Facility ([INDIS, n.d.](#)). Despite significant attention from the state, donors, and NGOs due to poverty, food insecurity, and climate variability, indigenous perspectives are often ignored, resulting in short-lived or harmful interventions. Karamoja's rich mineral resources further exacerbate social and environmental costs for local communities, whose customary land rights are frequently overridden by mining licenses. INDIS aimed to amplify indigenous voices through initiatives such as Rangeland, Pastoralist, and Environment policy development, piloting Communal Land Agreements, participatory input to the National Development Plan, engagement with donors and UN agencies, alignment with SDGs and climate commitments, discussions on the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative, and early steps toward a national Indigenous Peoples policy.

Older people

Uganda has significant issues with age discrimination; reports and studies have shown older people can suffer discrimination, rape, theft, and dispossession of property. This is a growing issue as it is expected that in the next 30 years, the number of people over 60 years old will be 6 million in Uganda ([Sengupta, 2020](#)). There are widespread issues that older people face because of a lack of infrastructure and services in rural areas, such as illiteracy, landlessness, food insecurity, poor health, neglect and abuse by younger generations ([Sengupta, 2020](#)). Older people in Uganda are less aware of their rights and struggle to access social services. Despite the existing legal and policy frameworks³, older people's rights are still increasingly violated ([Wamara and Carvalho, 2021](#)).

The economic prospects of many older Ugandans remain constrained. More than half lack basic literacy and depend on labour-intensive subsistence farming that yields minimal income. Their wellbeing is shaped less by personal earnings and more by the strength of their social networks and the resources available within extended families and clans, yet these networks are often just as poor as the individuals who rely on them, creating difficult priority trade-offs ([Sengupta, 2020](#)). The majority of older people live in rural areas and work in agriculture sectors, with about 85% engaged in crop farming with no social security (ibid). Even with diminishing health, many older people continue to work in physically demanding, low-paid activities that undermine their ability to age with dignity. Most households headed by an older person rely primarily on subsistence agriculture, with smaller proportions depending on remittances or wage labour, the latter being concentrated in Kampala (ibid).

Older adults are disproportionately poor, particularly those in skipped-generation households. Many older people care for children orphaned by the HIV/AIDs crisis, in families known as skipped-generation households, increasing their care and economic responsibilities ([Sengupta, 2020](#)). The vulnerability of older people in later life is deepened by

³ 'The 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda recognises the rights of older people and offers the basis for the enactment of other laws and policies to further protect them. The National Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy (NODPSP) refers under Objective VII to the welfare and maintenance of older people. Similarly, Objective XI (i) spells out the state's commitment to give the highest priority to legislation establishing measures to protect and enhance the rights of all people (including older people) to equal opportunities for development (Uganda, 1995).' ([Wamara and Carvalho, 2021](#)).

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lifelong exposure to shocks, gradual asset depletion, irregular and low earnings, and limited access to healthcare for age-related illness or disability. These disadvantages are especially pronounced for older women, who face cultural barriers to economic agency, limited opportunities to build assets, and higher rates of widowhood or singlehood. In rural areas, traditional assets like land and cattle still hold value, even though subsistence farming is no longer a reliable source of livelihood in an increasingly cash-based economy, and pastoral communities no longer maintain sufficient livestock for commercial viability. Many older people also struggle to secure adequate housing, sanitation, and safe water, which are basic conditions essential to their physical and mental wellbeing, autonomy, and dignity (ibid).

Inclusion of Older People in Waste Management and Agriculture Sectors

There is very limited literature focused on the role and inclusion of older people in the waste management sector in Uganda. Research conducted in 2013 suggests that older people are less likely to be engaged in informal waste management, with the average age of an informal refuse collector being 32.3 ([Katusiimeh et al., 2013, p.4](#)); however this trend may well have changed over the past decade. There is some more recent evidence showing older people are engaged in waste picking, with a 2022 study finding that older waste pickers may be more likely to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) ([Byonanebye, D. et al, 2022](#)) - again however, a lack of evidence means it is unclear whether this holds true for lower income older waste pickers, who may lack the resources to acquire and replace adequate PPE.

There is evidence from other contexts that older people often play an important role in household-level waste separation and recycling. Indeed, nascent global evidence suggests older people, alongside women and people with higher levels of education, are more likely to adopt green waste management practices at home ([Konstantinidou, A. et al, 2024](#)). This trend may have implications for the (potential or actual) role of older people in the waste management sector. Overall, more research is needed into this topic.

