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Original Article

### Adoption of the Parish Development Model (PDM) for Socio-Economic Development of Ugandans: A Case Study of Banda and Kyambogo Upper Estate Parishes

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**Background:** The escalating burden of poverty in Uganda, disproportionately affecting youth, prompted government initiatives like Emyooga and Entandikwa. However, mismanagement and misuse of funds hindered their effectiveness. In response, the Government of Uganda introduced the Parish Development Model (PDM) in February 2022, aiming to eradicate poverty and accelerate socio-economic transformation. The PDM is built on seven pillars, including production, infrastructure, financial inclusion, social services, community data, governance, and attitude transformation. These pillars promote collaboration between public and private sector actors, ensuring sustainable development. The government has doubled funding for PDM, allocating UGX 200 million per parish to promote economic growth at the grassroots level. While the PDM shows promise, its success depends on effective implementation, transparency, and accountability. Addressing concerns surrounding mismanagement and misuse of funds is crucial to ensuring resources reach intended beneficiaries and contribute meaningfully to poverty alleviation. **Objective:** To examine the benefits of the Parish Development Model among the beneficiaries for socio-economic transformation. **Methods:** This study utilized a qualitative research paradigm, incorporating a case study methodology to investigate the benefits of the Parish Development Model (PDM) among purposively selected groups in Banda and Kyambogo Upper Estate parishes. A strategic sampling framework was employed to select 50 beneficiaries from diverse groups, ensuring the capture of nuanced perspectives and experiences. Participants were drawn from specialized groups, including Snack A and B, the Mushroom Group, the Tomato and Vegetable Group, and the Hard Corn Group. Data collection entailed focus group discussions, which yielded rich, contextualized insights into participants' lived experiences with PDM. Thematic analysis was employed to deconstruct the data, facilitating the identification of salient themes and patterns pertinent to the benefits and challenges encountered by participants. This methodological approach afforded a comprehensive

understanding of the PDM's impact on these communities, illuminating areas for potential enhancement and informing avenues for future research. **Findings:** The empirical evidence suggests that the Parish Development Model (PDM) funds have yielded significant positive outcomes, including enhanced financial inclusion, augmented agricultural productivity, job creation, poverty alleviation, empowerment of marginalized groups, improved infrastructure, strengthened social capital, and localized economic growth. However, a notable disparity persists between beneficiaries who have received funding and those awaiting disbursement, with the latter experiencing undue delays despite investing considerable resources in the application process. These delays have impeded progress toward achieving the program's objectives, underscoring the need for expedited fund disbursement. Nonetheless, optimism prevails that timely access to funds will catalyze socio-economic transformation, augment quality of life, and foster community development. **Conclusion and Recommendation:** The Parish Development Model (PDM) has demonstrated significant progress over its two-year implementation period, facilitating beneficiaries' ability to consolidate their projects and attain enhanced economic stability. Nevertheless, persistent challenges undermine the program's efficacy, particularly the perceived politicization of the PDM. Beneficiaries underscored the imperative of decoupling political interests from the program to ensure its seamless operation, foster a paradigm shift in mindset, and guarantee equitable access for all eligible participants.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Ugandan government introduced the Parish Development Model (PDM) as a strategic initiative to enhance local development and improve living standards, particularly in rural areas (Moses, & Turyasingura, 2023). By integrating multiple sectors, such as infrastructure, health, education,

and agriculture, the PDM aims to achieve sustainable development at the parish level, emphasizing grassroots participation (Awan, 2021). The PDM's effectiveness is rooted in its core principles, including community participation, local empowerment, resource mobilization, and promotion of livelihoods. Community participation and engagement are essential for ensuring

development initiatives align with local priorities and realities (Haldane et al., 2019). Local empowerment is critical, and the PDM adopts a bottom-up approach, enabling communities to identify their developmental needs and objectives. The PDM's multifaceted approach encompasses economic transformation, provision of integrated services, and alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The model emphasizes economic transformation by increasing agricultural productivity, diversifying income sources, and providing access to markets, financial services, and skills training (Mwesigwa et al., 2022; Ayoo, 2022).

