The Politics of Staying Poor in Uganda[1]

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Abstract

This paper explores how political actors, processes, debates and institutions influence the reduction and reproduction of chronic poverty in Uganda. Uganda provides a particularly appropriate case study for such work, as the country's recent success in poverty reduction has been significantly related to 'getting the politics right'. However, findings here suggest that politics in contemporary Uganda holds as many threats as opportunities for reducing long-term poverty. The policy processes, debates and interventions that might challenge chronic poverty are steadily moving from the margins of the poverty agenda towards the mainstream. For example, the current review of the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (Uganda's home-grown PRSP) has identified social protection – likely to be a key policy response to chronic poverty – as one of the key cross-cutting themes. However, arguments for targeting the poorest groups and regions currently lack political persuasiveness, as such programmes have tended to become highly politicised and subject to both national clientelism and local elite capture. There is a 'politics of inclusion' in Uganda that stretches to most groups of the chronically poor, although this has yet to be transformed into a 'politics of justice', in part because the institutional representatives of Uganda's chronically poor are currently marginal in terms of command over resources and policy influence. On a broader note, little effort has been made amongst development actors in Uganda to articulate the type of 'pro-poor' or redistributive growth that is likely to be required to alleviate chronic poverty. It might be argued that this reflects a 'global' politics of staying poor in Uganda, with the neoliberal policy hegemony playing an important role in shaping the possibility of reducing chronic poverty.

Many amongst the political elite perceive the rising inequality in Uganda as a potential threat to them, although only over the long-run. Many also see the poverty reduction agenda as externally imposed and profligate with resources, suggesting that if poverty reduction is to stay on the political agenda in Uganda for long enough to impact on chronic poverty, national ownership of the poverty agenda must be broadened and deepened beyond the current 'champions'. Ongoing political conflict in northern Uganda and the perennial threat of regional instability remains the greatest threat to both the chronically poor and the poverty reduction agenda. In addition, the debate over presidential succession and the potential move towards multi-partyism appears to have triggered an intensification of neopatrimonial political practice, posing a significant threat to the poverty reduction agenda. However, the paper also finds that the policies and programmes likely to challenge chronic poverty can be usefully aligned with the most progressive aspects of political actors and policies in Uganda. These include certain civil society actors, participatory poverty assessments, the local government development programme and social sector ministries. Finally, it is proposed that a number of shifts are required within the ways in which politics is understood within poverty analysis. One example, is that we might need to reconceptualise the long term politics of commitment to poverty reduction in terms of a 'contract' rather than in terms of 'ownership'.

CONTENTS

Acronyms

CPRC	Chronic Poverty Research Centre
DENIVA	Development Network of Indigenous Voluntary Organisations
GoU	Government of Uganda
HIPC	Highly Indebted Poor Countries initiative
LC	Local Council
LGDP	Local Government Development Programme
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MFPED	Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development
MGLSD	Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development
MoH	Ministry of Health
MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
NRA	National Resistance Army
NRM	National Resistance Movement
NUSAF	Northern Ugandan Social Action Fund
PAF	Poverty Action Fund
PEAP	Poverty Eradication Action Plan
PEWG	Poverty Eradication Working Group
PMA	Plan for the Modernisation of Agriculture
PMAU	Poverty Monitoring and Assessment Unit
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Process
PSIA	Poverty and Social Impact Analysis
PWD	People with Disabilities
SEI	Strategic Export Initiative
SWG	Sector Working Groups
UDN	Uganda Debt Network
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UPDF	Uganda People's Defence Force
UPE	Universal Primary Education
UPPAP	Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment
WDR	World Development Report

Introduction

This paper reports on ongoing research into these themes within a country case study of Uganda. The research examines the politics of poverty and poverty reduction in Uganda at village, district and national levels, and began in September 2002. The main research methods involved are semi-structured interviews at each level, along with focus group discussions and a questionnaire survey at the local level. Further work at the local level is forthcoming, and this paper draws mainly on the forty-plus key informant interviews conducted at the national level and the thirty conducted at District level (some of which are repeats), along with policy documentation and media sources. As such, it represents a first cut of the data collected so far.

The paper begins by briefly outlining the state of chronic poverty in Uganda, the current poverty reduction strategies and policy context, and the arguments that 'getting the politics right' formed a central element of the successful poverty reduction achieved by Uganda during the 1990s. The subsequent sections examine the representation of chronically poor groups within the political system and political discourse; the politics involved both in Uganda's policies related to chronic poverty and the poverty reduction strategy more broadly, and the wider politics of the development project in Uganda, as undertaken by the National Resistance Movement (NRM) regime since 1986. The paper goes on to analyse the relationships between the poverty reduction agenda and broader political processes in Uganda and, briefly, the international development community, before returning to the key issue 'ownership'. At the broadest level, the findings so far suggest that various forms of politics both within the poverty reduction agenda and more broadly in Uganda closely shape the possibilities for challenging long-term poverty. There is a great deal of ambiguity and contestation surrounding the politics of staying poor in Uganda, with current and underlying political processes presenting both threats (e.g. the growing politics of patronage) and opportunities (e.g. growing recognition of the chronically poor within policy circles, the presence of a contract between the regime and many of the rural poor) to the prospects of reaching the chronically poor.

Of the recent analyses that undertake to examine the 'politics' involved in Uganda's current approach to poverty reduction, two in particular have usefully shed critical light on two key processes, namely the PEAP process (Porter and Craig 2003) and how poverty reduction policy is shaped by the multiple ways in which policy actors and poverty knowledge interact within certain policy spaces (Brock, McGee and Ssewakiryanga 2002). This latter study has claims to offer an understanding of the politics and power relations that underpin the making of pro-poor policy, and has revealed several opportunities and risks within the poverty reduction agenda. Elements from both studies are adopted here to analyse the current extent of and potential for a *chronic* poverty reduction agenda in Uganda. However, this research seeks to go beyond these analyses to examine the politics both within and beyond (and sometimes behind) the policy processes (as do Francis and James 2003). It argues that a closer analysis of the politics *within* and between policy actors, knowledge and spaces opens up new and important questions concerning the likelihood that long-term poverty will be challenged in Uganda. Perhaps more importantly, it examines politics in Uganda itself rather than just the politics within policy processes, employs more specific set of analytical constructs from political analysis and African studies.[2] It is through this frame of analysis that many of the key

[2] In terms of political analysis, the research suggest the importance of examining both the politics *of* poverty reduction, and the links between politics *and* poverty reduction (Tornquist 1999). See Hickey with Bracking 2003 for a more detailed discussion of this distinction and the use of political analysis in poverty studies more broadly

findings (e.g. regarding the long-term 'ownership' of poverty reduction in Uganda) emerge. Moreover, it is argued that a series of shifts are required within current forms of political analysis and practice if the dual challenge of understanding the politics of chronic poverty and of tackling chronic poverty are to be met more thoroughly than they are at present. As such, the analysis seeks wherever possible to go beyond simply pointing out where politics obstructs poverty reduction, and examine how the political analysis used here can make constructive contributions towards the reduction of long-term poverty (Moore and Putzel 1999).

Exploring the politics of chronic poverty in Uganda

Chronic poverty and inequality in Uganda

Uganda achieved significant levels of poverty reduction during the 1990s, to the extent that it has been hailed as the 'showcase' of the potential gains from following a broadly neoliberal economic reform agenda accompanied with a specific package of poverty reduction policies. According to general household surveys, the income poverty headcount fell from 56 per cent in 1992 to 44 per cent in 1997/8 (Appleton et al 1999) and then to 35 per cent by 2000 (Deninger and Okidi 2002). Uganda also achieved particular renown for the reductions that it achieved in HIV/AIDs prevalence (Okidi et al 2002), a strong mediating factor between levels of growth and social development outcomes (Barnett and Whiteside 2001). Such successes saw Uganda rise more than ten places up the UNDP's Human Development Index to a position at 150 out of 173.[3]

However, major challenges remain. In general terms, there is a high level of chronic poverty in Uganda, with a strong association between depth and severity (Lawson et al 2003, Okidi and Kempaka 2002). It appears that chronic poverty is likely to be disproportionately and unequally experienced by those living in remote rural areas (Sseweya 2003), the landless (Nabbumba Nayenga, 2003), people with disabilities (Lwanga-Ntale, 2003), the elderly (Najjumba-Mulindwa, 2003), and who experience multiple asset depletion (Bird and Shinyekwa, 2003). Health plays a key role in determining who is trapped in long-term poverty (Lawson, 2003), especially in relation to HIV/AIDs (Shepherd, 2003).

Of particular concern is the evidence that the poverty-reducing benefits of the growth experienced between 1997-2000 was highly uneven in its distribution. With a low Gini-coefficient during the early 1990s allowing for a high level of 'elasticity' in the relationship between growth and poverty reduction (Okidi et al 2002), and with growth concentrated in the newly liberalised and labour intensive coffee sector (e.g. Blake et al 2002), the conditions for 'pro-poor growth' (Hamner and Naschold 2000) were effectively met during this period. However, it is doubtful that the same can be said of the more recent pattern of growth, which was urban biased, benefited the richest 10 per cent to more than double the extent that it benefited the poorest and did nothing to ameliorate the regional inequalities that affect the North in particular (Okidi and Kempaka 2002: 8). Ongoing political conflict in the North has led to further increased poverty levels there, with over two-thirds of the population living below the poverty line. However, conflict is not the only force towards greater inequality in Uganda. As argued by Okidi and McKay (2003: 1),

> "…the chronic poor appear not to have benefited much from the market-oriented development policies that have been responsible for much of Uganda's macroeconomic success over this period".

[3] For a more in-depth analyses of poverty reduction in Uganda over the 1990s, see Okidi and Kempaka 2002.

The extent to which economic growth will reduce poverty is closely shaped by inequality levels, the character of the growth being pursued and the extent to which this growth deepens existing or creates new forms of inequality (Dagdeviren et al 2002, Demery and Walton 1999, Naschold 2002, Ravallion 2001). There is likely be a strong relationship between inequality and intractable forms of poverty. From a political perspective, then, it is important to analyse the ways in which particular forms of macroeconomic policy and growth-oriented policies become established and maintained as the dominant approaches, and the extent to which it is possible to imagine, promote and implement alternative policy packages.

Uganda as the showcase of poverty reduction: getting the politics right?
Uganda offers a particularly interesting case study for the political analysis of poverty reduction, given that the successes of the 1990s have been closely associated with 'getting the politics right'. For example, political leadership has been accorded a key role in terms of the impressive reduction of HIV/AIDs prevalence, and the championing of reforms such as Universal Primary Education (McGee 2000) and the more recent abolishing of user fees in health. According to a recent paper on policy processes in Uganda (Brock et al 2002: 1),

> "The Government of Uganda…is frequently held up as an example of a sub-Saharan African government which has the political will to undertake meaningful poverty reduction strategies and policies…His re-election on the basis of such themes suggests a political currency for poverty reduction issues, and a political mandate for poverty reduction strategies"

Above all, the success has been associated with the high level of 'ownership' that Uganda has taken of the reform packages that have underpinned poverty reduction. With reference to the phase of structural adjustment in the early 1990s, one study argues that "continued policy reform was driven more by ownership of the reform programme than by aid", (Kasekende and Atingi-Ego 1999: 617), and that "strong political commitment" and "political will" (ibid: 646) have been central to the success of the programme.

The question of who 'owns' the current poverty agenda has a particular resonance with the politics of staying poor, both in general and with specific reference to Uganda. Ownership implies a level of sustainability, with the tenets, policies and moral imperative of poverty reduction becoming embedded in the decision-making, policy debates and actions of particular countries. It is this long-term commitment to poverty reduction – beyond the Millennium Development Goals – that is required for chronic poverty to be challenged. Moreover, according to some, "ownership is an inherently political concept" (Mills and Darin-Ericson 2002), and is one of the increasing range of political terms to enter the donor lexicon over the past few years, within broader calls for the poverty reduction agenda to be nationalised (Toye 1999).

Uganda's ownership of the poverty reduction agenda is usually attested to with reference to the presence of a 'homegrown' Poverty Reduction Strategy Process (PRSP), and the strong protection given to poverty spending within budgetary processes. Further evidence relates to the strong programme of decentralisation that Uganda has undertaken, and which broadly concurs with the tenets of the 'good governance' reform agenda.[4] This section briefly outlines the reforms that have been most strongly associated with 'ownership'.

[4] A recent Social Watch study outlines several key challenges to country ownership within PRSP processes – such as low levels of budget support from donors, the failure of PRS working groups to address cross-cutting themes and the isolation of PRS reform from broader development and political

Uganda's Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) was devised in 1996, operational from 1997 and is revised on a three-yearly basis (Government of Uganda 2000). It consists of four main 'pillars' (see Box 1), from which the GoU's priority spending areas have evolved. The PEAP is funded from two main sources: government revenue, and development aid which contributes 53 per cent of the government budget (Okidi et al 2002: 4). The Poverty Action Fund (PAF, see below) also funds initiatives related to Pillars Three and Four of the PEAP.

Box 1: The PEAP pillars and priority actions

Pillar I: Creating an enabling environment for rapid and sustainable economic growth and structural transformation. The main objectives are:

- Maintenance of macroeconomic stability and provision of incentives for private sector development
- Equitable and efficient use of public resources

Pillar II: Good governance and security. This encompasses decentralisation, law and order, increased transparency, accountability for public expenditure, and public information.

Pillar III: Actions which directly increase the ability of the poor to raise their incomes. The key areas of focus here are:

- Feeder roads
- Agriculture, particularly extension services
- Small scale enterprises
- Vocational education and
- Energy for the poor.

Pillar IV: Actions which directly improve the quality of life of the poor. This aims towards increased provision of basic social services in the following areas:

- Health care
- Water and sanitation
- Primary education
- Adult literacy

The PEAP sets targets for poverty reduction that are remarkably close to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and in some cases is actually more ambitious. For example, the arch aim of reducing the poverty headcount to 10 per cent by 2017 is in advance of the MDG aim of reducing poverty by half of the 2000 figure by 2015 (which was 35 per cent in Uganda in 1990). According to one insider account, the 'homegrown' character of the PEAP was revealed at a meeting between the GoU officials responsible for drawing up the PEAP and World Bank officials. Officials from the Bank tried to convince their GoU counterparts to add another pillar to the existing four, but lost the argument in the face of well-articulated defence (Brock et al 2002: 34). The GoU claims that the formation and subsequent revisions of PEAP involved "a highly participatory process" (Government of Uganda 2000: 6-7), and by most accounts levels of civil society consultation were high (for example, NGOs chaired the sessions that focussed on Pillar IV regarding 'Quality of Life') and

processes (Mills and Darin-Ericson 2002) – many of which Uganda could be said to have overcome or at least have gone some way to meeting them.

findings from the first Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment (UPPAP), carried out in 1998-9, strongly informed the 2000 review. [5]

The extent of government ownership is further manifested in terms of the priority given to poverty-related spending within the budgetary process, with Uganda being highly commended in this area vis-à-vis four other African countries in a recent study (Foster et al 2001). This poverty-focus is ensured through a series of interrelated mechanisms and processes, with three being of particular importance: the sector working groups (SWG), the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF), and the Poverty Action Fund (PAF).

The PEAP goals are operationalised through a series of specific sector wide plans (e.g. Education Sector Investment Plan), that are debated and formulated within Sector Working Groups. Each SWG seeks to have broad-based representation, including not only key civil servants from the relevant ministries but also parliamentary, donor and civil society representatives. The SWG process embeds a pro-poor bias within the budgetary process, as all SWG plans must pass through the Poverty Eradication Working Group, an SWG that is accorded 'special status' as a Policy Advisory Group, and which vets the plans of the other sectors for their contribution to the PEAP goals.

The MTEF is an annual, rolling three-year expenditure planning process that sets out medium term expenditure priorities and hard budget constraints against which sector plans can be developed and refined. This process effectively sets 'ceilings' on sectoral spending over a three year cycle, in line with the requirements of 'macroeconomic stability' outlined in PEAP Pillar I, whereby any increased spending in one sector would have to be off-set against reduced spending in another.

PAF, confusingly, is not actually a 'fund', but is a set of expenditures within the Government budget that corresponds to Pillars Three and Four of the PEAP. Introduced in 1998-9, it is funded from budgetary resources (i.e. domestic revenues such as taxes and donor budget support), with around one third provided by the savings from debt relief via the Highly Indebted Poor Countries initiative (HIPC). The link to donor conditionality appears to be very important in terms of ensuring that such funds are ring-fenced and protected from budget cuts (Foster and Mijumbi 2001: 8).

The key means by which poverty policy is delivered in Uganda is through a highly decentralised system of local government units known as the Local Council (LC) system. Although this strategy that accords with donor calls for decentralised rule as a key aspect of the good governance agenda (World Bank 2000, UNDP 2001), the model of political decentralisation pursued in Uganda has its roots in the 'resistance councils' established during the current regime's guerrilla campaign to topple the second regime of Milton Obote (1980-1985) (e.g. Nsibambi 1998, Regan 1998). The LC system consists of a pyramid of multi-levelled local governance structures, descending from the apex of LC5 at District level, LC4 at County level, LC3 at Sub-County level, LC2 (Parish) and LC1 at village level. There are direct local elections for three tiers of government (LC1, LC3 and LC5) and a participatory planning process is, in theory, in place to ensure that local concerns are fed upwards into policy-making and resource allocation measures. The powers of local governments are enshrined in the 1997 Local Government Act.