The majority of older people in Uganda live in rural areas and work in the agriculture sector. An estimated 85% of older people are engaged in crop farming with no social security, playing a central yet under-supported role within Uganda's agricultural production overall ([Sengupta, 2020](#)). An estimated 60% of households headed by an older person rely on subsistence agriculture as their main source of income ([Sengupta, 2020](#), p. xii), while around 59% of the farming population are women aged over 60 ([HelpAge, 2014](#)). This reliance on subsistence farming puts older people both physically and economically at risk. For older women in particular, who are more likely to have a disability and to have additional caring responsibilities within the home, reliance on subsistence farming can be particularly precarious.

The Government of Uganda has taken steps to safeguard and support older people working in agriculture, however older people continue to face overall marginalisation and exclusion. Older people are mentioned within Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Health five-year plans; the government has also provided support through interventions like the Expanding Social Protection Programme (2015-2020), which reported positive impacts for older agricultural workers ([Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, 2014](#)). Despite these efforts, an absence of data on the experiences and needs of older people, combined with limited national expertise on ageing and a weak multi-sectoral approach,

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means older people continue to face exclusion from broader efforts to improve the lives of agricultural workers (Sengupta, 2020, p. 10). This exclusion is compounded by the fact that older people are much less likely to have completed formal education or to be fully literate, making them even more reliant on subsistence farming (and less likely to have access to newer methods or technologies that could improve productivity) (Sengupta, 2020). There is some evidence that older women farmers may face heightened exclusion, as women in northern Uganda have reported being restricted from attending agricultural training opportunities by their husbands ([HelpAge, 2012](#), p.2).

Older agricultural workers are also more likely to remain in marginalised rural communities as compared to younger family members, creating an additional layer of geographic exclusion ([Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, 2021](#)). These geographies often host a disproportionate number of refugees, which can increase pressure on already limited agricultural and food resources on which older farmers are reliant (ibid). These multiple exclusion factors are likely to increase in coming years as climate shocks disrupt and undermine agricultural production, increase food insecurity, and drive up numbers of displaced people within the region.

Impacts of pollution (air, waste and chemical) on marginalised communities

> **Pollution is a significant problem in Uganda.** In 2024 Uganda was ranked as having the 8th worst air quality globally ([IQAIR, 2025](#)), with Kampala (Uganda's most polluted city) described as having dangerously high levels of air pollution. Approximately 19% of all non-accidental premature adult deaths in Kampala from 2018 to 2021 were attributable to long-term PM_{2.5} exposure, in large part due to vehicle pollution ([Crowe et al., 2025](#)). Uganda also suffers from high levels of solid waste pollution, including plastic and e-waste ([Biovision Africa, 2025](#)). Around 180 tons of plastic waste is generated in Kampala daily, with only 40-50% brought to landfill ([Balcom, P. et al., 2021](#)). It is unclear where the remaining waste ends up.

> The **disproportionate and heightened impact of pollution on already excluded or marginalised groups**, including children, older people, pregnant women and new mothers, people with disabilities, and the very poor, is well established ([Chen, F. et al., 2024](#)). However, data is lacking on the impact of pollution in Uganda across all marginalised groups – this represents a critical evidence gap.

> **Open burning of plastic and other waste in homes and landfills is the primary method of waste disposal in Uganda, and a key driver of the release of lethal carcinogens and other toxins** ([Balcom, P. et al., 2021](#)). Rates of air pollution are extremely varied across Uganda, with the northeast and southwest much more impacted by high levels of PM_{2.5} ([Clarke, K. et al., 2022](#)). In the northeast in particular, areas with higher PM_{2.5} concentrations are broadly correlated with areas most likely to experience multi-dimensional poverty ([UNICEF, 2020](#)). Similarly in urban centres like Kampala, very poor households are more likely to be located close to waste burning sites, increasing their exposure to air pollution and associated health impacts. Overall, air quality in Uganda has been found to be significantly worse where residents have low income and low education rates ([Clarke, K. et al., 2022](#)).