The PDM's integrated service provision adopts a multi-sectoral approach, linking infrastructure, healthcare, and education initiatives to deliver comprehensive benefits to communities. Improved access to services is associated with better health outcomes, increased educational opportunities, and an enhanced quality of life (McMaughan et al., 2020). The PDM aligns with the SDGs, addressing poverty, advancing gender equality, and fostering environmental sustainability (Szetey et al., 2021). Regular monitoring and assessment ensure transparency and accountability in resource utilization. However, challenges persist, including capacity building, resource limitations, and ensuring inclusivity (van Niekerk, 2020). The PDM provides Uganda with a transformative opportunity to advance local development, but addressing these challenges is crucial to realizing its potential. The PDM is anchored on seven fundamental pillars, including production, storage, processing, and marketing; infrastructure and economic services; financial inclusion; social services; mindset change; parish-based management information system (PBMIS); and governance and administration. By integrating efforts across these pillars, the PDM provides a holistic framework to address local challenges. This study examines the impact and benefits of PDM during its first two years of implementation, investigating whether this

developmental initiative has delivered measurable benefits.

### **Statement of the Problem and Research Question**

Uganda's protracted efforts to alleviate poverty have yielded a myriad of programs, offering invaluable lessons for future interventions. Regionally, initiatives such as the Peace Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP), Northern Uganda Rehabilitation Programme (NUREP), and Karamoja Integrated Development Programme (KIDDP) have demonstrated varied degrees of success (Cammack, & Twinamatsiko, 2013). Nationally, programs like Entandikwa, the Youth Venture Capital Fund (YVCF), and the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP) have sought to address poverty across diverse demographics and regions. Despite some notable achievements, these initiatives have yielded mixed outcomes, underscoring the complexities of poverty alleviation. Common challenges include the need for mindset transformation, effective community mobilization, and improved public service delivery. Undeterred, Uganda continues to pursue economic transformation, with the Parish Development Model (PDM) representing the latest endeavor to enhance household incomes and quality of life. The PDM seeks to transition households from a subsistence economy to a money economy within five years, emphasizing community-led initiatives and inclusivity. This study investigates the socio-economic development outcomes of households and groups adopting the PDM. Through a critical analysis of successes, challenges, and areas for improvement, this research aims to provide insights into the readiness of communities and stakeholders to drive Uganda's socio-economic transformation. Furthermore, this study seeks to distill valuable lessons from the PDM's early implementation phase, offering strategies to enhance its effectiveness and ensure meaningful contributions to poverty alleviation and sustainable development in Uganda.

## Research Question

What are the benefits of Parish Development Model for individuals, groups, and households that adopted it during the first two years?

## THEORETICAL REVIEW

This study on the adoption of the Parish Development Model (PDM) for socio-economic development is theoretically grounded in Empowerment Theory, a conceptual framework extensively applied in social work, psychology, and community development (Zimmerman, 2000). Empowerment Theory elucidates the processes by which individuals, groups, and communities acquire the requisite skills, confidence, and resources to exert control over their lives and effect positive change (Perkins, & Zimmerman, 1995). At its core, Empowerment Theory emphasizes self-determination, agency, and the capacity to influence decisions that affect one's life, both individually and collectively (Perkins, & Zimmerman, 1995). The theory encompasses several interrelated components, including personal development, psychological empowerment, social empowerment, collective empowerment, and access to resources (Zimmerman, 2000). These elements resonate strongly with the objectives of PDM, which aims to drive social and economic transformation at the grassroots level. By employing Empowerment Theory as a guiding framework, this study examines the effective implementation of the PDM and its profound impact on beneficiaries' lives. The judicious allocation and disbursement of resources enable individuals to invest in businesses and income-generating activities of their choice, thereby achieving economic empowerment and enhancing socio-economic development. PDM ensures that government programs are accessible at the community level, addressing local needs and fostering sustainable growth. Through active stakeholder participation and the judicious use of allocated resources, communities can experience tangible outcomes, such as increased financial