[5] A further example of GoU 'ownership' of the poverty agenda might be the fact that the 'Participatory Poverty Assessment' initiative is located within the Ministry of Finance, rather than being an externally-led process as has been the case elsewhere in Africa (Robb 1998).

As is discussed in more depth below, there has recently been a series of heated debates concerning the links (and apparent contradictions) between decentralisation and the poverty reduction agenda in Uganda (e.g. Francis and James, 2003). More generally, and despite the apparent efforts to ensure a pro-poor bias within the political system, 'politics' has recently become increasingly cited as an obstacle to poverty reduction in Uganda. According to a central government figure commenting on the distribution of anti-poverty programmes in Uganda "Our weakness is politics" (quoted in Brock et al, 2002: 14). When interviewed for this research, a key policy analyst and researcher notes that "…what bothers me about policy-making in this country is that you can yield to political pressure without looking at the economics".

There is a similar and related level of disquiet concerning the level of 'ownership', with even the current political leadership seen by some as constituting a threat to rather than the bulwark of Uganda's ownership of the poverty reduction agenda. According to one recent study, the "crucial conditions" for ownership and long-term poverty reduction are "political stability in which clientelist demands are curbed, while government expenditure is increasingly better targeted" (Dijkstra and van Donge 2001: 860). The key question that emerges is the extent to which these conditions pertain in Uganda today. The research presented here suggest that there are strong grounds for concern here, but also that the concept of 'ownership' does not accurately capture the particular form of politics that underpinned Uganda's apparent commitment to the reform agenda and now appears set to undermine it.

Voices of the chronically poor? The 'political space' for reducing long-term poverty

The clearest way in which the international development community has tried to engage with the politics of achieving poverty reduction has been under the heading of 'good governance', 'social capital' and 'empowerment'. However, as argued elsewhere (Hickey with Bracking 2003), there are serious concerns regarding the adequacy of such approaches in uncovering the underlying politics and power relations that shapes interactions between the state and citizenry within and around the formation and implementation of pro-poor policy. A particular problem concerns the economism of the supply/demand rubric that underpins debates on 'voice' and 'responsiveness' (Cornwall and Gaventa 2001), and the World Bank's (2001) focus on 'social capital' and 'decentralised governance'.

One emerging approach that seeks to overcome such weaknesses is the notion of 'political space'. For Webster and Engberg-Pedersen (2002) political space is an analytical tool with which to explore the role of the poor in poverty reduction, and comprises three analytical dimensions. First are the institutional channels through which policy formulation and implementation can be accessed, controlled or contested by the poor. These include popular assemblies, elections, hearing procedures and special representative structures. The second dimension concerns the political discourses in which poverty and poverty reduction are significant issues, not just within policy processes and debates but also within popular discourse more broadly. For Webster and Engberg-Pedersen, this is imperative for understanding how poverty is understood to occur in given political communities, and also who is responsible for alleviating it. The third element comprises the 'social and political practices of the poor' which may be a basis for influencing decision-making, agendas, policy and programme implementation. Such practices are often founded

on collective memories of historical attempts to access and contest political processes, involving social movements and small associations.[6]

Overall, political space is an approach to understanding the politics of poverty reduction within particular political histories and places, and with an understanding of politics as resulting from ongoing series' of contests and conflicts over how society should be organised. This approach has been adopted here, with a specific focus on the *institutional channels* through which the chronic poor and their representatives can gain access to policy processes, and also the *political discourses* within which the chronically poor are represented.[7] The key areas discussed here are the representation of the poorest groups in the local council structure and parliament; representation of issues related to chronic poverty at ministerial level; and the presence and representation of information and issues related to chronic poverty within poverty-related political discourse. From this review, it is argued that although the institutional channels exist through which the chronically poor and their advocates can participate, some key groups remain excluded, while inclusion itself does little to guarantee influence within decision-making areas. There are further problems regarding the ways in which the chronic poor are represented in political discourse.

Local institutional channels and political space for chronically poor groups in Uganda

> "Uganda has a participant political culture" (Bratton et al 2000: 3).

As discussed earlier, the process of decentralisation in Uganda has devolved significant levels of political and administrative autonomy to lower levels of government, and increased the institutional channels through which local people can participate in local governance. Within this system, several opportunities present themselves to chronic poor groups, such as the Constitutional provision for a minimum of one-third female representation on local councils, and Council Secretaries for Women, the Youth and People with Disabilities, throughout the system. This research has also uncovered a broader set of concerns regarding the links between decentralisation and poverty reduction in more general terms.

Initial research into the efficacy of the quota system of representation for chronic poor groups reveals mixed results. In Kamuli, where the elected local District representative for PWD has proved to be influential in terms of resource allocation, this has been in the direction of his local constituency as a whole rather than towards his special interest group, revealing the tension between spatial and social understandings of representation. A different problem emerges at the LC1 level. During initial meetings with LC1 in three different Districts for this research, a single female council member represented the highest turn-out, with none participating on some occasions. Questioned on this, respondents said that the husbands of women representatives saw the meetings as 'public gatherings' which were for men and would therefore expose their wives to potential 'illicit liaisons'. These negative findings – and others – are also apparent in the wider literature, and a major study into women's participation in Uganda discusses these and other problems of the LC quota system in more depth (Tripp 2000: 224-7). A significant problem that has emerged is that women's representatives within the system feel that they lack the autonomy to pursue women's interests where they may conflict with either Movement policy and/or local (male) elite interests, with some Women's Secretaries actually opposing pro-women initiatives on this basis. Far from providing an empowering arena of engagement for marginal groups, then, the 'local' remains riven by unequal

[6] See Hickey with Bracking (2003) for a fuller elaboration and extension of this notion of political space.
[7] Research into the 'social and political practices' of chronic poor groups in Uganda through village level surveys and interviews forms the next stage of the research project from which this paper is drawn.

power relations and processes of subordination in Uganda (Khadiagala 2001), as elsewhere (Mohan and Stokke 2000).

Perhaps the most searching critique to date, though, is that even if women were to participate freely, the spaces accorded to them are marginalised within the political process, such that,

> "The system of separate and parallel Councils for Women, People with Disabilities and Youth…is seen as a cure worse than the illness, at least with regards addressing women's concerns at the local level. Being parallel and weakly linked to the LC System – where real power resides at local level – and being imperfectly connected to the national-level women's political machinery, the local level Women Council structure effectively hives off women's concerns into a political cul-de-sac and ensures that LCs remain dominated by men and their concerns" (Brock et al 2002: 42).

This apparent failure to transform political representation in local government towards greater gender equality in Uganda is also apparent in the electoral system for female representatives, whereby the 'method of reservation' creates a similarly parallel and relatively degraded avenue through which women are channelled (Ahikire 2003: 219-213).

However, some of the evidence collected for this research also suggests that the quota system can have an influence. Not all marginal concerns are channelled into a 'cul-de-sac', as special interest secretaries also sit on the general technical and planning committees at LC5 level and have informal access to civil servants. In one District, a Planning Officer states that the councillors for vulnerable groups "are active and have an influence", citing their direct lobbying of departmental heads rather than the influence of their 'formal' deliberations. The Chief Administrative Officer of the same district states that the level of this influence differs between groups – with women more influential than the Youth and PWD the weakest – according to the level of agency displayed by the particular representative, and the "level of threat that the group offers" to the decision-makers, both at the ballot box and in social/household life. In another district, the Deputy District Planner noted that, "the targeting of vulnerable groups is dependent on the representative system", with the Council Secretaries for vulnerable groups ensuring that the particular needs of their group are fed into planning processes through a variety of technical committees. However, a key point made strongly at the local level is that for this type of influence to feed through into resource allocations that actually make a difference, there is a need for local governments to have a level of financial autonomy that has been increasingly withdrawn over the past few years as fiscal decentralisation has moved heavily towards conditional grants (Government of Uganda 2002). In this context, the discretionary funding provided by the Local Government Development Programme was regularly cited by local civil servants as being the most useful for targeting resources and service delivery towards the poorest of the poor at District level and below.

Although critically debated within poverty policy circles in Uganda, the channels presented to chronically poor groups in Uganda through decentralisation are not at risk of being curtailed. What is sometimes overlooked in debates over decentralisation in Uganda is that this process is not an element of 'good governance' conditionality that the GoU has gracefully taken 'ownership' of but a political reform that is central to the NRM's project of transforming state-society relations and claiming legitimacy for the state, particularly in rural areas (Regan 1998). The representation of women and youth was established during the

Movement's Luwero days (Mamdani 1996: 209). It forms part of what are arguably the most secure of all reforms that now fall under the aegis of the 'poverty reduction strategy', not merely because it is a central part of the 1995 Constitution but also because it can be said to form part of a 'contract' between the state and citizenry. Although the security of these representative channels does not guarantee influence, they at least provide a constitutional space around which strategies to gain this influence can be sought.

The findings of this research on the links between decentralisation and poverty reduction in Uganda suggest that a more balanced perspective is required concerning the impact of decentralisation, as opposed to the tendency to either uncritically celebrate (e.g. Craig and Porter 2003) or write-off the reforms as damaging (e.g. Ellis and Bahiigwa 2003). The perspective of some within central line ministries (e.g. Health), is that decentralisation reforms have fragmented and confused efforts towards coherent pro-poor service delivery, although there is little direct evidence that decentralisation reforms are the key problem behind the general downturn in terms of progress towards meeting the health related MDGs (Okidi et al 2002). The installation of public services commissions at the district level – in line with 'good practice' regarding horizontal accountability between elected and administrative officials (Manor 1995) – has led some civil servants officials to complain of political interference with regards the use of poverty-related expenditure. The resulting 're-allocations' (often into 'petrol costs') calls for creative accounting, with officially resourced activities such as monitoring and evaluation visits by District level officials – which lack close central oversight and can therefore be easily accounted for as having been carried out without risk of being found out – being cancelled. This reduces the quality of oversight and level of accountability for service delivery in key pro-poor sectors.

There are mixed findings in terms of pro-poor political leadership. In Mbale, the incoming District Chairman (2002-) campaigned on a poverty reduction agenda and has actively sought to ensure a high quality of service-delivery in health and education. However, he was re-elected on a wave of clan-based sentiment whereby members of the dominant clan in this largely single-ethnic region were returned to power at each level of the political system. As this clan are also the largest landowners, this marked a (re)convergence of economic and political power which recent research has suggested is inimical to the pro-poor character of local governance (Crook and Sverrison 2001). Against this, the Chairman of Kamuli District has instigated a number of pro-poor initiatives in a bid to match the popularity of his predecessor, who was renowned for populist measures.

National institutional channels and political space for chronically poor groups in Uganda

A similarly ambiguous picture regarding the political capital that can be assigned to or claimed by the chronically poor emerges at the national level. On the one hand, the influence of actors with a vested interest in representing those affected by chronic poverty within national policy-making circles are both low on capacity and poorly connected to mainstream decision-making processes and actors, both in terms of Parliamentary and Ministerial representation. However, there are also clear signs that progress is being made in each of these institutional areas.

The chronically poor can be said to be represented in Parliament in three main ways: through the Caucus system (special representatives), through the committee system and (in terms of the spatial distribution of chronic poverty in Uganda) through the territorial representation of individual MPs. There are five 'special interest' groups,

including Women (56 members, one per District) and PWD (three).[8] The PWD Caucus has yet to have any significant influence on the policy process as yet, beyond ensuring that the Parliament was adapted for wheelchair access, a gain yet to be extended to other public buildings in Kampala. Unsurprisingly, the Women's Caucus has been the most influential of all the Caucus', the highlight being their central role in developing the 1995 Constitution.[9] However there have since been defeats on two key issues that the Caucus and women's movement in Uganda more broadly has campaigned on, namely the 1998 Land Act and the current Domestic Relations Bill. The last-minute presidential withdrawal of the 'co-ownership' clause placed within the Land Act (Khadiagala 2001: 62), was of particular relevance to chronic poverty given the tendency for many widowed women to enter long-term poverty traps as a result of the asset-stripping that follows the death of their husband. Both of these apparent defeats suggest that while a voice in policy-making processes is seldom denied to marginal groups in Uganda – the elderly, landless and people with mental disabilities excepted – this may not be sufficient to alter the power relations that underpin long-term or what Iliffe (1987) called 'structural' poverty.[10] As noted by Goetz (2003), the inclusive character of Uganda's political system towards marginal groups was offered as a favour rather than claimed as a right, and has yet to transcend the politics of patronage from which it emerged.

In general, the Caucus' are less influential on policy-making processes than the committee system, which forms a constitutional element of the scrutiny, and also lobbying and advocacy functions of parliament. According to a bilateral donor official who runs capacity-building programmes in Parliament, Equal Opportunities committee is "…the only committee that could be said to be looking out for those left behind in Uganda", although there is also a HIV/AIDS committee. Both are newly formed but developing capacity fairly quickly. As with other committees, the main factor that will affect their influence is active leadership, a more difficult quality to develop capacity.

However, the key issue here is the limited extent of Parliamentary influence over poverty-related policy making in general. One observer describes relations between Parliament and MFPED (the key institutional home of the poverty reduction agenda in Uganda) as "very poor", a claim supported by a civil servant within that Ministry who states that,

> "Parliament are a confused group and I would not take them seriously. They have no broader perspective and never come out with an issue on livelihoods – just what affects them".

To an extent, this is unsurprising given that, as elsewhere, Parliament in Uganda has been effectively sidelined in the poverty reduction strategy process. Few members were involved in the formulation of the PEAP while the MTEF procedure effectively determines budgetary allocations in sectoral areas over which parliament officially has oversight. However, parliamentary attendance in those channels that are open to them (e.g. the annual budget process) is limited. The implications for the broad-based 'ownership' of the poverty agenda required to tackle poverty over the long-

[8] Youth (5), Workers (5) and the Army (10) also have specific representatives within Parliament.
[9] The involvement of women members of parliament but also women's organisations more broadly has been related to the achievement of a succession of 'gender-sensitive' provisions (Tripp 2000: 77-8). In particular, Chapter Four Article 21(1) grants women legal equality and protection in political, economic, social and cultural spheres (Khadialgala 2001: 62).
[10] A final point that is that members of these Caucus' are unlikely to provide the critical perspective required to act as consistent advocates for their particular interest group, as their place in power is seen as beholden to the Movement's patronage rather than as of electoral right.

term are discussed in the penultimate section below. The point here is that a key channel through which the interests of the poorest groups in Uganda could be represented is currently marginal in the poverty reduction process, with only limited efforts being made to redress this problem on both sides.

An emerging political space at the national level within which the interests of the poorest groups in Uganda are arguably most clearly invested in the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD), which is responsible for "promoting the rights of vulnerable and poor groups", including women, PWDs, children, people affected by conflict, youth workers and the elderly. Since being established in 1988, this ministry is currently emerging from a chequered history involving at least four different names and mandates until reaching the current formulation in 1998. Its sphere of influence is as much in lobbying and advocacy as direct service-delivery, with a particular focus on trying to mainstream policies and approaches across line ministries in ways that benefit vulnerable groups, most recently the 'social protection' agenda (see following section). Officials are aware of their relative lack of formal institutional power but have begun to develop ways of increasing their 'political capital' at the centre; as one notes, "we do not have powers of negative sanction against line ministries so we work through those who do". Although currently marginal, then, it is argued below that the association of the Ministry's promotion of both a discourse on the most 'vulnerable groups' and the emerging social protection agenda suggest that it is actively seeking to widen the political space within which debates and policies concerning chronic poverty emerge.

Political discourse and the poorest groups in Uganda: the 'left behind' and the 'economically active'

The role of political discourse in determining the political space that is available for the reduction of chronic poverty is twofold. The first dimension relates to the availability of scientific data on issues related to chronic poverty, the second to the way in which issues related to chronic poverty and the chronic poor themselves are represented within political discourse. This issue goes beyond raw data and concerns the extent to which the chronic poor and their advocates will be able to mobilise or influence 'ideological resources' within poverty discourse in their favour. Recent research on the attitudes of political elites has found that this is crucial, particularly in terms of the distinction that some make between the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor (Hossain and Moore 2001). This section analyses these issues of poverty knowledge and discourse in relation to the chronic poor in Uganda.