> **Smallholder farmers are particularly vulnerable to the effects of pesticides, use of**

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which is increasing across Africa despite the associated risks of chemical poisoning and broader contribution to water pollution. A study of smallholder farmers in Uganda found that 99.5% of farmers applied pesticides without adequate PPE, and that 92.7% mixed chemicals with their bare hands ([Demi, S. and Sicchia, S., 2021](#)). Farmers with pre-existing health conditions or vulnerabilities, including people with disabilities, pregnant women, new mothers, and older people, are more likely to be impacted negatively by both direct exposure to these chemicals and indirect exposure (for example, through polluted water as a result of soil run-off). Economically insecure farmers, or farmers with lower education levels (which typically includes older farmers and those in more remote rural areas) are less likely to have access to adequate PPE, or to have information around the risks of pesticides and importance of limiting exposure.

> **There is evidence that air pollution (specifically, high PM_{2.5} concentration) has direct negative health implications for pregnant women and children.** A 2022 study across 32 countries in Africa (including Uganda) found that mothers who had been exposed to higher levels of PM_{2.5} were more likely to have children with a lower height-for-age score, stunting, and overall undernutrition ([deSouza, P. et al., 2022](#)).

> **E-waste is a growing global concern, and can have severe adverse health effects when poorly managed,** especially for pregnant women and children ([WHO, 2024](#)). While Uganda has not historically been a major recipient or generator of e-waste, its e-waste is projected to increase by a factor of two to eight by 2032 ([Maes, T. and Preston-Whyte, F., 2022](#)).

Risks of working with marginalised communities

Interventions aimed at shifting unequal power relations come with an inherent risk of backlash from individuals, groups and systems whose power is perceived to be under threat. Persistent discriminatory norms continue to undermine otherwise promising advancements regarding gender equality and disability inclusion, while the rights of LGBTQI+ people remain actively contested and under threat as a result of widespread discriminatory attitudes and beliefs that both drive and are driven by repressive legislation. Research from 2024 outlined the multiple ways in which progressive legislation to promote gender equality has resulted in backlash at an individual and organisational level, including restrictions on press and civil society freedom and on the silencing of feminist organisations and voices in particular ([CBR, 2024](#)). The 2024 murder of Ugandan Olympian Rebecca Cheptegei by her boyfriend was described by the Women's Movement in Uganda as 'not an isolated incident but rather an alarming reflection of the escalating violence against women in Uganda' and 'a painful reminder of the growing backlash and rollback on women's rights...in all sectors' ([UWONET, 2024](#)).

Failing to take a nuanced, intersectional approach to understanding and mitigating potential backlash, based on an intervention's intended aims and context, risks causing harm to and exacerbating the exclusion of already marginalised groups. Similarly, any interventions that focus only on practical, institutional, or policy-based barriers to inclusion risk being ineffective at best, or causing harm at worst, if they do not take into account these underlying norms. Working in meaningful partnership with organisations that represent/are represented by excluded groups – including LGBTQI+ organisations, WROs, and OPDs – can help to mitigate these risks through centring the needs and lived

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experiences of excluded groups intervention design and delivery.

There is a lack of data on key aspects of social and economic exclusion in Uganda.

Data on the number of people with disabilities in Uganda is inconsistent, making it difficult to accurately assess the needs and scale of people with disabilities in different contexts across Uganda. Evidence on the experiences of different marginalised groups in relation to key sectors (including agriculture and waste management) is minimal, as is data and evidence focused on how different marginalised identities intersect to influence individual and collective experiences within these sectors. Accurate, up to date evidence on all aspects of LGBTQI+ rights and lived experiences is inherently limited by the severe exclusion of both individual and collective LGBTQI+ rights. Meanwhile, the experiences of indigenous groups like the Benet community are likely not fully understood, given their historic statelessness and exclusion from accessing core services. These data gaps pose a challenge in terms of designing interventions that accurately reflect the needs and lived experiences of marginalised groups, and that mitigate risks of causing harm to those groups.

Ongoing restrictions to civic space have created barriers to meaningfully engaging with civil society on inclusion-related issues.

The Ugandan government continues to restrict civil society activities and freedoms both in general and in relation to specific issues and sectors. This is most evident in relation to LGBTQI+ organisations, but has also impacted women's rights organisations, feminist groups, and any organisation engaging in democracy promotion or human rights advocacy. This shrinking of civic space has forced many organisations to take their work underground, shift or self-censor their activities away from more high-risk inclusion issues, or close altogether. This creates a challenge for donors and other international aid actors to a) identify organisations able and willing to engage on sensitive topics, including inclusion, and b) engage in a way that does not put the organisation or those they represent at risk of harm.