independence, improved livelihoods, and enhanced social inclusion. This participatory and inclusive approach aligns with the government's goals while empowering citizens to shape their destinies, ultimately paving the way for sustainable socio-economic progress.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The proliferation of development programs globally has yielded mixed outcomes, despite substantial investments aimed at achieving holistic and democratic development. Effective development strategies must prioritize a pro-people, by-the-people, and of-the-people approach. Scholars such as Veronesi et al. (2022), Puie (2020), Kandpal (2022), Mukaddas (2020), and Moallemi et al. (2020) have examined and proposed various programs to initiate sustainable development. In Uganda, the Parish Development Model (PDM) is a pivotal initiative designed to address persistent development challenges by transitioning subsistence households into the money economy. This program aims to foster grassroots-led economic transformation, align with global and continental development agendas, and help Uganda achieve middle-income status by 2030. However, addressing challenges such as resource mismanagement, inadequate community mobilization, and weak public service delivery is crucial for its success. The PDM's emphasis on decentralized service delivery and community-driven development empowers local governments and communities to combat poverty. Globally, several programs resemble the PDM's approach of grassroots empowerment and local economic development. For instance, the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Empowerment Zones in the United States focus on local leadership and community-driven poverty alleviation (Veronesi et al., 2022).

In Europe, the LEADER program, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), and the European Social Fund (ESF)



emphasize local solutions for poverty reduction, sustainable livelihoods, and social inclusion (Puie, 2020). Similarly, India's Self-Help Group (SHG) model provides microfinance and capacity building to empower marginalized communities, particularly rural women, to address socio-economic challenges (Kandpal, 2022). In Africa, comparable programs include Ghana's Planting for Food and Jobs (PFJ) program, the Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty (LEAP) initiative, and the National Youth Employment Program (NYEP). These initiatives focus on rural development, job creation, and poverty reduction through community participation (Mukaddas, 2020). Kenya's Uwezo Fund, Women Enterprise Fund (WEF), and the Kenya Rural Development Program (KRDP) similarly aim to empower youth, women, and rural communities, aligning with the PDM's objectives of economic growth and poverty alleviation. These global and regional initiatives highlight the importance of local participation, empowerment, and targeted support in addressing poverty and fostering sustainable development. By integrating tailored interventions such as agro-industrial parks, innovative financial mechanisms, and improved infrastructure, these models, including Uganda's PDM, can drive the transformation of rural communities into engines of growth and prosperity across Africa.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopted an interpretivism paradigm to explore the benefits of PDM funds from the perspective of individuals and groups who benefited from the program during its first two years. The interpretivism paradigm allows respondents to interpret their social realities based on personal experiences (Phillips, 2023; Boyland, 2019). A case study design was employed to examine the benefits of the PDM in the communities of Banda, and Kyambogo Upper estates parishes. This approach facilitated an in-depth comprehension of the program's impact on residents. A qualitative research method was used to focus on participants'

interpretations of their experiences, aiming to gain profound insights from a small, targeted sample

## Population and Sample

The sample for this study was purposively selected, with a final sample size of 50 respondents determined by data saturation. The respondents comprised both male and female participants drawn from five groups that had benefited from PDM funds, as well as individuals who had not yet benefited. The groups included Snack A Group based in K15, Snack B Group in K14, Hard Corn Group in K19, and Mushroom Group in K14—all located in Kyambogo Upper Estates—while the Tomatoes and Vegetable Stall Group was based in Banda 4. This selection ensured a diverse representation of experiences and perspectives regarding the benefits of the PDM.