The extent to which it is possible to discuss, analyse and develop policies in relation to chronic poverty relies to a large extent on having adequate data for this purpose. The conceptualisation of chronic poverty as both a temporal and multidimensional phenomenon (Hulme and Shepherd 2003) means that a mixture of quantitative panel datasets and qualitative data sources are required in order to analyse this phenomenon. Such requirements are generally well met in Uganda, which has good panel data and houses the paradigm model for participatory poverty assessments.[11]

[11] In Uganda, the panel datasets required for tracking chronic poverty and the cross-sectional household surveys are generally considered to be of good quality and have been increasingly well utilised of late (e.g. Deninger and Okidi 2002). In terms of qualitative data, the Uganda Participatory Poverty Assessment (UPPAP) has been a major influence in terms of revealing the lived experience of poverty to policy-makers, and particularly in terms of showing "that poverty was not uniform and that there were different categories of the poor" (Interview, PMAU official). This has made it difficult to maintain an view of the poor as an homogenous group. In terms of moving from poverty data to poverty knowledge, policy-focussed research institutes such as the Economic Policy and Research Centre (EPRC) have played a central role here. One report drew particular attention to the poorest groups (Mijumbi and Okidi 2001), and is cited by donors and as marking a key contribution to a more differentiated understanding of poverty.

More specifically, the recently conducted second round of UPPAP focussed directly on issues of relevance to chronic poverty, with a close focus on 'poverty dynamics' and also on particularly vulnerable groups. Although few policy actors currently differentiate between the 'transient' and 'chronic' poor, UPPAP has contributed strongly towards an acceptance that different poverties exist in Uganda, with this understanding increasingly encompassing a temporal dimension. However, data relating to inequality remains insufficient both in its production and its use. Poverty data is rarely disaggregated either socially (e.g. by gender) or spatially (e.g. by district), and where this does occur, as with UNDP's District profiles, take-up is limited to parliamentarians eager to see how their constituency is doing (Brock et al 2002: 30-31). This is concerning for debates over chronic poverty given the key role of inequality in underpinning long-term/structural poverty.

Within policy making, there is a similar and growing awareness of the need to disaggregate the effects of government policy and uptake of government services according to the respective poverty levels of different groups and individuals. For example, one of the tests that the Poverty Eradication Working Group applies to policies that it 'vets' from sectoral working groups, is an analysis of how such policies will impact on the poorest 20 per cent (Interviews with PMAU officials). However, it is not clear that the monitoring and evaluation processes required to offer this data are in place at the policy delivery end within local line Ministries or local government offices level. For example, the returns made regarding access to local health care centres to the Ministry of Health are not disaggregated by group. Although research on access by socio-economic grouping is available from other sources (e.g. the recent World Health Organisation study of uptake of services since the abolishment of user fees), this does not overcome the absence of such differentiated evaluation processes within policy making feedback processes.

A recent development that may help to overcome this problem is the new, World Bank-driven approach of Poverty and Social Impact Analysis (PSIA), introduced partly as a result of pressure from NGOs on the World Bank to prove that their new lending policies were as pro-poor as the rhetoric suggests. PSIA aims to provide an "analysis of the distributional impact of policy reform on the well-being or welfare of different stakeholder groups, with particular focus on the poor and vulnerable" (World Bank 2002, quoted in Wilkes and Lefrancois 2002: 9), and should therefore be able to provide the basis upon which policies are (re)designed to ensure that the poorest groups benefit from them. The PSIA process has recently been piloted in Uganda, albeit with mixed findings, particularly concerning the extent to which the insights gleaned from this process can be embedded in the national policy system such that recommendations are able to be adopted in a timely way (ODI 2002). More broadly, there are concerns that the PSIA in itself is unlikely to lead to a more thoroughgoing review of poverty reduction strategy processes that may well be required if those currently 'left behind' in Uganda and elsewhere are to be reached. According to one former Bank official, there is nothing about PSIA which forces analysts to question policy from the outset, and nothing that "might change institutional biases towards orthodoxy within the Bank itself" (Wilkes and Lefrancois 2002: 17). As argued below, there is a growing need for such a challenge to be made if policies that might challenge chronic poverty are to be recognised.

Moving beyond poverty data per se, there may be a broader obstacle to focusing on chronic poverty in Uganda that derives from the way in which poverty is perceived and analysed amongst key policy actors. In terms of poverty analysis, the growing debate concerning those amongst the poor who have yet to benefit significantly from the successes of the 1990s are seen as those 'left behind', invoking the language of marginalisation and locating the continuing poor as somehow outside the wider

socioeconomic experience of most Ugandans during this period. This reflects an essentially 'residualist' view of poverty rather than the relational view that seems increasingly necessary in Uganda if processes of long-term impoverishment are to be accurately detected and analysed.[12] In terms of elite perceptions of the poorest people in Uganda, there is a close association made in policy circles between the poorest groups and a failure to be 'economically active'. The use of this term is pervasive throughout policy actors in Uganda – both state and civic – and although invested with different meanings by different actors, a predominant effect appears to be both the exclusion of the poorest groups from key poverty reduction programmes, and a sense in which the poorest are both stereotyped as 'unproductive' and somehow blamed for the overall problem of poverty in Uganda.[13] This tendency resonates with the way in which agency within African agriculture has been politically constructed more broadly in recent decades (Whitehead 2000).

In policy terms, the effects of this discourse of the economically active is most apparent within the GoU's flagship poverty reduction programme, the Plan for the Modernisation of Agriculture (PMA). The PMA seeks to address the PEAP objective of raising the incomes of the poor, primarily by increasing agricultural productivity and market share for subsistence farmers through interventions such as agricultural advisory services, rural finance, agricultural education and agro-processing and marketing. The overall aim is to transform subsistence agriculture into commercial agriculture. Although incipient as yet – with some observers already doubting the GoU's commitment to PMA – there is evidence that the chief beneficiaries will be those 'economically active' and 'progressive farmers' with existing assets and good links to both agricultural extension agents and the local government officials responsible for delivering the programme (Bahigwa, Rigby and Woodhouse forthcoming, Woodhouse 2004). However, contrary to the claim made in the sources just referenced, the key architects of PMA admit that the poorest people in rural Uganda were not necessarily the target in the first place. According to one, "The poor might not have the ability to benefit" from PMA, because:

> "…the poorest are deficient in agricultural assets (land and livestock), which brings into question whether or not the PMA will be make any difference to the poorest…plans for the PMA did try to recognise some of this after being questioned as to how the poor could benefit. It is secondary benefits really and we envisaged that after initial successes with commercialisation the poorest would provide labour on maize farms and agro-processing factories. But this was as a wish statement – the results depend on production being stimulated; and there is no certainty that profits will be reinvested; this sort of outcome cannot be determined by policy"

This lack of a clearly defined link between PMA and the poorest groups in Uganda is explicable with reference not to problems within the poverty reduction agenda *per se*, but its at times contradictory location within a broader development strategy that emphasises a particular form of 'modernisation'.[14] In the dominant poverty-related discourse the poor are cast as agents of their own recovery, knowledgeable about

[12] See Bernstein 1992.
[13] From a government perspective, the model Ugandan citizen might fit into the model of 'economic citizenship' found in the United States, where the primary obligation of the citizen – upon which access to the rights of citizenship is contingent – is to be economically productive, and at the very least look after oneself and ones dependents (Fraser Gordon 1994).
[14] Attempts are underway to ensure a more pro-poor focus within PMA, with MoGLSD gaining an agreement that Community Development Workers will be employed to mobilise poorer groups into the co-operative groups demanded by government policy as a pre-requisite for accessing inputs. However, this plan has yet to be financed and implemented, and the revival of the community development movement in Uganda is likely to be a significant challenge.

their circumstances and able to author their own development through participation in local governance and labour-intensive growth.[15] In the broader development discourse, the poor in Uganda are framed as part of the problem, lacking the level of economic activity to drive through the transformations required to move Uganda out of being a 'backwards' agricultural economy. For example, in a recent Presidential speech aimed at (re)articulating the Movement's underlying project of development, Museveni argued that most of the 85 per cent of Ugandans engaged in the agricultural economy "are stepping on top of each other and not doing anything useful". As is discussed in greater detail below, this tension between the poverty reduction strategy and the Movement's underlying development objectives – which has at best ambiguous implications for the poorest groups – is likely to increase in the coming years as the President seeks a final push for the Movement's transformative project in advance of the 2006 presidential elections.

Conclusion

In terms of the political space available to chronically poor groups with regards political discourse, it has been argued that while the scientific knowledge-based for analysing chronic poverty is available, there is a representation of poverty within political discourse in Uganda that may limit the extent to which those termed in Ghana as 'God's poor' (Hulme et al 2001) are included in national development strategies. More broadly, there is a 'politics of inclusion' in Uganda that reaches most of the chronically poor, although the elderly, the landless and people with mental disabilities are largely excluded from formal representation. People with disabilities and women are represented at each level of the elected political system and within Parliament and ministries such as the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. However, despite having the at least a degree of access to the 'spaces, actors and knowledge', these institutions have limited resources and little influence over the policy agenda. For Brock et al (2002: 20, borrowing from the work of Goetz), this signifies a 'politics of presence' rather than a 'politics of influence' in Uganda. This research would agree with this but go further and argue that what is at stake more broadly is whether Uganda operates according a politics of inclusion or one of social justice.

The politics of reducing chronic poverty in Uganda: overcoming PRS hierarchies and contesting disagreements

There is a growing recognition amongst key policy actors in Uganda that the broad strategy of pursuing neoliberal economic growth alongside a universalist approach to poverty reduction has failed to reach certain sectors of the population, and that increasing numbers have been 'left behind'. There is also a general sense in which policy debates are moving in a direction that increasingly recognises that certain forms of poverty are more intractable than others, and that such types of poverty require different forms of interventions to those pursued to date, as with recent and growing emphasis on 'social protection'. The specific forms of poverty data and knowledge required for such a move are – with the exception of a clearer focus on inequality – largely in place. However, serious challenges remain at multiple levels, many of which are essentially political in character. The consensus around the

[15] The stereotype of a poor rural man allowing a new breed of pig disbursed to him through PMA to die because of alcoholism is becoming one of several apocryphal 'policy stories' that circulate within Uganda's policy circles, in this case used as a means of depicting the incapacity of the poorest groups to manage agricultural inputs (see Woodhouse 2004, forthcoming, for how such elite attitudes may lead many of the poor to be excluded from the PMA). Although alcoholism is undoubtedly a serious social problem in Uganda, there is a certain irony here, in that such a discourse actually draws on an alleged tool of empowerment as a means of degrading the poor and their potential to be involved in poverty reduction interventions.

relative failure of the current strategy to reach the poorest groups disguises deep-seated divisions over whether financing for poverty reduction should be increased given the likelihood that PEAP targets may not now be met, and how (and even if) policies and interventions should be targeted at such groups. The increased financing of poverty reduction that this would entail is contingent on the outcome of an institutionalised political dispute between key policy actors, with divisions broadly following Kanbur's (2001) distinction between "Finance Ministry" and "Civil Society" tendencies. The likely impact of the social protection agenda may depend both on which understanding of social protection gains acceptance amongst key policy actors in Uganda – a process which again is closely informed by an institutionalised struggle between donors – and on the extent to which the social protection agenda can transcend its current location at the bottom of the overall PRS hierarchy in Uganda. Finally, in terms of the shift towards targeting implied by the social protection agenda, previous and ongoing attempts to reach the chronically poor have tended to become heavily politicised in ways that are inimical to sustained poverty reduction, and are largely discredited as a result. Moreover, there are signs of this history repeating itself in the run-up to the 2006 Presidential elections.

Social protection and the politics of targeting in Uganda

> "Museveni does not ask himself 'who is left behind', but thinks of the common or garden poor person" (Donor official from a bilateral agency).
>
> "At first, poverty was so massive that we just came up with blanket coverage, and aimed for everyone. Now we realise that some people have been left behind and that we need some other types of intervention" (Government official in PMAU).

There is a growing debate concerning the policies that might target the poorest groups in Uganda's PRS circles, a feature that reflects the multiple ambiguities that characterise the politics of staying poor in Uganda. This is most evident in terms of the incipient but growing focus on 'social protection', an approach to poverty policy that has been identified as central to efforts to alleviate chronic poverty (Hulme and Shepherd 2003: 19-20, also Marcus and Wilkinson 2002). At present, Uganda has "…no effective state-operated safety nets" (Okidi and Kempaka 2002: 6). However, social protection has been identified as one of the key 'cross-cutting' issues that the review teams for each PEAP Pillar will have to address in the ongoing 2001-2003 PEAP review. The most influential donors in Uganda – namely the World Bank and DFID – are strongly promoting debates on social protection through workshops, the resourcing of a Social Protection Task Force and capacity-building initiatives with the natural ministerial 'home' of policies designed to address the most vulnerable groups, the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. In the first phase of a study commissioned to 'Inform the Development of a Framework for Social Protection' in Uganda, the chronic poor are specifically identified as a key group requiring social protection. However, this growing realisation that 'different poverties requires different policies' will need to overcome a particular set of political challenges if it is to become an influential approach within Uganda's poverty reduction strategy. These are discussed in terms of past, present and future problems with programmes targeted at the poorest groups; and the broader issue of how social protection might overcome its current 'last among equals' status within the hierarchical sequencing that characterises poverty reduction strategies in Uganda and beyond.

A recent review of social protection in Uganda notes that the chronically poor are likely to require a particular form of social protection in the form of 'social assistance' transfers' (SPTF 2002: 5). More broadly, the apparent rejection of a universalist welfare model on grounds of the unsustainable costs of such a system, means that

targeting is likely to become the default mode of reaching the poorest groups in Uganda.[16] However, the targeting of poverty reduction initiatives has a particular recent history in Uganda that augurs badly for political and popular support of a significant policy shift in this direction. Of particular note here is an infamous programme aimed at targeting credit towards the poor, namely the Entandikwa Credit Scheme. *Etandikwa* was "…targeted on the poor population living in rural and peri-urban areas. The Scheme seeks to reduce poverty by providing credit to the poor, who cannot obtain credit through conventional Commercial Banks" (Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning 1995: foreword). The targeting mechanism would be a 'Country Steering Committee', located at sub-county level of local government (LC3). According to the civil servant responsible for co-ordinating *Entandikwa*, the scheme was promoted by the President from 1994-5 on the basis that many rural people needed some initial assistance if they were to contribute to economic growth (Interview data). In the financial years of 1995-6 and 1996-7, totals of Sch4.2bn and Sch3.5bn were disbursed.[17]

However, funding for *Entandikwa* was suspended by 1998 and remains suspended today. Although full cost-recovery was envisaged by the scheme, nearly half of the funds remain unaccounted for, and there is strong evidence that the failure of the scheme to reach its target beneficiaries was because the scheme became heavily politicised, in two key ways. First, the Country Steering Committee failed to target the poor in favour of using the funds as a form of political patronage. A lawyers' report into attempts to recover *Entandikwa* funds in Kamuli District noted that "Access to credit has been influenced by political support for the individual steering committee members. Worse still, many loans have been irresponsibly allocated to friends and relatives".[18] Second, most observers at both local and national level note that the timing of the credit disbursals – either side of the 1996 Presidential elections led to the funds being seen as either a pre-election give-away of 'vote-buying' or a financial 'thank-you' for returning Museveni to power. Few saw any need to repay this 'gift', reflecting a wider feature of electoral politics in some sub-Saharan African countries whereby, "the purpose of the individual vote remains indelibly linked to the anticipation of direct communal (or even personal) benefit which elections offer" (Chabal and Daloz 1999: 39).

At one level, the sheer ubiquity and horror with which the *entandikwa* experience is recounted in policy circles in Uganda will make it difficult to garner support for targeted transfers. As one official from an influential donor agency noted "Bad policy stories have a lot of influence in Uganda…I can't think of any good policy stories regarding targeting…people always mention *entandikwa*".[19] This lack of political persuasiveness in relation to targeting is further exacerbated by what is an apparently wilful and ongoing tendency to employ targeting as a mechanism of patronage rather than poverty reduction. This is apparent both in current efforts to revive *entandikwa* (The New Vision, 8/01/02) – which is interpreted by many

[16] However, the tension between whether to pursue a universal or targeted approach to social protection – the key dilemma according to Hulme and Shepherd 2003: 20 – is far from resolved in Uganda, with the key donors lining up behind opposing approaches.
[17] Exchange rate for January 2003: £1= Sch 2,600; $1=Sch1,800.
[18] This mirrors research in India that shows how bureaucrats and councillors are able to use their superior levels of political capital to capture resources as they are devolved through development programmes (Baumann 2000), and broader findings on how devolved resources are captured by local elite groups (Crook and Sverrisson 2001, Johnson 2001).
[19] Less dramatically, targeting was also attempted through the employment of user-fee exemptions during the era of structural adjustment. This system – much critiqued – disappeared with the abolishment of user fees in 2001 – although this narrower, more instrumental approach to social protection remains on the agenda. According to officials within the Ministry of Health, this was also open to leakage, with LC1 officials this time (mis)using their targeting powers

observers as a preparation for the next election give-away – and in other instances where poverty programmes are focussed on particular groups of the poorest people.[20]

A key instance here is the most recent flagship programme designed to address the region with the highest levels of chronic poverty in Uganda. The Northern Ugandan Social Action Fund (NUSAF) is a World Bank-funded project targeted at internally displaced people, returned abductees, female-headed households, orphans, people with disabilities and people living with AIDS. NUSAF has become heavily criticised on a number of counts, including the lack of consultation with intended beneficiaries and the failure to learn the lessons of past failures programmes in this region (UDN 2001), and the use of a project-based approach which is outmoded in comparison to the mainstreamed, institutionalised character of most poverty reduction initiatives in Uganda (Brock et al 2002). From a social protection perspective, a key concern is that although the level of vulnerability experienced by the targeted groups would normally qualify them for social assistance transfers, the activities to be funded under the scheme are predominantly income-generating activities and the provision of tool-kits to allow beneficiaries to pursue trades (SPTF 2002: 36). Once again, the discourse of the 'economically active' has obscured a more appropriate response to chronically poor groups in Uganda.