Interventions focused on formalising aspects of the waste management or the agriculture sectors present significant opportunities, but also risks leaving already marginalised groups behind in the process. Individuals from historically excluded groups are most likely to be over-represented as informal workers – for example, people with disabilities are estimated to make up only 1.3% of formal sector workers (UBOS, 2018). Similarly, minoritised indigenous groups face increased barriers to entering the formal sector due to restrictions on their formal documentation and citizenship. Efforts to formalise sectoral systems and processes that do not proactively and systematically address the specific barriers different marginalised groups face in joining the formal workforce will likely only create opportunities for non-marginalised individuals, with already excluded groups continuing to be left behind.

Exclusion dynamics are complex, spanning multiple interdependent systems and sectors; engaging with only one element of exclusion may risk raising expectations that cannot be met. For example, increasing employment opportunities for women or people with disabilities may not be effective without addressing the barriers children with disabilities face in accessing inclusive quality education, or that young women and people with disabilities face in joining vocational training schemes. Viewing possible intervention areas as part of a systems-wide analysis will help to ensure interventions are able to have a positive impact on inclusion outcomes.

Interventions that do not take an intersectional approach to promoting inclusion are likely to be ineffective at best and harmful at worst. Intersectionality – the complex ways

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in which multiple marginalised identities can compound to change or increase how exclusion manifests for different individuals and groups – is often overlooked, with interventions instead targeting one or more excluded identities in isolation (e.g. women, people with disabilities). However, for example, women informal waste pickers will face different challenges – and opportunities – depending on their age, ethnicity, whether they are live in (or have migrated from) and urban or rural setting, and whether or not they have a disability. An intersectional lens should be used in the design and delivery of interventions looking to promote inclusion, to maximise the intervention’s impact and to ensure it both leaves no one behind and does no harm.

Key stakeholders to engage GEDSI with

The table below highlights some key organisations engaged on GEDSI in the agriculture sector in Uganda, organised by stakeholder type.

Stakeholder	Work and GEDSI focus
Government	
Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry, and Fisheries	<p>MAAIF is the lead ministry for regulating agricultural chemicals; it maintains the Agricultural Chemicals Register and is responsible for policy around what agrochemicals are allowed. MAAIF implements projects that aim to reduce farm pollution and related health challenges, e.g. relating to the misuse of agrochemicals.</p> <p>Various MAAIF policy documents reference gender mainstreaming and smallholder inclusion⁴; MAAIF’s Uganda Climate Smart Agriculture Transformation Project has a dedicated Vulnerable and Marginalised Group Framework⁵.</p>
Ministry of Water and Environment	<p>MWE sets national environment and water policies, standards and guidance, and addresses agricultural pollution (e.g. land degradation, negative impacts of irrigation) through policy, monitoring and guidance documents. MWE also oversees the monitoring of water quality, contributes to pesticide monitoring studies, issues standards used to respond to the contamination of surface and groundwater, and works on wetland conservation.</p> <p>Uganda’s National Water Policy includes a guiding principle of ensuring the ‘full participation of women at all levels in sector institutions and in institution making’, and commits to providing investment subsidies to vulnerable groups, including women, youth, poor farmers and people with disabilities, particularly in drought-prone areas.⁶ The Ministerial Policy Statement 2025/2026 includes commitments to support women and young people, including through the provision of support to women’s groups.⁶</p>

⁴ See for example, the MAAIF Micro-scale Irrigation Program, <https://www.agriculture.go.ug/micro-scale-irrigation-program/>

⁵ <https://www.mwe.go.ug/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/National-Water-Policy.pdf?utm>

⁶ <https://mwe.go.ug/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Ministerial-Policy-2025.pdf>. see for example, p. 87

