

CITIZENS' SOCIOECONOMIC RIGHTS AND UGANDA'S POVERTY ERADICATION ACTION PLAN

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses Uganda's Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) as a framework for actualizing citizens' socioeconomic rights, particularly education and health. It is shown that the conceptualization and formulation of the PEAP as Uganda's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) was dominated by "donors" and the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (MFPED), without any significant role being played by more interested and relevant organizations and institutions such as Parliament, political parties (including the ruling party) non-governmental organizations, and representative civil society organizations. Despite the constitutional and legal guarantees of socioeconomic rights on Uganda's statute books, the formulation and implementation of the PEAP did not regard these rights—particularly education and health—as rights but as mere services given by the State if the right macro-economic policies are pursued. Only a new law on education enacted in 2008 attempts to concretize education as a right. The assumption that economic growth and the operation of market forces are the way to poverty reduction is misconceived—there are structural problems and unequal endowments and capabilities that the PEAP ignored. As a policy framework therefore, the PEAP was essentially not a Ugandan document but one premised on a conditionality accepted by Government and the MFPED to secure debt relief and advance the variously critiqued macroeconomic policies of the World Bank and IMF that have little or no regard for socioeconomic rights.