However, the main problems with NUSAF as a programme for targeting the long-term poor in Uganda are – again – of a political character. Described as a "contentious and politically sensitive programme" (Brock et al 2002: 14), such targeted programmes have proved to be open to manipulation according to the logic of ethno-territorial patronage politics. In this instance, the districts defined as being of the 'North' extended to include several districts from the East, largely because the Minister responsible for designing the project wanted to ensure that his home area was included (*ibid*: 15).[21] The result – a US$100m spread across 18 of Uganda's poorest districts over a limited five-year project which bypasses local government structures – does not represent the sort of 'targeting' required to challenge long-term poverty in a region where two-thirds of the population are below the poverty line and institutional decay is endemic. In addition to these points, there is a strong sense that this programme more likely to become a conduit for patronage than poverty reduction is its location within the Prime Minister's Office. This Office lacks constitutional status, and is not viewed as a serious player within the poverty reduction agenda, but as a means by which the Prime Minister can maintain political support through the control of some marginal poverty-related programmes. Given the lack of constitutional status accorded to the Prime Minister's Office, there is little chance that such programmes becoming part of a wider 'contract' between citizenry and state, a move that, as argued in the penultimate section of this paper, is essential for long-term poverty reduction.

Social protection within poverty reduction strategies: last among equals?
The final problem for social protection debates relates to its recent arrival on the reflects a wider sequencing of reforms within the PRSP process currently being rolled out across developing and transitional countries (Conway and Norton 2002). According to Porter and Craig (2003), the perennial sequence within the supposedly country-specific PRSP is as follows:

[20] However, this mainstream aversion may be increasingly out of step with new research findings in this area that there is not necessarily a higher risk of leakage with targeted transfers (Ravallion 2003).
[21] According to 'a central government figure cited in a recent paper on policy processes in Uganda (Brock et al 2002: 14) "Our weakness is politics – and that's what the location of the NUSAF is all about; politics in the Bank, politics in government".

This sequencing of policy debates and reform broadly holds for Uganda, with the recent arrival of debates on social protection following the earlier focus on structural adjustment, decentralisation and poverty reduction.[22] To some extent, it mirrors the four pillars of PEAP, the home-grown Ugandan PRS, which similarly starts with 'economic growth and transformation' and ends with 'quality of life' issues. Importantly, this 'sequencing' is not simply temporal but of a hierarchical nature, with the earlier elements within the sequence privileged in a number of ways over subsequent reforms. This privilege is underpinned by institutional interests that express themselves through a variety of policy and management mechanisms designed to protect certain areas of reform from critical debate, most significantly the 'Medium Term Expenditure Framework' (MTEF) which sets budgetary ceilings on poverty spending (Craig and Porter 2003: 60-1). This hierarchy is also apparent in more subtle forms, as in the expression of dominance within shared policy spaces that underpins the hegemony of a particular neoliberal vision of poverty reduction. It is argued here, then, that there is particular politics to the sequencing of reforms within Uganda's poverty reduction strategy, understandable in terms of particular institutional and ideological interests, that renders efforts to challenge long-term poverty particularly difficult, not just in terms of social protection, but in terms of considering alternatives approaches to those dictated by the framework of macroeconomic policy set higher up the chain.

With specific reference to social protection, the key issue is that this hierarchy within the PRS reform process limits the influence that debates over social protection are likely to have on the overall strategy. Not only is upwards influence difficult to exert (e.g. debates from lower down the hierarchy exist *within the context of* debates higher up the chain, rather than acting on them through some sort of dialogue), but the links between the segments are obscured. For example, debates over social protection have yet to engage with issues of macroeconomic policy (e.g. are the costs of protecting people from the effects of their exclusion from current growth models worth paying or should alternative growth models be considered?) or good governance. The first phase of a study into social protection does little to examine the politics of social protection in Uganda beyond a limited reference to 'political commitment', despite evidence that there is a particular and debilitating politics associated with targeted forms of social protection in Uganda that needs to be addressed. The hierarchical sequencing of reforms within the poverty reduction agenda acts to ring-fence debates over each keeps social protection away from good governance agenda, an observation supported by the experience of social protection within PRSPs more broadly.[23] This entrenched sequential hierarchy both obscures

[22] However, it might be argued that for Uganda, poverty reduction has actually been privileged over the good governance agenda in the eyes of the donors at least, with few willing to press as hard for reform in the political arena as they have been in the social and economic spheres (Hauser 1997).

[23] This appears to be a problem within PRSPs more broadly than Uganda – a recent survey of six full and seventeen interim PRSPs notes that "none of these strategies discuss the implications of (partial) decentralisation of revenue raising and service provision to finance social protection, although this may well be a problem at least in isolated, poor areas with limited resources" (Marcus and Wilkinson 2002: 22).

the links between the apparently discrete dimensions within the overall strategy and locates all new initiatives within the remit of an argument regarding macroeconomic policy at the apex of the pyramid that is framed in this sequence as beyond debate. This has become apparent of late in terms of the obstacles put forward by macroeconomic policy makers regarding proposed increases in poverty spending (see below). Unless this political hierarchy of reform debates is challenged, social protection is likely to be remain seen as merely a mopping-up exercise rather than a more developmental strategy (Devereux 2001), that requires particular forms of governance to be effective.

Overall, then, several key challenges emerge for the social protection agenda if it is to become a significant force towards the reduction of chronic poverty in Uganda. First it needs to cross the hierarchical boundaries identified here within the overall poverty reduction strategy. To make policy reform in the area of protecting the long-term poor in Uganda that is more thoroughgoing and embedded, there is a need to engage with macroeconomic policy debates and explore the political and governance implications of formulating and delivering social protection policies.[24] In particular, and despite a current focus on targeted social assistance transfers for the chronically poor, a more convincing way forward may be to avoid separate programming in favour of using existing successful systems that have both presidential and popular support (e.g. supplying food to school children suffering from HIV/AIDs).[25]

Beyond this, 'self-targeting' social protection programmes involving special employment schemes, public works and food for work schemes have proved capable of for reaching the poorest and excluding the non-poor (Booth and Mosley 2003: 15), and there is clear potential for such programmes in the fields of infrastructure (e.g. construction of schools, health centres and roads). Moreover, such programmes can also have important political benefits for the chronically poor. Where such programmes have been given constitutional status they have provided the basis on which poorest groups could organise around and make claims as citizens rather than as clients (Joshi and Moore 2000), a move that begins to develop the 'political capabilities' of the poorest groups and thus change the current situation whereby the chronic poor have a relatively high level of political rights and inclusion, but lack the political agency required to effect change (ongoing research). At the conceptual level, it might be necessary for debates over social protection need to engage with debates over inequality rather than just vulnerability. As well as focusing more on the transitory rather than the chronically poor, debates over vulnerability tends to be somewhat 'depoliticised' in their failure to problematise the underlying causes of risk.

The hierarchical sequencing within poverty reduction strategy: the absence of alternatives

The hierarchical sequencing of policy reforms within Uganda's poverty reduction strategy process has important implications for the reduction of long-term poverty in Uganda that are broader than the issue of social protection. This section begins by analysing two particular and related problems: the first concerns the extra financing

[24] In terms of engaging with the poverty reduction agenda, rather than being a residualist 'add-on' the debate on social protection is currently framed within an institutional struggle between DFID's more holistic approach and the World Bank's. There is support for DFID's approach from studies revealing how targeted transfers offer households the opportunities to diversify and/or consolidate livelihood strategies in ways that are not merely 'survivalist' but which constitute viable development strategies and exit routes out of poverty.

[25] Efforts are also required to overcome current problems concerning the with bias against the most vulnerable groups in terms of localised service delivery. At present, for example, women are face male bias with regards expert support in maternal delivery that is hindering efforts to reach the PEAP target for reduced maternal and child mortality levels (Okidi et al 2002).

of poverty reduction policies and programmes that would be required for chronic poverty to be challenged, while the second concerns the current direction of macroeconomic policy and growing disquiet concerning its 'pro-poor' character. These debates are currently framed within an institutional struggle over competing visions of how to reduce poverty in Uganda, and the politics of what is termed here a 'hegemonic' struggle within the poverty reduction agenda is analysed here. However, despite the increased level of contestation within the confines of pro-poor policy actors, there remains a broad consensus concerning a broader development project around which most policy actors – from state and civil society – converge irrespective of their position within poverty debates. This convergence around a particular notion of growth has potentially damaging implications for the poverty reduction agenda.

A hegemonic struggle for the poverty reduction agenda

> "The Ministry of Finance is currently building the ceilings for government expenditure on poverty reduction beneath the floor" (Ministry of Health official).

In spite of the impressive gains made towards achieving poverty reduction in Uganda over the past decade, we have already noted a growing consensus regarding the failure of the current model of neoliberal economic growth with poverty reduction as a means of reaching certain groups. However, there is a strong sense of disagreement within policy circles in Uganda regarding the most appropriate way forward in terms of resolving this dilemma. This often hotly contested debate has been ongoing since around 2001 and appears destined for some sort of climax within the current 2001-3 PEAP review. In broad terms, the debate revolves around the question of whether the level of social spending aimed at achieving poverty reduction should be increased to a level that can make the achievement of PEAP goals feasible (revealing a bias towards an increased emphasis on Pillar IV regarding 'quality of life'), as against the argument that growth is paramount and that macroeconomic stability required for this growth would be compromised by significant increases in government borrowing and spending (i.e. Pillar I and the focus on 'macroeconomic stability'). This is a particularly important debate regarding the reduction of chronic poverty, given current concerns that the rate of progress in Uganda towards poverty goals require massively increased spending in some sectors (Okidi et al 2002), and that even the attainment of these goals would only be expected to benefit a limited proportion of the chronic poor (Hulme and Shepherd 2003).

The advocates on either side of this debate closely resemble Kanbur's (2001) distinction between the Group A and Group B constituencies that he notes tend towards forceful disagreements concerning economic growth, inequality and poverty. In Uganda, Group A, the 'Finance Ministry tendency', includes some who work in MFPED and for the IFIs, officials in the Bank of Uganda, and private sector pressure groups such as the Ugandan Manufacturers Association. Group B, the 'Civil Society tendency', consists of analysts and advocates in NGOs, officials in social sector ministries and some departments within MFPED, some who work in UN agencies, bilateral donors and some also in the World Bank).[26] The current debate is framed most sharply between the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Health. This is unsurprising given the recent finding that Uganda is currently recording negative rates of progress towards its goals of reducing infant and maternal mortality and reducing HIV/AIDS prevalence, along with estimates that it would need a 213 per cent increase in spending to attain these (Okidi et al 2002).

[26] The Uganda case suggests the need to qualify this delineation, broadly along the lines suggested by Kanbur's own caveats concerning the porous nature of the boundaries between these groups/tendencies (2001: 1084-5), but also that a more political analysis is required in order to understand and explain the differentials in power and influence wielded by members of each tendency.

Table 1: Poverty contests in Uganda: the key players

Group A: 'the Finance Ministry' tendency	Group B: 'the Civil Society' tendency
MFPED: Macroeconomic, Budget	MFPED: PMAU
Overseas economics advisors	Ministry of Health
IMF	Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Dev't
World Bank	DFID, UNDP, WHO
Bank of Uganda	NGOs: e.g. DENIVA, FOWODE, Uganda
Uganda Manufacturing Association	Debt Network

The debate has thus far taken place over the terrain of several policy spaces, including the sector working groups, academia, and the media. Group B have produced successive policy papers on this issue, one of which directly argues 'The Case for a Bigger Budget for the Health Sector' and been particularly keen to counter the entrenched hegemony of Group A within policy processes by engaging in wider spaces, as in a recent special issue of the *Uganda Health Bulletin* entitled 'To increase or not to increase the health budget?' and an open letter to the policy review newspaper of the main advocacy NGO in Uganda (UDN 2002: 3). A key argument here is that extra funding is currently available for poverty reduction in Uganda (e.g. the Global Fund for Health) but that the Group A tendency has persuaded the GoU to turn such opportunities down.[27] For their part, Group A advocates argue that an increased budget is likely to require increased borrowing from donors, and that the expansion of public expenditure through borrowing from donors carries the risk of adverse macroeconomic consequences, particularly through real exchange rate appreciation or crowding out of private sector borrowing. Furthermore, such a move would raise the debt burden beyond that which is sustainable; it would cause the Ugandan Schilling to appreciate and therefore damage exports; such funding would require the GoU to find match-funding which it cannot commit to; and finally, that such a move would have an inflationary effect (Davis 2002).

That the balance of power is currently with Group A is further reinforced by a fact seldom commented on in discussions of Uganda's pro-poor budgeting process, concerning the influence of private sector organisations on poverty policy. In addition to having close informal links to decision-makers, there is a Private Sector Working Group which has the same 'Policy Advisory' status as the Poverty Eradication Working Group.

When debate is enjoined in the same space – as in the Macroeconomics Sector Working Group which is chaired by a member of MFPED's but includes a representative from Uganda Debt Network (UDN), the country's premier advocacy NGO – Group A's superiority is revealed in a different way.[28] According to the Director of UDN:

[27] On the one hand, there is evidence that such funding is being refused, as with DANIDA's offer to fund the Justice, Law and Order Sector plan in 2001-2 (Interview with MFPED Budgeting officials). However, the more Group B oriented donors appear to be caught in a dilemma here. Their confidence in the GoU and the progressive character of public sector spending cannot be taken for granted, and some Group B actors from within social sector ministries suggest that donors are using the MTEF ceilings as a convenient excuse for capping their inputs.

[28] This capacity gap, and use of technical language by Macroeconomic team, is well-captured by the title of a recent report entitled: *Blinding with Science or Encouraging Debate*? *How the World Bank Determines PRSP Policies* (Wilkes and Lefrancois 2002).

> "We attend – but the quality of the input is what counts. Some representatives find the debates too technical and might revert to the local issues that they know with regards poverty. So you delink at that stage."

More broadly, it is striking how often this dispute fail to meet on the same grounds. Even when the MoH invited an international consultant invited to put down a substantive academic challenge to the GoU to increase, the resulting work failed to address the central points of the Group A arguments outlined here (Sachs 2002). This reinforces the sense in which policy debates in Uganda remain largely ring-fenced within the boxes prescribed by the sequencing within the poverty reduction strategy process.[29] It is noticeable that the MoH is increasingly trying to "box clever" and show how their work on improving the quality of life envisaged by PEAP Pillar IV also has benefits in terms of PEAP Pillar III (e.g. UHB 2002, MoH 2002). Indeed, the heat currently emanating from this debate in Kampala is not just the usual fireworks that spark during disagreements between Kanbur's opposing tendencies, but results more specifically from increased friction whereby the hierarchical layers of the current PRS process have been forced by Group B into ever closer contact.

However, the limited character of this essentially instrumental use of 'human capital' to reinforce 'financial capital' reinforces the sense in which a wider debate is being overlooked. In particular, no engagement has yet been made by Group B actors with the first PEAP Pillar regarding macroeconomic growth. For example, one official within MGLSD argues that "the neoliberal model has been proved right…it is now about integrating a human perspective…need to add on a people-centred focus".

It is possible, therefore, for a key member of Group A to argue that:

> "The current economic reforms are likely to lead to greater inequality in rural areas…this is defensible as there is no other alternative".

Even the notion of 'pro-poor' growth is not on the agenda, despite evidence that only certain forms of growth will ensure success in reaching the IDTs (Hamner and Naschold 2000). None of the Group B policy actors interviewed for this research were able to articulate what such a strategy would look like in the Ugandan context.[30] To the extent that politics consists of the art of the possible, then, it is remarkable that the boundaries of what it is possible to imagine in poverty debates in Uganda are so closely circumscribed. To imagine, articulate and work through the macroeconomic and public policy implications of an alternative mode of growth – leave alone the politics of redistributive justice that Bracking (2003b) argues is necessary to find a politics that can challenge chronic poverty – appears to be an impossibility. However, as recent work suggests, inequality has been rising in Uganda, both during and after the periods of poverty reducing growth of the 1990s. In particular, the hegemonic argument that growth leads unproblematically to poverty reduction is being increasingly challenged on the basis that some forms of growth are leading to higher

[29] This also reflects a wider problem noted by Kanbur whereby the two groups tend to view poverty debates at different levels of aggregation, and have different views of markets and time horizons (Kanbur 2001). Also see Ravallion's (2001) argument regarding different views on inequality between these tendencies.

[30] According to two independent sources, the current Minister of Economic Affairs – who to a large extent straddles the Group A and B tendencies described here – had tried to introduce the language of 'pro-poor' growth into MFPED debates. However, this view was opposed during a Macroeconomic SWG meeting in December 2002 by an externally-funded macroeconomics advisor who said that this would mean losing the existing neoliberal, growth-first approach and having to target the poorest directly. In effect, acknowledging the importance of pro-poor growth would leave Group A as hostages to Group B's claims.

levels of inequality – both socially and spatially – in ways that will reduce the positive correlation between growth and poverty reduction.