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Ministry of Local Government	<p>MoLG is the policy lead for municipal waste, meaning local governments are responsible for domestic and municipal waste collection, transportation and disposal under the Local Government Act and Waste Management Regulations. MoLG coordinates district and municipal delivery of waste services, and is the lead ministry developing Uganda's new National Waste Management Policy (2025).</p> <p>The Local Government Act includes various guidelines and quotas for the election and engagement of women, people with disabilities, and other marginalised groups in decision-making processes. It is not yet clear if/how marginalised groups will be included in the National Waste Management Policy.</p>
National Environment Management Authority	<p>NEMA is the principle regulator for environmental protection under Uganda's National Environment Act (2019). NEMA issues environmental licenses, enforces pollution standards, requires Environmental and Social Impact Assessments, and enforces National Environment (Waste Management) Regulations. NEMA's Waste Management Regulations set requirements for hazardous waste management.</p> <p>NEMA's Strategic Environmental Assessment guidelines requires public consultations and recognises the importance of targeting marginalised groups who may have more limited formal influence, however guidance or requirements on engaging these groups is limited.⁷</p>
Ministry of Gender Labour and Social Development	<p>MGLSD is responsible for social protection, equity promotion and inclusion policies that affect how households (including smallholder farmers) cope with environment-related health risks. They oversee social protection instruments – like the Special Grant for Persons with Disabilities⁸ – that can support people harmed by pollution.</p> <p>MGLSD is the government lead on gender equality and disability rights. It houses the Department of Gender and Women Affairs; the Minister of State for Disability is based within the MGLSD; the MGLSD 'owns' the Revised National Policy on Persons with Disabilities (2023).</p>
International NGOs	
WasteAid	<p>WasteAid is currently implementing two projects in Uganda: Ugandan Circular Textiles (part of the FCDO-funded Sustainable Manufacturing Environmental and Pollution Programme), and support to micro-businesses (funded by International Distribution specialist firm, Bunzl Plc).</p> <p>WasteAid's Circular Textiles programmes has a specific focus on women traders and businesswomen. Its micro-businesses project is focused on empowering people working in the informal waste sector, with a strong community engagement component.</p>

⁷ https://www.nema.go.ug/en/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/STRATEGIC_ENVIRONMENTAL_ASSESSMENT_SEA_guidelines_2020_final_0.pdf

⁸ <https://mglsd.go.ug/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/MOG-FINAL-GUIDELINE-BOOK-1.pdf>

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SNV	<p>SNV is a Netherlands-based INGO working on agri-food, energy and water sectors in over 100 districts across Uganda. Its work focuses on the agri-food, energy and water sectors.</p> <p>SNV has a focus on improving access to essential services for 'disadvantaged individuals. For example, its Climate Resilient Agribusiness for Tomorrow Project (funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs) has a cross-cutting scheme focused on gender equality and social inclusion.</p>
National civil society organisations	
Participatory Ecological Land Use Management Uganda	<p>PELUM Uganda is the Ugandan branch of a regional network of over 320 CSOs spread across 12 countries in East, Central and Southern Africa. PELUM Uganda's focus is on improving the livelihoods of smallholder farmers and the sustainability of rural communities through ecological land use.</p> <p>PELUM Uganda has multiple GEDSI-focused projects, including its Africa Women Leaders in Agroecology Initiative; Youth in Agroecology and Business Learning Track Africa; Women's Empowerment for Resilient Rural Livelihoods project; and Rooted in Diversity: Partnerships for Food Security and Livelihoods.</p>
Uganda Women's Network	<p>UWONET is a women's rights advocacy organisations that coordinates collective action around women's rights and gender equality. It comprises of 23 national women's organisations. Its 2026-2030 National Women's Manifesto includes a focus on women's health and wellbeing; livelihoods and climate justice; and women working in agriculture.</p>
National Association of Professional Environmentalists	<p>NAPE is a Ugandan CSO focused on the sustainable management of national resources, with a focus on women and youth empowerment. Its priority areas include chemical waste management, climate change, and water governance.</p>
The National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda	<p>NUDIPU is the national umbrella organisation for organisations for persons with disabilities (OPDs) in Uganda. While it does not have a specific focus on waste management or agriculture, it's broader objectives include the socio-economic empowerment of people with disabilities; advocacy for disability-friendly healthcare; and improved engagement around resource management.</p>
Dignifying Women in Waste Sector	<p>DIWWAS is a network of women working in the solid waste management sector – often in insecure roles and for low pay. DIWWAS aims to improve women's participation in all aspects of solid waste management and to promote sustainable waste management practices.</p>
Support for Women in Agriculture and Environment	<p>SWAGEN is focused on the empowerment of grass-roots women farmers and communities, including through engagement in solid waste management in the slum areas of Kampala.</p>