Several explanations are possible for this, at both international and national levels. To the extent that this apparent lack of alternatives and 'inclusive' agenda is characteristic of poverty reduction strategies more broadly, it is important to note the extent to which the IFIs play a "central role in defining and promoting development orthodoxy" (Wilkes and Lefrancois 2002: 8). The sense of inevitability and infallibility that surrounds this orthodoxy – despite the fact that there is little actual evidence concerning the positive effects of the "policy – growth – poverty reduction links" suggested in the PRS (Porter and Craig 2003: 13) – stems both from the debt-leverage but also the employment of a variety of discursive strategies (Mawdsley and Rigg 2002). An example of this comes in the form of the World Bank's Development Reports (WDRs), although it must be recognised that these cannot be read as if translated directly into practice, but as being emblematic of a broader policy hegemony. Commentators have noted the extent to which the World Bank's *WDR 2000/01* appeared to capture 'Fifty years of development thinking' (Shepherd 2001). For Mawdsley and Rigg (2002: 93), however, in their review of all WDRs 1978-2001, this apparently impressive feat of synthesis acts to promote "a narrow and pre-framed position that eschews radical or alternative agendas". The Reports,

> "…only rarely venture outside the arena of growth-oriented and neoliberal development thinking…(and) great swathes of radical development thinking and social protest are ignored as if they either do not exist or do not warrant mention…reading the WDRs pulls one, however gently, towards the conclusion that…there is no alternative" (*ibid*: 94, 99, 102).

Translated into practice via the PRS process, this sense of inevitability is closely reinforced by efforts to ensure that the consultation and participation heralded by PRSPs does not extend to issues of macroeconomic policy, which are effectively decided before being brought to the table (WDM 2001).[31]

In Uganda, the mechanism for ensuring this is the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF), which sets a three-year ceiling on sectoral spending in order to ensure the macroeconomic stability that is deemed to be required for current fiscal policy (Craig and Porter 2003: 60-61, Foster and Mijumbi 2001). Although the benefits of this cannot be dismissed in terms of ensuring stability, the effect is not simply to restrict spending on poverty reduction for fear of 'over-heating' the economy, but to close down any debate about alternative forms of 'pro-poor' or 'redistributive' growth, in spite of growing evidence that the current approach to poverty reduction – based on neoliberal growth policies – is leading to greater inequality and the marginalisation of certain regions (Deninger and Okidi 2002). Here, the transformation aimed at by development alternatives is written out of the picture despite the rhetoric of 'dialogue' and 'openness'. In providing the final ceiling on this debate the MTEF effectively prevents discussion of the types of alternative development strategies that might well be required to challenge poverty that is long term and structural.

Further arguments here focus on the nature of political space in Uganda, and the way in which the allegedly all-inclusive, no-party Movement-based system has systematically captured both the progressive agenda within Uganda and many of the high-capacity policy actors. For example, an important recent paper on this issue

[31] See Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith (2003) for a somewhat optimistic discussion of how participation can bridge the gap between macroeconomic policy and the citizens affected by reforms in this area.

commented that the GoU's apparent high level of ownership of the poverty agenda, coupled with the lack of autonomy that characterised civil society organisations in Uganda has meant that NGOs have little capacity or room to interpret and develop the poverty reduction agenda in alternative ways (Brock et al 2002).

However, a political analysis of the evidence presented here regarding the struggle between Groups A and B suggests that there are two other ways of framing this problem at the national level. The first involves adopting a more politicised frame of analysis for understanding state-civil society relations in Uganda, while the second is to understand current poverty reduction strategy as being located within the broader political project of transformation. Most analyses of state-civil society relations in Uganda tend to flounder around the assumption that these two institutional arenas should ideally be autonomous and distinct from each other (e.g. Brock et al 2002, Dicklitch 1998), an promote the same notion of civil society promoted within international development more generally (Howell and Pearce 2001). However, there is little evidence that such a form of civil society is emerging or even likely in most African polities, where there notions of autonomy and a pluralist political culture flounder against the realities of 'straddling' and ethnicised political action. However, if one understands civil society not in the de Tocquevillian sense promoted within the aid industry (Whaites 2000) but in a Gramscian sense as a contested terrain over which the state and other actors seek to secure legitimacy for their political, social and economic project, then the alignment of different actors with regards poverty reduction becomes more apparent. Such an analysis allows for the fact that different elements within the media, civil society and even ministries can be lined up within and against each other in different configurations for different struggles.

From the politics of poverty policy to development as a political project

Pro-poor growth, privatisation and export strategies?

> "…the chronic poor appear not to have benefited much from the market-oriented development policies that have been responsible for much of Uganda's macroeconomic success over this period" (Okidi and McKay, 2003).

What is striking in Uganda, however, is that the scope of this counter-hegemonic movement is so limited. As noted above, little effort has been made by the 'Civil Society' tendency to challenge the neoliberal project that underpins the overall poverty reduction strategy in Uganda. What arguably explains this apparent convergence is not so much the broader hegemonic power of the neoliberal project (Porter and Craig 2003) or even the lack of capacity amongst the counter-hegemonic NGOs and social sector ministries, but rather a genuine convergence around a broader project of development that centres on rapid growth and the structural transformation of the economy. It is argued here, however, that the current focus and direction of this national development strategy is (a) moving in a direction that has at best ambiguous implications for poverty reduction in Uganda and (b) is both being driven and is characterised by a particular form of politics related to the NRM's trajectory as a political movement, the presidential electoral life-cycle and the neopatrimonial form of politics that increasingly prevails over policy direction and resource allocation at the centre.

Development as the political project of the NRM

> "…to transform Uganda from a pre-industrial to an industrial one; to provide more non-government/non-primordial agriculture and employment; to create bigger markets without restrictions; to support human resource development; to attract factories and service companies; to generate more taxes to fund infrastructural

> development; and help build a viable, democratic and accountable state" (President Museveni's Seven-Point Agenda for 2003, The New Vision, 01/01/03).
>
> "Why is poverty so pervasive in our case? Because we don't have a capitalised economy…an African peasant life is no life – the life of a dog – are we saying Africa should not get capitalist development?" (NGO Director)

As the above quotes reveal, the Movement government in Uganda is increasingly returning to an emphasis on the model of development that it intended to pursue from the day it took power, and it can command the support of significant civil society actors in doing so. In Museveni's first speech to Parliament in 1986, he stated that "I do not want a country of peasants", going on to establish a Ten Point Programme that focussed specifically on achieving rapid economic transformation. The Movement's Fifteen Point Programme, established in 1999, re-endorses this aim, and "recognizes the urgency of speeding up industrialization and the modernisation of agriculture" (NRM 1999: 20). More recently still, in a speech to Cabinet Ministers in June 2002, the President re-iterated the Movement's project of 'modernisation', based on strategies that: "add value to our raw materials so that we get more forex; create more employment, widen the tax base, stimulate and support PMA…(which) will, inevitably, transform our society from being a pre-industrial society to an industrial one". [32]

The acquiescence of 'alternative' voices with this overall project of modernisation, as the revealed second quote above, reflects a broader moment within contemporary development theory and policy where the precepts of modernisation have returned by default in the guise of neoliberal prescriptions on the market economy, liberal democracy, a responsive state and strong civil society (Brett 2000). Although the end of socialism came quickly in Uganda – the structural adjustment began in 1987 after a brief attempt to establish bartering terms of trade with Cuba and China – it is argued here that the loss of 'emancipatory alternatives' (*ibid*.) beyond this transformative neoliberal project (Porter and Craig 2003) may prove to have negative implications for the poverty reduction agenda in Uganda. In particular, there are signs that the key elements of the Movement's current approach – based on exports and privatisation – are leading to increasing divergence with pro-poor policies.

Despite a growing focus on PMA in research debates over poverty reduction in Uganda, then, the shift of greater importance within Uganda is arguably not in this policy – which the state has yet to invest serious money in and funding for which few districts have actually accessed – but the move towards export-oriented strategy. As noted by one close observer of the regime,

> "Museveni is distracted from the poverty agenda with regards economic growth – he is convinced that exports are the way forward and does not see PMA as a means of economic growth" (Official with bilateral donor).

The shift to an export-oriented strategy has been heralded in successive Presidential speeches, the current financial year's Background to the Budget and the emphasis placed over the last two years on high-profile initiatives such as the Strategic Export Initiative (SEI). However, there is little evidence of any systematic effort to relate this strategy to pro-poor outcomes; despite the title of the current year's budget – 'Enhancing Production and Exports for Poverty Eradication' (MFPED 2002b) – it contains little explanation for how this strategy will support poverty reduction. In some instances, as with the focus on textiles, it is possible that there will be negative

[32] Recent research stresses that pro-poor growth in Africa must be based within the agricultural sector (Gallup et al 1998, Hamner and Naschold 2000).

consequences for those amongst the poor. According to Museveni (2002), "We tolerated used clothes and used shoes in the past. These, however, do not give us jobs, forex or government revenue. Instead, they are killing all three". As a result, the poor who are engaged with the second-hand clothes market are set to lose their livelihood source, while the majority of the poor who rely on such clothing will also face much higher prices for clothing. The related emphasis on cotton farming, while being a potentially labour-intensive process, is likely to benefit large rather than small-scale farmers, with the government recently subsidising cotton farms of ten hectares and above (The East African January, 2003).

In broader terms, a recent pilot testing of SEI in terms of its 'Poverty and Social Impact' found that there was a much greater need for SEI to be integrated alongside poverty reduction initiatives such as PMA (ODI 2002). The study found that SEI not been subject to debates over its poverty-related impact, and that in particular there had been little attention paid to the distributional implications of such policies at the household level, where it was likely that the most vulnerable groups would not benefit. For pro-poor outcomes there would need to be a shift in priorities towards targeting women farmers and poor households.

Moreover, the study also noted that SEI began as a presidential rather than broader-based policy initiative, and enjoyed only "narrowly based political commitment" (*ibid.*). It is this politics of this recent policy shift towards an export-oriented that is of particular concern here. Although the move in this direction is understandable as historically related to the Movement's underlying development ideology, the question remains as to the particular timing of this policy shift. At one level, it clearly reflects Museveni's desire to reduce the dependence of the GoU on external donor funding, despite the fact that this problem is arguably caused by a lack of tax revenue rather than of the increased foreign exchange earnings that the SEI aims for. However, the other political dynamics that underpin this change of direction concern the particular moment within the Movement's trajectory and particular debates over the politics of succession, and also the growing politics of patronage in Uganda over recent years.

It is arguable that Museveni has determined that the next few years leading up to the 2006 elections – at which point he is constitutionally required to step down or at least aside – marks the last opportunity for him to realise the NRM project of Uganda's transformation into an industrial society, a project that he perceives to be faltering under a non-interventionist neoliberal strategy.[33] Coincident with this moment is also an increased politics of patronage in Uganda, where the President appears to be under increasing pressure from those who depend on their relationship to him for access to resources and power. The export-oriented strategy has provided such a process. As already discussed, selective processes encourage 'favoured investors' to lobby, resulting in higher levels of patronage. Most of the newly privatised corporations (e.g. under the Africa Growth Facility Initiative) are owned by close friends and relatives of the President and as one observer notes "…now his hands are tied; there is no guarantee that his national vision will be pursued by these people" (Official, PMAU, Ministry of Finance).

This other main plank of the current modernisation processes – namely the process of privatisation – has been closely associated with 'patronage, cronyism and corruption' (Tangri 1998, Tangri and Mwenda 2001), and is similarly showing few signs of being pro-poor in character. Such policy moves are opposed, to an extent,

[33] One critic notes that this move allows the President to be associated with high-profile and highly visible projects such as new factories.

by some NGOs who advocate on behalf of the poor. For example, DENIVA argue that:

> "The trend towards further privatisation seems to collide with Government's obligations to promote the well being of citizens as established in legally binding human rights agreements and treaties and more recently the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. Privatisation aims at profit, neglects the social responsibilities and basic services that are highly demanded by the poor. The poor lack the capacity to gain access to the benefits of privatisation" (The New Vision, 12/01/03).

However, the language used by DENIVA here – with the overall argument being that "Privatisation and the poor are on parallel lines" – again illustrates the residualist view of poverty within Uganda, that sees the poor as somehow 'outside' the normal operations of socioeconomic processes rather than being embedded within and shaped by them. The metaphor of parallel lines employed in one NGO attach on privatisation is indicative of the missing links in policy debates in Uganda regarding macroeconomic reforms, poverty and inequality.

Conclusion

The current state of poverty policy discourse in Uganda cannot be understood solely in terms of the dynamic and multi-levelled interactions between 'actors, knowledge and spaces' (Brock et al 2002). A closer understanding of the direction of poverty policy – and the possibility of reforms that will challenge chronic poverty – requires an analysis of the competing visions of poverty reduction and ideologies of development within the Uganda polity, and of the politics surrounding the current 'ceilings' placed on these debates. From this perspective, it is apparent that there has been a hitherto injunction placed on debates of alternatives. This is now being broken as actors within Group B begin to perceive the importance of playing policy as a game rather than as a rational process, and recognise the way in which poverty debates have been layered and sequenced so as to give the appearance of inevitability to a certain approach, particularly at the macroeconomic level. However, this move is unconvincing as yet. However, no alternative is considered to the overall development strategy (an alternative PRSP is being developed in Ghana that adopts a structuralist analysis of poverty and examines redistributive policies (Wilkes and Lefrancois 2002: 30).

Political threats to the poverty reduction agenda

So far, this paper has examined what has been termed the politics *of* poverty reduction in Uganda with specific reference to chronic poverty. This has drawn attention to importance of understanding political struggles amongst policy actors concerning institutional power, political discourse around the poorest groups and problems of political representation of the poorest groups. Underlying several aspects of this debate have been references to the broader form/s of politics that underpin the use of power in Uganda, as with the politics of patronage and elite capture that informs programmes targeted at the poorest groups. It is to these underlying forms of politics and their broader influence on rather than within the poverty agenda – what Tornquist (1999) refers to as politics *and* development – that the paper now turns. The intention is to go beyond the type of 'political risk' analysis increasingly favoured by donors (Kauffman et al 2002),which reveals a highly instrumental view of politics and tends to focus on elements of the political system that have been proven not to effect development in ways that the 'good governance' agenda may have thought (Moore et al 1999). Rather, the focus here is on those processes and features that characterise and shape the use of political power in

Uganda, and which are embedded within historical processes of state formation and which underpin and inform contemporary forms of and changes within state-society relations. Uganda provides a particularly insightful case-study, given the point made here that the current poverty reduction strategy needs to be seen as part of a broader development project which is itself embedded in efforts to transform Uganda's postcolonial political, economic and social trajectory. The three key issues discussed here concern the increasingly influence of neopatrimonial politics and the links to political leadership; related issues of 'democratisation' and succession; and issues of conflict, insecurity and the militarisation of political space in Uganda. It is argued that developments along these three dimensions of politics in Uganda will closely shape the prospects for poverty reduction over the medium- to long-term.

The growing politics of patronage in Uganda

Political analysis into the economic crises that have afflicted most postcolonial countries in sub-Saharan Africa have tended to focus on the theory that the state has succumbed to a form of neopatrimonial politics that has undermined the rational and accountable use of resources in pursuit of a wider public good. Despite the competing prefixes given to the state in postcolonial Africa (failed, bloated, predatory, rhizome, bifurcated), what is striking is that when seeking to explain the underlying character of political rule employed by these states, few analyses have been able to dispense with the concept of 'neopatrimonialism'.[34] The neopatrimonial state, which emerges from "the incorporation of patrimonial logic into bureaucratic institutions" (Bratton and van de Walle 1997: 62), is characterised by three key features. The first is the personalisation of power, whereby all positions of political power are held by virtue of the ruler's patronage, and based on ties of personal, nepotistic, ethnic or regional loyalty. This is closely aligned to the centralisation of power within the executive, or 'presidentialism' (Bratton and van de Walle 1997: 63-5), although does not necessarily imply that the central ruler is able to fully control those patrons s/he empowers. Second, public office, and the access to resources that this affords, is treated as a means to personal and communal gain, rather than as a means of pursuing a broader public good. Third, power is extended throughout the territory via networks of 'clientelism', at every level. Inclusion within this patronage system becomes the main source of accumulation and security. This form of politics has been linked to Africa's general economic 'stagnation' and failure to 'develop' since independence (Sandbrook 1985), in part because the arbitrary nature of personalised decision-making within a presidentialist system creates instability and is also, along with clientelism, highly susceptible to corruption.

It is argued here that in spite of genuine efforts by the NRM in Uganda to break with this debilitating form of rule, and evidence that Uganda's initial success with poverty reduction was closely to the low levels of neopatrimonial politics, there is a growing body of evidence to suggest that neopatrimonial political practice has become increasingly prominent in Uganda. As is argued in the following section, this has particularly negative implications for 'ownership' of the poverty agenda in Uganda.

The relative success of pursuing an agenda of economic and political reform agenda in Uganda upon which the current poverty reduction strategy is now based was closely related to challenging the bases of economic accumulation and political power upon which neopatrimonial rule is generally forged. In terms of the economic reforms pursued since the late 1980s and with particular commitment from 1992,

[34] For example, Mamdani (1996) and Chabal and Daloz (1999) forward different understandings of the state, and actually reject the teleological and Eurocentric basis of neopatrimonial state theory, but nonetheless use the concept to describe and explain the form of politics and general mode of political interaction in contemporary Africa (Mamdani 1996: 20, Chabal and Daloz 1999: 21).

Djikstra and van Donge (2001: 845) argue strongly that the removal of state control over significant areas of economic accumulation was possible both because some aspects of the economy had never been effectively brought within a statist development project (e.g. few agricultural parastatals and no system of subsidized food marketing, which provided the basis of patronage elsewhere) and because the government intervention associated with this control had become discredited within Uganda as a result of years of misrule under previous presidencies. With the state closely associated inefficiency and corruption, and given the lack of a strong public sector lobby group, the internal opposition to such reforms that was witnessed across much of sub-Saharan Africa during structural adjustment (e.g. Callaghy and Ravenhill 1993) was minimal.

In terms of political reforms, the decentralisation programme that is in many ways the hallmark of the Movement's political strategy was deliberately aimed at breaking local patronage. Although framed by some as simply part of the overall package of reforms within current PRS (Brock et al 2002: 42), decentralisation in Uganda cannot be seen as a technocratic process of reform engineered from outside by donors under the good governance agenda, but was instead conceived as a central part of the Movement's project of transforming state-society relations following two decades predatory, centralised and ineffective rule. As one observer notes, "Decentralization policy is but one of a number of NRM policies implemented as part of a political strategy intended to bring about fundamental change in state and society" (Regan 1998: 162). Moreover, the means of this transformation reflected a sophisticated understanding within the Movement not just of the need to rebuild state legitimacy at the local level by simply moving the state closer to people, but that the historical basis of local participation in governance needed to be transformed from one in which local citizenship was defined in terms of ethnic-territorialism, and authority was wielded on the basis of tradition and patronage by local chiefs. The plan was threefold. First that the notion of citizenship as a form of belonging to traditional ethnic communities – introduced by indirect rule and territorial administration[35] – could be extended to a broader, more universal sense in which citizenship is accorded to people on the basis of their residence in a particular area (Mamdani 1996: 201-2). The Movement did this by literally "redefining the basis of rights from descent to residence" (ibid: 208), thus allowing 'settlers' to vote and participate in the Resistance/Local Councils in the area to which they contributed their labour. Second, the ethnic-territorial basis of native administration would be further undermined by (a) no-party elections, (b) ensuring that the boundaries of local governance units would either cross-cut ethnic communities in a bid to ensure that politics would become more integrated, less ethnically divided and/or (c) that ethnic groups were internally divided into smaller districts (Carbone 2001: 243). Finally, the power of traditional chiefs within the local arena – which rendered people as 'subjects' rather than 'citizens' (Mamdani 1996) – would be removed in favour of a new class of literate, elected leaders required to lead the new structures (Regan 1998). These reforms were aimed at ensuring that local participation in governance could occur on the basis of equitable forms participatory citizenship, rather than the asymmetrical reciprocity of clientelism and divisive politics of ethnicity that so often provides the mobilising logic of patronage politics in Africa (Chabal and Daloz 1999).

[35] Under colonial rule, the 'communities' through which colonial 'Native Administration' was pursued were defined in terms of territorially based ethnicity. The defining feature of an individual's participation in what were usually multi-ethnic and heterogeneous 'communities', would now to be defined in terms of ethnic origin, language and place of birth. For Mamdani (1996), it is this conflation of ethnicity with territory that underpins the crisis of politics in contemporary Africa.

However, there is growing evidence that this struggle against neopatrimonial forms of politics is increasingly being lost in Uganda, with advances apparent in terms of each of the defining characteristics of neopatrimonial rule outlines above – namely the personalisation of rule, the misuse of public resources for private and communal gain, and associated rise of corruption and political fragmentation along ethno-clientelist lines. These are discussed in turn, before briefly suggesting the reasons for this deepening of neopatrimonial rule and exploring the possibilities of its reversal.

Neopatrimonialism at the centre: the personalisation of rule, bureaucratic corruption and the privatisation of corruption

> "African political societies are duplicated between, on the one hand, a *pays legal*, a legal structure which is the focus of attention for multilateral donors and Western states, and on the other hand, a *pays reel* where real power is wielded. In extreme cases this duplication can lead to the existence of a hidden structure which surrounds, or even controls, the official occupant of the presidential throne, rather like a board of directors which appoints an executive to carry out its decisions" (Bayart 2000: 229-230).

The personalisation of decision-making around the presidency over the past few years has become an increasingly important feature of politics in Uganda, with close observers noting 2000/2001 as marking a shift away from a more inclusive approach to policy-making. The core national constituency of Movement 'historicals' have sought to oppose this tendency, noting that Museveni "has become too narrow and no longer consults broadly", in contrast to promise to include more Ugandans in the Movement decision-making process (The Monitor, 03/05/02). Close insiders note that, "there has been a shift from institutional policy-making to personalised policy-making with regards macro-economic policy since 2000", with key initiatives such as the Strategic Exports Initiative launched by the presidency with very little discussion, despite their central importance to Pillar I of the PEAP and the commitment to consultation made therein.

This has been accompanied by two further and related developments at the centre, involving the extension of presidential patronage throughout the appointment of 'presidential advisors' in State House[36] and formation of an ever-increasing range of 'quangos' and 'commissions'. In terms of the 'quangos', although some bodies were formed for ostensibly democratic purposes – such as the Electoral Commission – most are broadly seen as modes of dispensing presidential and ministerial patronage. This is particularly the case given the high rewards that are available for service within these quangoes, which remain outside public sector pay restrictions. Even the Electoral Commission soon became embroiled in allegations of corruption, resulting in the dismissal of all but one of its members under charges that "The Electoral Commission has been a hotbed of incompetence and corruption….losing Sch3.7bn through malpractice" (UDN 2002: 1).[37] Such developments constitute an increasing drain on budget resources that neither repays for itself in terms of administrative efficiency or productive gains. Some commissions are empowered to raise funds through imposing a levy on users of public utilities – as the Electricity Regulatory Board is currently proposing – and thus may have a direct impact on the income levels of poor households.

[36] This tactic also allows the regime to silence critics of its policies (e.g. a current presidential advisor on poverty reduction was formerly an outspoken critic from within the Human Rights Commission).

[37] Further cause for concern here was aroused by Museveni's announcement in January 2003 that he would be extending the number of foreign embassies. This was seen as yet another means of dispensing patronage, despite the evidence that many overseas missions were facing bankruptcy as a result of mismanagement.

However, these visible and publicly discussed (mis)use of state resources are arguably of secondary importance compared to the less formal pressures on the Presidency that are largely hidden from public view. According to close observers, "Museveni is entangled in a web of people who benefit from his being at the top – family and kin – this is all stacked against him doing the right thing", "…he has too many people advising him - some that are beyond him" and "when Museveni was un-challengeable, he could resist demands of elites. Not now". Such views receive strong support from research into the cronyism and corruption that accompanied many cases of privatisation, which argues that Museveni took no action against his friends and relatives who were directly involved in these cases (Tangri and Mwenda 2001: 129). The 'personalisation' of presidential decision-making therefore needs to be seen in this wider context of political elite pressure. As a recent review of African politics notes, *Africa Works* – that is, there is an underlying logic that often relates to hidden elite pressures within the logic of neopatrimonial rule (Chabal and Daloz 1999) – the point is to identify those actors for whom it is working.[38] It is the apparently growing influence of this 'politics of the verandah', rather than the 'politics of the air conditioner' that recent analyses of policy processes in Uganda have focused on, which underpins the increased moves towards neopatrimonial rule.[39]

The increased divestiture of state resources to the private sector is the answer in itself. However, it has been the process of privatisation itself that has helped to entrench this form of rule (Tangri 1998, Tangri and Mwenda 2001). The beneficiaries of privatisation are conspicuously close in relations to the President, and as one study of this process notes "allegations abound of political favouritism and suspicious business dealings, which tend to confirm the public's view that a successful private sector is invariably tainted with corruption" (Tangri 1998: 100). As a result of this and the other processes discussed above, then, few were surprised when Transparency International last year rated Uganda as the third most corrupt country in the world.

Importantly, this deepening of neopatrimonial politics looks set to worsen as the 2006 presidential elections approach. Although democratisation was originally heralded as the key to undermining neopatrimonial politics (e.g. Lemarchand 1988), research has increasingly shown that the pressures of political competition and the limited time-frames for rule imposed on leaders by electoral cycles have actually intensified patterns of neopatrimonial rule as rulers and their dependents seek to maximise the benefits gained from their access to state resources (Bratton and van de Walle 1997, Gabriel 1999). As discussed in the following section on 'democratisation' and the politics of succession, this forms a particular dilemma for Uganda.

Losing the local: neopatrimonial pressures at the bottom

There is also increasing evidence that the constitutional reforms of the local state have increasingly failed to resist the logic of neopatrimonial rule increasingly permeating political power, popular participation and resource allocations at the local level. As noted by Francis and James (2003: 334-5), the "patronage mode" of decentralisation in Uganda "is very much enmeshed in the local political process", in ways that are contradictory to official the role of local government in poverty reduction. However, a broader explanation is also required as to how and why this political reform programme looks like failing in its expressed attempt to prevent the emergence of neopatrimonial rule.

[38] It is cautionary to note that similar explanations are given for why President Mugabe has undertaken actions (e.g. conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo) that appeared to alienate nearly his entire electoral base.

[39] This is Emmanuel Terray's term, and is used to distinguish the crucial informal political negotiations that characterise African politics, from the more formalised and public 'politics of the air conditioner' (Bayart 1993).

An important factor relates to the failure to install local units of governance that were autonomous from the often entwined demands of patronage and 'exclusive' forms of ethnic citizenship. This failure has occurred at two levels. First, the regime has been unable to resist pressures from local elites for increased local autonomy. The absence of another channel for such demands (e.g. a multiparty system) has limited the accede to regionalised demands for autonomy. The result has been a proliferation of Districts – from 39 to 56 over the late 1990s – with many of the newly formed districts corresponding to areas of relative ethnic unity, marking a return to the ethnic-territorial basis of governance that the Movement claimed to reform. The second failure is related, but more specifically concerns the 1998 Land Act, which failed to resolve the complex issue of land ownership, and resulted in a confused system comprising state, customary and commercial ownership (Mwebaza 1999). As a result, the local politics of citizenship in Uganda is divided between the electoral and representative system whereby the rights of participation are accorded to all residents, and the 'politics of belonging' that surrounds local land ownership, and which remains subject to ethnic-territorialism. Increasingly, these divides are being breached in favour of the latter mode of 'ethnic citizenship', whereby local elections are couched in terms of debates over insiders/outsiders, indigenes/settlers. This is particularly apparent in areas with heightened tensions around land pressures, as in Mbale District, where land ownership provides the basis of livelihood strategies for most poor households.[40] In Mbale, land ownership is closely associated with clan membership which in turn relates directly length of settlement in a given area. The 2002 local elections at both LC5 and LC3 levels saw power return to the dominant land-owning group – under threat, feel need to consolidate power. As such, the poorest groups are subject to a form of 'double-exclusion' in both the local political economy of development and politics of governance.

In a sense, the Movement's political project of replacing ethnic politics and patrimonialism with accountable governance and citizenship has faltered if not entirely failed. The multiple causes for this lie in a series of policy failures (e.g. land reform), a failure to institutionalise policy-making processes at the centre from elite pressure, and a failure of development more broadly in terms of producing an entrepreneurial elite capable of accumulating capital independent of state support. This is not to say that the Movement has given up on these methods. As note above, there is a renewed emphasis on the project of economic modernisation, in the hope that "…the modernisation of the economy will bring forward a new middle class, which will break the mould of tribal and regionalist discourse" (Ddumba-Ssentamu 1999: 55, quoted in Brock et al 2002: 38), and develop alternative forms of accumulation to that offered by the state. There is evidence that it is to this project of economic transformation that Museveni is now turning in what are likely to be his final years in power.

The other available challenges to neopatrimonial forms of rule are equally long-term and uncertain. According to one mode of thought, the form of sociopolitical agency most able to resist and also transform the politics of patronage in Uganda and Africa more broadly resides within women's movements. The institutions established to combat corruption in Uganda are yet to achieve significant successes (Flanary and Watt 1999, Ruzindana et al 1998), and the IGG has been condemned for being led by officials almost exclusively drawn from the President's own region and/or ethnic group (Tangri and Mwenda 2001: 129). Multiparty democracy is unlikely to provide the answer here – see Zambia (Szeftel 2000) and also the acceleration of

[40] This data regarding Mbale was gathered during research visits to that District (at levels LC1, LC3 and LC5) in late 2002 and early 2003.

neopatrimonial politics under 'democratisation' in Cameroon (Gabriel 1999). More specifically, there is little evidence to suggest that any opposition forces in Uganda are more attuned to the need for justice and poverty reduction in Uganda than the current regime – to the contrary (Interview data). The challenge, then, from a pro-poor perspective, is for the Movement to use the demands of elections to realise a renewal in its project of political and social transformation, as it has within the economic sphere. The observations of some that what is required is a rights-based rather than a multiparty approach to governance in Uganda (Dicklitch 2002) may provide a useful way forward, although this needs to be explored in much greater depth with reference what this would entail in the Ugandan context, and how this would engage with the political trajectory identified here. Ultimately, the re-drawing of a contract between state and citizenry requires a genuine engagement with development as ideology as well as 'what works', and incorporating notions of justice, development as a right and redistribution rather than viewing poverty reduction as patronage. More broadly, the most ambitious aim remains a shift to a politics of social justice, that "would encourage a politics of growth and accumulation rather than of distribution and patronage" (Szeftel 2000: 440).

Conflict and the militarisation of political space in Uganda: donor relations; the obscuring of political solutions

As noted earlier, the protracted conflict that has underpinned the highest levels of poverty in Uganda has strongly political dimensions. More broadly, there remains a strong sense in which political space is militarised in Uganda, a characteristic that renders problematic the search for political as opposed to military solutions. However, the forms of politics – both national and global – that underpin the conflict in the North are being challenged and undermined. These moves may have political repercussions, and it is not clear that they will lead to a demilitarisation of political space.

As note earlier, political violence has played a central role in processes of state formation as well as state disintegration in Uganda (Kabwegyere 1995, Nyago 2003). More specifically, to the limited extent to which the conflict being waged by the Lords Resistance Army (LRA) in the North has its roots in a genuine grievance, this relates to how the region has been incorporated into the processes of political economy and state formation since colonial times. The history has not been one of straightforward marginalisation, but of differential and often adverse incorporation (Mutibwa 1992). A labour reserve under colonial rule, people from the North[41] were heavily represented in the army and security forces during the first decades of postcolonial rule, but largely excluded from the civil service. The first two presidents were from Acholiland and West Nile respectively, and when Obote (an Acholi) was ousted from power in 1985 and the Western-Central dominated NRM took over in 1986, insurgency soon broke out in the North. Although characterised as a 'complex *political* emergency', some observers note the extent to which the Lords Resistance Army is engaged in a struggle that is essentially non-political "inasmuch as (those engaged) no longer believe in politics" (Doom and Klassenroot 1999: 36).

The conflict in the North is one of several politically-related conflicts that have broken out in postcolonial Uganda (Nyago 2002), and which have contributed to the pervasive sense in which political space in Uganda is heavily militarised. This is perhaps most readily most apparent from a cursory listing of the three most prominent political figures in the country – President Museveni (the Commander in

[41] It is important to note that the 'North' does not constitute a homogenous political entity (e.g. Southall 1998).