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<u>National Union of Women with Disabilities Uganda</u>	NUWODU is a membership umbrella organisation that aims to promote the inclusion and equal participation of girls and women with disabilities. It has a specific focus on agriculture under its livelihoods programming area.
<u>CEFROHT</u>	CEFROHT is a legal advocacy and action-research organisation that uses a human-rights based approach to promote equitable land rights, food security and safety, livelihood rights, and environmental health, including for marginalised groups. Its programming areas include a focus on safe chemical use and chemical waste in food production and broader agriculture.
<u>Eastern and Southern Africa Small-scale Farmers' Forum Uganda</u>	ESAFF Uganda is the largest small-scale farmer-led advocacy movement in Uganda, with members spread across 54 districts. It aims to empower small-scale farmers' access to fair economic opportunities and financing, including for women and young people.
<u>Organisation for Community Action</u>	OCA is a community-based organisation based in Lira, working to improve the standard of living for rural-subsistence farmers in conflict-affected northern Uganda. Its focus areas are sustainable agriculture, gender, household savings and health, and other socio-economic development projects.
<u>West Nile Community Action for Rural Development</u>	WN-CARD is a youth-led community-based organisation working with rural communities and refugees in the West Nile sub-region of Uganda. Its areas of focus include livelihoods and agriculture (covering sustainable agriculture initiatives and climate-smart agriculture), gender equality, community health, and gender-based violence.
<u>Karambi Group of People with Disabilities</u>	KAGPWD operates in the Kasese district of Western Uganda, to support and empower people with all forms of disability. KAGWED has a programmatic focus on permaculture, which includes reducing chemical usage and waste in the production of organic, sustainable food, and on livelihoods, which includes a focus on youth empowerment.
<u>Youth Association for Rural Development</u>	YARD is a youth-focused community-based organisation working to promote socio-economic development for disadvantaged groups in Buikewe District. It has programmes on water and sanitation, agro-enterprise, and natural resource management.

Barriers

Some of the key barriers to engaging with the stakeholders include the following:

- > **Smaller organisations and collectives may not have a strong online presence, and may be difficult to reach without outreach and engagement at their local level.** They may also lack some of the organisational, financial and governance frameworks typically required from international donors as a prerequisite for engagement and funding. This means that without adequate outreach and the willingness to meet less formalised organisations and

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associations where they are, engagement with frontline stakeholders – often at the forefront of efforts to empower both local farmers and marginalised groups – is easily overlooked. This is especially true for groups representing LGBTQIA+ individuals, which are necessarily extremely discreet in their engagement and organising given the repressive political climate within which they operate.

> Related to the above, there is a risk that UK-funded programming only engages the ‘usual suspects’ of national and/or more formalised and well-established organisations.

While such organisations are often critical stakeholders in the overall agriculture landscape, they may not work closely with (or understand the lived realities of) excluded groups. Only engaging with bigger and more formalised organisations creates a barrier to truly GEDSI-informed engagement, and risks perpetuating existing inequalities within both society and the civil society ecosystem.

> Implementation of GEDSI-related policies is often limited or inconsistent. Policies such as the National Water Policy include provisions to include and support women, youth, the very poor, and people with disabilities; however, these groups remain disadvantaged across the sector. Inconsistent implementation of such policies likely stems from a combination of resource constraints and (primarily) social and institutional norms that undervalue excluded groups and perpetuate their exclusion. These two barriers are likely to limit the effectiveness of engagement around policy development and implementation unless they are meaningfully addressed.

Entry points

Despite these barriers, a number of promising entry points exist for strengthening GEDSI within the agriculture sector:

> Networks may present an effective means of accessing smaller, more rural, and/or less formalised organisations – including those representing excluded groups. Relatedly, interventions that support smaller or less formalised GEDSI-focused groups and networks to engage and share learning with larger sub-national and national organisations and networks (where this is not already happening) would support a GEDSI-informed, nationally owned movement to strengthen Uganda’s agricultural sector.

> Despite the challenges outlined above, policies such as the National Water Policy – which include an emphasis on community engagement – present an entry point for strengthening engagement on GEDSI. Similarly, the fact that a Waste Management Policy is in development highlights a national momentum around tackling challenges around waste management and pollution in the agricultural sector; support to the development and/or implementation of such policies presents an entry point for ensuring GEDSI is built in from the outset.

> Identifying and supporting existing schemes to empower excluded groups within the agriculture sector would ensure engagement reinforces (rather than duplicates) locally-owned initiatives. Examples of such schemes include PELUM Uganda’s Africa Women Leaders in Agroecology Initiative and Youth in Agroecology and Business Learning Track Africa.

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