Chief of the Armed Forces and ex-guerrilla army leader); Kizzy Besigye (ex-Colonel in the Uganda People's Defence Force) and Joseph Kony (warlord leader of the Lord's Resistance Army in Northern Uganda) – a premier list which is swiftly followed by a first division of lesser but publicly renowned colonels. The Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) is politically represented by quota throughout the political system. Although 'civilised' and detached from direct political rule (Okoth 1995), the informal political influence of the army is all-encompassing. Lieutenant General Salim Saleh – the President's brother and multi-millionaire – is arguably the most popular figure in the country, despite his alleged involvement in a series of high-profile cases of corruption (Tangri and Mwenda 2001: 128). The most renowned case, involving the bungled purchase of helicopters in 1997 which lost the GoU $6m, resulted in a Judicial Commission of Inquiry recommending that Salim Saleh be charged with criminal offences (The New Vision, 18/12/02). Although written in 2001, the results of this enquiry are yet to be formally released. Meanwhile, in late 2002 the main non-state owned newspaper revealed that an army helicopter had been shot down by the Lord's Resistance Army and was promptly (although temporarily) closed down. Such cases reveal the both extent of the military's grip on public life and to which the army remains the premier constituency of both Museveni and the NRM in general

The effect of this militarisation of political space has been to reduce the scope for reaching political settlements to political disputes. As discussed in the following sub-section, debates concerning the next election and the issue of presidential succession are frequently framed within broader discussions of the threat of further politically-related armed conflict. Claims of 'marginalisation' by regime 'opponents' are swiftly followed by threats of 'going to the bush' if a new district or cabinet post is not offered as an inclusive palliative. This pattern reflects the fact that although the NRM has generally been successful in maintaining stability and rebuilding state-society relations, rather than providing a break with Uganda's legacy of military rule, its model of guerrilla warfare and political revolution has provided a model of power change that remains the highly influential.[42]

However, both the national and global politics that apparently underpinned the conflict have recently been undermined. In August 2002, the President literally pitched camp in Gulu in, keen not simply to prosecute a swift end to the conflict with the LRA, but to symbolically show that the North can be brought within the Movement's all-inclusive tent. As yet, however, both this move and the piecemeal effort to resolve hears of impoverishment in the North through the aforementioned NUSAF programme constitute only the first steps towards a genuine political settlement. The second shift has been within the global political context, which has changed significantly since the 11 September 2001 terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in the United States. The future of groups that can be branded terrorists has become far less secure, and those states that can frame themselves as protagonists within the 'global war on terror' have found themselves within the patronage of the United States. In January 2003, the New Vision announced that 'USA Gives $33m to fight Kony' (10/01/03), a move which Presidency Minister Bukenya said that this made US their 'No.1' aid partner.

What is particularly noteworthy here in terms of the poverty reduction agenda is that this marked a twist within a longer series of controversial attempts by Museveni to increase the size of the defence budget, ostensibly on the basis of ending the conflict

[42] As recent research into the relationship between democracy and conflict has noted, democratic institutions in and of themselves may do little to prevent conflict; what is required is "inclusive government" in both an economic and political sense, and a spread of economic benefits throughout society (Stewart and O'Sullivan 1998).

in the North and thus allowing more efforts to go into reducing poverty in the region. In the second-quarter of financial year 2002-3, Museveni demanded a 23 per cent increase in defence spending. At the national level, opposition was limited to a brief outcry from the Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee and stronger concerns within MFPED. The latter eventually implemented the request without affecting the Poverty Action Fund, although the line ministries who were forced to make cut backs reports a declining capacity to perform basic tasks such as monitoring and quality control over poverty reduction programmes. However, the case caused a genuine storm within the donor community, particularly when it became clear that at least some of the money was being spent on military goods that were more associated with inter rather than intra-state conflict ('UPDF buys 12 fighter planes', The Monitor, 4/12/02). The issue was debated in the British Parliament, with the Minister of State for International Development "we must protect Uganda's progress in reducing poverty" (quote from Hansard 11/12/02, reported in The Monitor 16/12/02). The case also broke down the usually high degree of unanimity amongst international donor community in Kampala, with the UNDP and German ambassador to Uganda supporting the GoU's move ('Increase the defence budget, Germany advises Museveni'. The Monitor, 9/12/02), although the German ambassador later claimed to have been misquoted.

Although the full implications of this case have yet to become apparent, two key issues that may be of lasting relevance to the chances of reducing poverty over the long-term in Uganda emerge. The first concerns the extent to which the increased defence budget is linked to the intention of prosecuting a military conflict with neighbouring Rwanda, which would potentially undermine poverty reduction in several ways. The second is the risk that donors who either have or were planning to increase their direct budgetary support for the GoU – the aid modality most suited to the institutionalisation of poverty reduction in Uganda – will perceive the risk as being too great and either resort to a more regressive form of project-based funding or withdraw altogether. This relates in part to increasing pressures on donors whose domestic pressures have increased as a result of a shift to the politics Right (e.g. several European states, and the United States).

The 2006 elections, the 'succession' issue and the risks of cost-benefit analysis

> "A continuation of the current Movement regime and its policies does not bode well for democracy or for the basic rights of Ugandans. However, the political alternatives are also weak, stemming partially from Movement control over the political arena. The question then becomes, what should Uganda do in the next few years? The adoption of a multiparty system without effective alternatives or an enabling environment may be a recipe for disaster. However, the continuation of a semi-democratic regime that engages in repressive actions when it sees fit will further entrench regime and elite interests, making it very difficult, if not impossible, to replace that rule peacefully down the road" (Dicklitch 2002: 218).

The dilemma revealed here concerning debates over democracy and, implicitly, presidential succession in Uganda, emerges just as strongly from attempts to analyse evidence concerning the pro-poor implications of either elections and/or regime change. In terms of elections, both supporters and opponents of the regime bemoan their expense, particularly given the multiple polls that are required to service the non-party Movement system of rule. For one civil society critic,

> "…elections are very, very expensive, and take money away from viable projects. The Government says that elections are good for political stability and allow people to exercise their rights; but this is a one-party state – so what choice is there? We should just have one election, spend the rest on poverty".

Similarly, donors worry that the closer fought the election – and 2006 may well be close – the more the Movement will spend of the state's limited resources in order to retain its grip on power and thus the means of accumulation.[43]

However, elections have also proved in some ways to have a symbiotic relationship with poverty reduction in Uganda. At District level, there is evidence that District Chairs assess their legitimacy in terms of their capacity successfully pursue poverty reduction, while election campaigns are cited as the time when local politicians come into the closest contact with poverty. In Kamuli, for example, the Chair has recently embarked on a District-wide poverty reduction initiative that eschewed the 'prestige project' approach in favour of a more 'people-centred approach', noting that "I must show I can help people as much as my predecessor…at this level, you are terribly accountable and all stages" (Interview LC5 Chair).[44] At the national level, more significantly, it is notable that the two of the most significant pro-poor policy shifts over the last decade – the introduction of Universal Primary Education and the abolishment of user fees in health – occurred in the presidential election years of 1996 and 2001 respectively.[45]

However, it also appears that this symbiotic relationship is subject to a law of diminishing returns, with little scope left for a similar type of election give-away at 2006. Indeed, the poverty programmes apparently being prepared by the regime for the 2006 elections – with a return of state-provided credit and the discredited co-operative system, both located within the Vice-President's office – appear more suited to the consolidation of a rural patronage machine than poverty reduction. The fact that poverty reduction is at its most prominent on the political agenda during the pre-election period reinforces the view amongst regime opponents that this is a predominantly opportunist venture.

In terms of succession and/or regime change, a dilemma also arises. As noted earlier, the present regime is increasingly characterised by neopatrimonial politics and personalised rule that is inimical to the long-term institutionalisation of a rational-bureaucratic and accountable state. This tendency is likely to accelerate towards the 2006 'succession' date. However, the alternatives are not convincing in terms of commitment to poverty reduction. Of the opposition spokespeople and regime opponents interviewed for this research, very few were able to articulate the existing poverty agenda, let alone the sorts of alternatives that we have suggested here might be required to challenge poverty in Uganda over the long-term. More broadly, the likely constituency of a new regime would be the predominantly urban and educated elites who (apart from those in the North) have proved to be the most consistent supporters of multipartyism (Bratton and Lambright 2001: 442). Again, this is not a constituency with a strong stake in the poverty reduction agenda or the Movement's overall project of development (see below), a factor which appears to be understood by at least some amongst the rural poor, with one respondent in a survey on democratic change noting that, unlike the Movement, a multiparty system "will not necessarily include people like us in political discussions and decisions" (Bratton and

[43] Although the success of Kenya's multiparty elections in effecting regime change in December 2002 are perceived to have increased the pressure on Museveni, the role of an independent intelligentsia and popular protest in Kenya – neither of which exist to the same extent in Uganda – also highlights the difficulties in affecting such a change.

[44] However, the case of Mbale referred to above reveals the opposite tendency, whereby a convergence of land-owning and political power augurs badly for the later settlers who are already marginal in livelihood terms.

[45] A negative impact here was the politicisation of taxation at the 2001 presidential elections, with Museveni forced to dramatically reduce the Graduation Tax in order to overcome the populist promises of his opponent Colonel Besigye to cancel the tax altogether. This has significantly reduced the revenue base of local governments, with negative implications for their autonomy and capacity to function.

Lambright 2001: 445). Finally, even vocal opponents of the regime admit that Museveni remains the only politician capable of strategically planning the economic, social and political reforms over the sort of time-frames required to sustain development that will reduce chronic poverty (Anonymous interview source). [46]

Of greatest concern for poverty reduction efforts relates to the potential loss of stability that might occur should the regime attempt to retain power at the next polls through repressive and undemocratic means, as the experience around the 2001 polls suggest that they might (Bratton and Lambright 2001, Dicklitch 2002). In such circumstances, the stability that it retains as its most important political, social and economic contribution to post-Obote II Uganda, may well be in jeopardy. In a pre-2002 New Year message, Museveni's presidential opponent at the 2001 poll, ex-Colonel Kizza Besigye, wrote in the national press that "Conditions for armed rebellion exist in Uganda today because force is employed to deny people their rights and freedoms, justice, and sovereignty" (The Monitor, 18/12/2002, 'Is Uganda ripe for war?'). The proposition that, if peaceful means fail to offer a regime change then violent confrontation is justified, is resonant with Uganda's post-colonial political history, and perhaps offers the clearest argument for a form of political competition through which such concerns can be more fully debated and resolved.

Overall, though, the politics of democratisation in Uganda cannot be made explicable through a cost-benefit analysis, but must instead be subjected to a political analysis that seeks to identify how the underlying patterns of political rule, authority and legitimacy engage with processes by which resources are allocated and representation accorded to the poorest groups. On the basis of the evidence presented here, it appears that many of the wider debates concerning the links between democracy and development may not apply here (e.g. Varshney 1999), as they tend to assume a liberal multiparty form democracy that does not exist in Uganda. In any case, recent research shows that the links between particular regimes and pro-poor outcomes lie so much in the trappings of liberal democracy, but in the character of the 'political contract' between state and citizenry (de Waal 2000). This argument is pursued in greater depth in the following section.

Reducing poverty in Uganda over the long-term: 'from 'ownership' to a 'political contract'?

As noted earlier, Uganda's recent success in achieving poverty reduction has been closely associated with the high level of ownership of the current poverty agenda. However, a more critical perspective on the issue of ownership within Uganda has emerged recently, either by observers who question the depth of this ownership beyond the President (Dijkstra and van Donge 2001), or those who suggest that strong government ownership is actually a negative feature to the extent that the GoU's 'capture' of the poverty reduction agenda means that civil society organisations are forced work within the parameters it sets (Brock et al 2002). The research conducted for this paper generally supports these lines of argument, but goes further in terms of analysing the contemporary and underlying politics of ownership in Uganda. It finds that not only is 'ownership' quite fragile in Uganda, but reiterates the ways in which this is threatened by key political processes. It argues that the concept of a 'political contract' offers closer insights into the challenge of institutionalising long-term poverty reduction.

[46] The pressures on Museveni to retain presidential power come not just from those who rely heavily on his patronage, but also the rural poor. The opposition to his continued 'reign', however, brings together both the least (urban, educated elites) and most poor (those in the North).

How deep is 'ownership' in Uganda? A survey across policy actors and key stakeholders

> "…the crucial role for the President and a few others (in supporting the reform process) suggests that ownership is fragile" (Dijkstra and van Donge 2001: 845).

It has already been argued that the changing emphasis within presidential policy on issues of growth and poverty reduction and the growing level of elite pressure on the presidency has begun to draw into question the level of executive support for long term poverty reduction. To the extent that 'ownership' was founded on the absence of neopatrimonial processes that would have seen such reforms opposed (Dijkstra and van Donge 2001), it is worrying to note that this form of politics is now resurgent in Uganda.

In terms of the political centre beyond the executive, these 'few others' can be said today to form the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, "universally acknowledged as the most central poverty policy actor in the government" (Brock et al 2002: 12). Ownership has also extending to key PAF-related ministries such as the Ministry of Health – the conflict between MFPED and MoH detailed above can be read as a contest over who owns which aspect of the current poverty agenda. More marginal ministries such as the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development is increasingly taking ownership of similarly marginal issues within the overall poverty agenda. However, ownership levels would appear to be much lower amongst those ministries currently excluded from PAF and the associated expenditure protection (e.g. Defence, Justice, Law and Order).

The legislative branch of the GoU remains to be fully engaged in the poverty reduction process. For one civil society leader,

> "The whole political class is not bothered about poverty reduction. The first thing that Parliament discusses is their allowances…they are only interested in poverty reduction at the rhetorical level."[47]

This cannot be simply read as a critique of parliament. As noted by Hossain and Moore (2001) there is evidence that,

> "elites are more likely to appreciate, explore and be willing to act (towards reducing poverty) if they are sympathetically and constructively engaged in drawing up policies designed to reduce poverty, and in shaping the ways that they are labelled and justified".

However, according to donor agency officials who work closely with parliament, members frequently complain that "why should we focus on the PEAP? We didn't vote for this", and bemoan their lack of influence over budgetary process. Moreover, moves towards including parliamentarians more thoroughly within poverty reduction policy have yet to convince. For example, while there are now Members of Parliament on all but five of the sector working groups, the five lacking parliamentary representation include both of the most influential Policy Advisory Groups, and three of the groups most closely related to poverty reduction, namely Poverty Eradication, Health and Education. The problem of executive-domination of the policy agenda goes beyond the arena of poverty policy; members cannot even get a copy of bills in advance of them being tabled. However, Parliament currently lacks the capacity to

[47] For example, in same week that Parliament literally laughed at and rejected out of hand a proposal from one Northern MP that MPs should each make a financial contribution from their salaries to reducing poverty in the North, they voted for a significant rise in their own health cover (The New Vision, September 2002).

formulate specific amendments to bills as opposed to more general critical commentary.

In terms of the broader 'political class' referred to in the above quote, there is little evidence that political elites in Uganda are any more on board the poverty reduction agenda than parliamentarians. Many of those elites interviewed for this research rejected the GoU's claims to have achieved success in reducing poverty, and several could not clearly articulate the main policies within the agenda. Journalists and editors responsible for reporting on poverty issues claim that urban audiences are "bored" by the poverty agenda. Perhaps most seriously in terms of ownership, all dismissed the poverty reduction agenda as an externally imposed agenda that, with its apparent trappings of wealth (e.g. international conferences, per diems, 4x4 vehicles) is inherently profligate and corrupt, a means for personal enrichment by both nationals and international consultants. The poverty agenda is thus being read by some within Uganda as part of a wider historical process by which certain elites in Africa have since the colonial era tended to integrate themselves with patterns of external dependence as a means of enrichment (Chabal and Daloz 1999), and thus forms part of a wider strategy of 'extraversion' (Bayart 2000). According to this reading, then, the 'nationalising' of the poverty agenda contains little of the perceived morality and ethical commitment that the concept of ownership implies.

In terms of the importance of local governments in delivering the poverty related policies, recent research closely contests the 'pro-poor' tendencies of local councils in Uganda. As discussed above, there is evidence there are dynamics surrounding the local politics of accountability and elections that reveal a level of symbiosis between political decentralisation and poverty reduction in Uganda. It is also notable that nearly all officials and councillors within the three Districts and sub-Counties interviewed for this research were able to clearly articulate the national poverty agenda, and discuss its (ir)relevance to their particular district. This was at a noticeably higher level amongst those who had been involved in the UPPAP process. However, such an awareness may mean little in terms of ownership and commitment, and may reveal the same type of 'extraversion' or instrumentality that national elites accuse central policy-makers of. As a senior official within the Ministry of Local Government notes, the Districts "have learned to make the argument that their priorities are the same as at national levels" – they would be fools not to" given the high level of conditionality attached to the vast majority of central-local transfers. More broadly, critics point to increasing evidence concerning the misuse of resources and predatory tax regimes (e.g. Francis and James 2003, Ellis and Bahiigwa 2003). In terms of service-delivery, some line ministries (particularly the Ministry of Health) blame the slow-down in progress towards the PEAP goals in terms of the 'fragmentation' of delivery and leakage of funds caused by having to deliver services through local government, particularly in relation to 'leakage' and the low level of administrative and human resource capacity at local levels.

However, the debate is not as one-sided as is currently being presented in the backlash against decentralised forms of governance, and some would argue that the poverty reduction agenda is being operationalised in a way that is detrimental to longer-term governance reforms such as the institutionalisation of participation through Uganda's decentralisation programme. Many local government officials and councillors complain bitterly that the high-level of conditionality attached to poverty reduction spending has made it increasingly difficult to meet local-specific needs, a problem that has particular relevance given the likely need for 'targeted transfers' to reach the chronic poor. Although the system of local government was designed to identify local priorities and administer policy interventions, the heavy protection for poverty-spending in the budgetary process has helped to ensure that an increasing

proportion of central government funding for local government is conditional, with 85 per cent of the total local government income ear-marked according to nationally-determined priorities (Government of Uganda 2002). Compliance is ensured, in part, through a series of fiscal sanctions and penalties, which are closely linked to donor insistence that certain central funds should be ring-fenced (the Poverty Action Funds). The input by the lowest political tiers into this decision-making process was virtually non-existent (e.g. Jeppsson 2001). The outcome is a disciplining of the local rather than its empowerment to determine locally-appropriate priorities and actions. The participatory rhetoric of national poverty planning is implicit in circumventing the transformation of the local state, and effectively short-circuiting the establishment of more participatory forms of governance, to the extent that a recent study has noted "the destructive effect on local governance of the financing and management arrangements accompanying PRSPs" in Uganda (Craig and Porter 2003).[48]

More generally, some observers argue that the solution to problems of 'fragmentation' between national level ownership and local government delivery can be overcome by greater rather than less involvement of local governments in the formulation of national poverty reduction policies (Jeppsson 2001). The Local Government Development Programme (LGDP) appears to offers a convincing way of squaring this debate. Established as a pilot 'District Development Programme' in 1999 and set to enter its second full phase in August 2003, the LGDP contains measures that are directly aimed at addressing the apparent contradictions between the decentralisation and poverty reduction agendas. As stated by Craig and Porter (2003: 63), "The intention was to craft a system of financing for "pro-poor" investments that corresponded with, indeed, tested the boundaries of the newly promulgated Local Government Act 1997" regarding the empowerment of local councils. A system of budgetary incentives rather than conditionality is used as a means of ensuring a pro-poor focus, and there is early evidence that significant progress is being made in terms of developing capacity, accountability and pro-poor spending patterns at the local level (Ministry of Local Government 2002).

Finally, and in terms of looking beyond local government and towards communities, there is further evidence here that the national capture of the poverty reduction agenda does not necessarily augur well for ownership lower down the scale. Although research at this level is ongoing and cannot claim in any way to be comprehensive, some interesting findings are emerging that have particular implications for local ownership. For example, in one of the villages visited, the government's flagship UPE programme was roundly criticised by local elites for disempowering the level of 'ownership' and influence that local parents had over schools in their area. A key problem concerned the level of power now invested in head-teachers rather than parent/teacher associations, in addition to the now more familiar criticisms of the quality of education now available in primary schools with their increased teacher:pupil ratios. This point with regards local ownership is echoed by a senior official within a central line ministry, who notes that,

> "Before 1997 (the advent of PEAP and UPE) I can say for sure that at the local level you would have found schools, health centres, administrative buildings built with local resources, that local people would identify with strongly" (Interview with author, parentheses added).

There appears, then, to be a politics of class surrounding issues of ownership at the local level. Given the dynamic nature of class formation and relations, it is difficult to predict the long-term implications of this. At best, such local opposition may be a

[48] Part of this section draws on Hickey and Mohan 2003.

short-lived backlash borne of a sense of lost privilege rather than of genuine grievance, and which will become less vociferous as alternative modes of educational provision become available (as they have already, with fees-charging church and NGO related schools). However, this evidence implies that there is a greater need for poverty analysis to engage with the politics of class relations when considering the poverty reduction agenda in general and ownership in particular.

The final problem with current debates over ownership in Uganda concerns not just problems with the depth and breadth of ownership in relation to underlying political processes within Uganda, but also the appropriateness of the concept in relation to the GoU's relations with donors. Two points are worth noting. First, it is striking that those elements of the reform agenda that the GoU can be said have the highest level of 'ownership' over – namely decentralisation and UPE – were not being promoted by donors at the time of their implementation in Uganda. Some donors opposed the introduction of UPE in Uganda, just as some opposed the abolishment of user fees in 2001 (Interview data). As such, they cannot be properly discussed in terms of ownership and its implied emphasis on state-donor relations. Rather, these were elements of a state-led project of social and political transformation adhered to by the Movement.[49] The second point comes from the opposite direction, and suggests that it is disingenuous to talk of 'ownership' given the extent to which several aspects of Uganda's commitment to pro-poor spending (e.g. PAF, MTEF) are clearly externally driven. To the extent that this protection of poverty-spending in Uganda's budgetary processes is reliant on debt-led leverage and conditionality, it constitutes the antithesis of 'ownership'.[50] Overall, then, although the concept of 'ownership' claims to be political, it actually obscures the underlying politics of policy reform in agenda. It obscures – either through exaggeration or concealment – the actual character of state- donors relations. As is argued below, a more useful term (and a more politically nuanced and embedded one) is that of a 'political contract'.

Towards a political contract?

> "…social contracts are not something just created. They are enforced by people and adhered to by their rulers out of political necessity. They are owned by the people, or at least by substantial sections of the people, or representative institutions. Social contracts come about through historical, political processes" (de Waal 1996: 201).

Several themes that arise from this study of the politics of staying poor in Uganda have suggested the utility of adopting the concept of 'political contract' as a means of engaging with the political challenge of sustained poverty reduction. These have primarily been the finding that (a) the concept of ownership does not adequately capture the underlying politics that shape the long-term 'commitment' to poverty reduction within Uganda, (b) the role of local government cannot be entirely reduced to a mode of service-delivery and the process of decentralisation to a technocratic process of governance reform and (c) that the prospect of multiparty politics (in itself) holds ambiguous promise for poverty reduction and political stability in particular. It is argued below that not only can the notion of a 'contract' capture these issues, but also that there are several other advantages to adopting the notion of a political

[49] A similar point relates to the project of economic transformation. Although influential throughout the highly contested process in the late 1980s concerning the direction of economic policy in Uganda, the donors cannot be said to have created the agenda and then passed it on. As has been noted, "the SAP which the IMF and World Bank designed incorporated many recommendations from the consultative forum, including the liberalisation of the financial sector, privatisation and divestiture, an reduction of excessive government expenditure" (Kasekende and Atingi-Ego 1999: 646).

[50] The President is often infuriated at being unable to change budgetary allocations.

contract as a framework for analysis and policy action – both analytical and normative – including links to social protection.

The notion of a 'political contract' has entered development debates through arguably the most contested debate within politics and poverty reduction, that regarding the links between democracy and development. Starting from a specific focus on anti-famine policies, Alex de Waal (1996, 2000) has argued, contra Sen, that democracy alone is not enough to counter famine. In seeking to explain why civic and political rights have not been enough to protect people's social and economic rights in terms of chronic poverty and malnutrition in India, yet have succeeded in preventing famine, de Waal finds that the answer lies not so much in the trappings of liberal democracy (e.g. free press, parliament), but in a 'political contract' between state and citizenry. In India, this emerged on the basis of mass mobilisation, whereby the nationalist leaders of Congress struck a deal with the 'masses' on the issue of famine (2000: 14). Preventing famine thus formed a key plank within the anti-colonial nationalist movement, and thus of the postcolonial *political settlement*.[51]

Extending this analysis to Africa, de Waal notes that the experience of Museveni's National Resistance Army (NRA) in the bush offers one of the few examples of strong social contracts emerging in Africa in recent decades (1996: 201). Driven by the necessity of developing a local support base in the rural areas in which the resistance war was being waged, an ideological commitment to development, and (as with the Indian nationalists) a need to define itself against the predatory rule, corruption and economic failures of both current and previous regimes, provided the NRA with the basis of the contract which it forged, initially with the local citizenry and later with the country as a whole. The most enduring elements of this contract have been a commitment to political stability, a decentralised form of rule based on the resistance councils and including provision for marginal groups, and a commitment to securing development for rural people (Mutibwa 1992: 179-192).[52] Moreover, it is the nature of the contract forged in the Luwero Triangle – between the Banyoro-Buganda partnership and (inevitably) against the northern soldiers of the ruling regime – that also contains the seeds of the NRM regime's failure in terms of forging an inclusive political contract since 1986, particularly regards the North (ibid: 156-7). As has been noted, "…the regime has yet to extend a stake in the system to those citizens who do not accept the leading role of the NRM", with this dissent strongest in the war-torn North (Bratton et al 2000: 21).

Poverty reduction is thus central to the rebuilding of a sociopolitical contract between the North and the centre. The Presidential relocation to a camp in Gulu in the heart of the conflict-affected area resonates with this requirement, but this move remains focused on resolving the military struggle rather than either the twin strategies of inclusion and social justice that recent analysis suggests is crucial for breaking cycles of conflict (Stewart and O'Sullivan 1998). Rather than promote the types of programmes for the North that are more open to the abuses of patronage than the gains of poverty reduction (e.g. NUSAF), donors should support efforts to bring the North within the mainstream of poverty policy.

[51] This contract has been maintained through the institutionalisation of early warning systems, a high level of technical understanding concerning the analysis of famines and policy responses across sectors, and an educated public concerning their rights on this issue.

[52] More contentiously, it could be argued that UPE has become part of a poverty-related contract between state and society, which commands broad public support, and which people not treat as their right. This is significant, as it suggests that even pro-poor reforms that are introduced effectively as a form of presidential patronage can transcend such clientelist beginnings and become part of a broader democratic contract within which citizens can make additional claims.

There is then, a potentially symbiotic relationship between poverty reduction and the forging of a social contract. However, poverty reduction initiatives can also undermine elements of such contracts. The way in which donor conditionalities associated with poverty reduction appear to be disabling the Movement's programme of empowering local government is an example here. Although there are undoubtedly problems with local governments as agents of poverty reduction, these problems are not necessarily insurmountable. Moreover, efforts to undermine decentralisation reforms should note the extent to which local government is not only a key element of the political contract between state and citizenry, but also that it underpins another key element of this contract, namely that of security. Local people surveyed in this research associate the lowest levels of government (LC1 and LC2) with higher levels of security – itself a key element of the Movement's political contract.

As such, the notion of a contract – unlike 'ownership' – problematises rather than celebrates the role of the international development community. Indeed, it may raise particular problems for donors given recent evidence that states which are heavily dependent on aid tend to be characterised by weak social contracts between citizens and the state, particularly in terms of low levels of downwards accountability (Moore et al 1999).[53] This is welcome to the extent that it repositions donor agencies in direct relation to the forms of political arrangements required to attain long-term poverty reduction, and makes their role more amenable to analysis. Their role can then be analysed relative to their impact on the strengthening or weakening political contracts, both in their entirety and along particular dimensions.

In addition to offering an analytical tool for understanding the links between politics and poverty reduction, the notion of a social contract can also offer a normative approach to public policy that has particular relevance to the chronically poor. For example, recent advances within public policy research has shown how the notion of a social contract can relocate social protection within a project of redistributive justice (Ramia 2002) that is arguably required to underpin a long term challenge to chronic poverty (e.g. Bracking 2003b). In particular, undertaking social protection within the broader remit of social contractualism offers a means of avoiding the tendency for social protection to be interpreted and delivered as a form of 'patrimonialism' (Ramia 2002: 49), as some critics (*ibid*.) and this research has revealed can be the case (e.g. failed targeted credit programmes). As originally understood by Rousseau, the very basis of contractualism is citizenship rather than the patronage associated with clientelist forms of political relationship. It is along these lines that Jayusiraya (2002: 316) argues that contractualism "must be conceived as a political relationship that places a premium on the political capacity of the individual to bargain within an adequate range of available choices and options". In framing the recipient as an actor rather than a passive recipient, the empowering potential of social protection remains in tact and transcends the 'hand-out' culture with which it is currently associated amongst many in Ugandan policy circles.

The global politics of staying poor in Uganda

> "The international policy focus on poverty alleviation coexists with neoliberal policies that widen inequality domestically and internationally (Pieterse 2002: 1023).

[53] De Waal goes further and argues "something approximating strong social contracts (in Africa) have emerged only in 'aid-free zones'" (de Waal 1996: 201). In terms of the political processes that underpin the forging of a contract, it has been noted, "The key to successful reform is a political movement for change, and donors cannot do very much to generate this" (Aid & Reform study cited in Mills and Darin-Ericson 2002).

An analysis of the politics of staying poor in Uganda cannot merely focus on national and local factors, but must also examine the ways in which politics and power relations in the global arena also shape the reproduction and potential reduction of long-term poverty. This means overcoming a tendency within the recent resurgence of political analysis on poverty and development to eschew the global in a return to the national, a problem that is reflected within development studies more broadly, which tends to "…focus on questions of regional, national or local development… 'world development' is hardly on the map beyond the macroeconomic data of the IMF, World Bank, UN, OECD and WTO (Pieterse 2002: 1034). In terms of chronic poverty, such an analysis is required to explain why whole countries can be classified as 'chronically poor' (Gore 2003), particularly in relation to key issues of trade and debt.

Arguably the largest gap on the current international poverty agenda is that concerning analysis on and policies for reducing global inequalities (Maxwell 2001). For Uganda, unequal terms of trade and commodity price fluctuations have strongly influenced its lower than predicted level of economic growth in recent years, particularly in terms of poor coffee prices. The GoU's increased emphasis on export strategies (see above) has so far floundered on the international politics of protectionism that has so far reduced the efficacy even of initiatives ostensibly designed to challenge such as AGOA. Finally, the level of sustainable debt in Uganda – the first through the HIPC completion stage – has actually risen (The Guardian, January 2003), leaving observers amongst Uganda's political elite highly sceptical of the global actors promoting poverty reduction (Interview data).

The current extent of global inequality and its adverse impact on poor countries has led some (e.g. White 2001) to argue that 'attacking inequality' rather than poverty might be the key to long-term poverty reduction. Such a move would require a global version of the contract discussed above – or 'global compact' (UNDP 2003) – that goes beyond the short-term mobilising potential of the MDGs. Although impressive in several ways, the MDG focus remains limited to the field of interventions within the sphere of international development assistance, whereas it is clear that the inequalities that underpin long-term poverty are more strongly associated with broader processes of late capitalism – e.g. more to do with trade than aid. What is required is for the links to be made between not only policies and poverty but between politics and underlying processes of development and impoverishment, such that processes of late capitalist development can be analysed and where necessary made to pay for the price of incorporation that they exact from poorer countries and peoples. Framed thus, a tax on international financial transactions or a more general Tobin tax could begin to provide the basis for such a global contract for challenging long-term poverty.

Conclusion

The political analysis employed here has hopefully contributed to a deeper understanding of the possibilities of poverty reduction strategies in Uganda reaching the chronic poor. It has argued the politics to the reduction of chronic poverty in Uganda – around the types and character of the institutional channels through which they and their advocates can access, influence and seek to control policy processes, and the depiction of the poorest groups within political discourse around poverty – is characterised by contestation and ambiguity. Although the chronically poor and their concerns are included within this 'political space', there is sense in which this currently amounts to a politics of inclusion rather than 'presence' or 'justice', with little opportunity to frame debates about long-term poverty within discussions of inequality and redistributive policies. Targeted policy interventions remain closely associated

with the patronage politics that is increasingly undermining the poverty reduction agenda more broadly in Uganda. Furthermore, the poverty reduction agenda is closely shaped and increasingly driven by the politics of succession in Uganda, and, the continued politics of conflict and militarisation of political space.

Overall, and tentatively given the ongoing nature of the research, the political analysis employed here suggests that policy action to challenge chronic poverty could usefully address three thematic areas. First, support should be offered to those pro-poor policy actors, policies and programmes that are capable of transcending the hierarchical sequencing within the PRS/PEAP process as these are more likely to produce change that is thoroughgoing and sustained rather than become either mired in contradictions or relegated to 'mopping up' status. Such actors currently include the Ministries of Health, and Gender, Labour and Social Development – who are seeking to break down the barriers between Pillars III and IV of the PEAP (incomes and quality of life) – with the Local Government Development Programme the best example of an initiative that can overcome some of the contradictions between Pillars II and III (governance and incomes). UPPAP has made it possible to analyse the different poverties that exist in Uganda and generate information for and debate around the different policies required to reduce them. The social protection agenda has the potential to operate across the compartmentalization of current policy debates and processes, particularly when viewed from the perspective of a social contract, which locates social protection within a politics of distributive justice and as a form of protection from unregulated market forces (Ramia 2002), and away from the politics of patronage within which it is currently embroiled.

Second, policies and political action should as far as possible be directed towards challenging the neopatrimonial forms of political rule that are increasingly characterising politics in Uganda and which pose a significant threat to the long-term sustainability of the poverty agenda. This is a particularly difficult challenge, as there is only evidence of success in Uganda at the level of women's movements (Tripp 2000, 2001). The broader challenge requires a "…move towards a politics of social justice, of concentrating on equality, security, decency" (Szeftel 2000: 440), suggesting an alternative policy troika to that proposed within the current poverty reduction agenda, and one which resonates with the needs of policy to challenge the rising inequalities that underpin long term processes of impoverishment in Uganda and more broadly.

Finally, and given the extent to which the reduction of chronic poverty form part of a longer-term effort than that currently envisioned by the Millennium Development Targets, efforts in this direction can usefully be located within the formation of broader political contracts between regimes and citizens. A more political concept than 'ownership', the notion of a political contract has been used here to identify those policy reforms that are genuinely embedded and long-term – particularly universal primary education, decentralisation and a broad commitment to the rural majority – as forged during the NRA's guerrilla struggle and through subsequent collective engagements around elections. This notion also draws attention to those yet to be brought into the contract, and those included but on adverse terms. As argued earlier, it both problematises the role of donor agencies and usefully frames their efforts within the longer-term political challenge of reducing chronic poverty. Finally, it draws attention to the need for a global contract aimed at addressing the politics of global inequalities that underpin long-term, structural poverty.

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