## Study Area

The study was conducted in the parishes of Banda and Kyambogo Upper estates, located in Nakawa Division, Central Region of Kampala. These study sites were selected purposively because they are active hubs for groups that have applied for Parish Development Model (PDM) funds. Respondents were members of various groups, each pursuing distinct activities, such as mushroom farming, chapatti making, hard corn selling, tomato and vegetable selling.

## Sampling Methods

To examine the benefits of PDM among beneficiaries, purposive sampling was employed. Respondents included the beneficiaries from each group, along with the five chairpersons of these groups. This sampling approach ensured that the data collected was both rich and relevant to the study's objective, providing a comprehensive understanding of the program's impact.

## Data Collection Instrument

The focus group instrument was developed to explore respondents' experiences and perspectives

on PDM. It included an introduction, demographic information, and guiding questions covering participants' general understanding of PDM, its benefits, and the challenges encountered. The instrument aimed to gather rich qualitative data by encouraging participants to share their experiences, challenges, and suggestions regarding the PDM.

### Data Analysis

A systematic and iterative data analysis process was employed to examine the data collected from focus group discussions. The data was transcribed, coded, and organized by topic, with relevant codes assigned to capture key ideas. An inductive thematic analysis was conducted, allowing themes to emerge naturally from the data through iterative review and comparison. Significant statements and recurring patterns were identified during this process, and overarching themes that encapsulated the core aspects of the discussions were visualized using concept maps created with NVIVO software, a qualitative data analysis tool. This analytical approach facilitated a detailed exploration of the

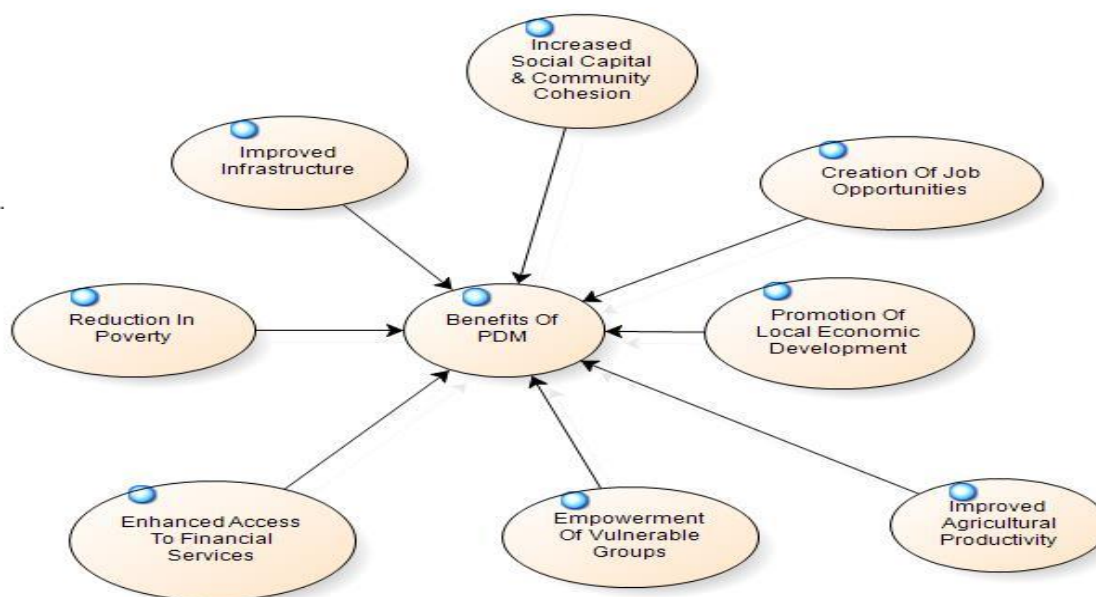
benefits of the Parish Development Model (PDM) from the beneficiaries' perspective, with a specific focus on its contribution to their socio-economic transformation.

### Ethical Considerations

Before participating in the study, all respondents were given detailed information about the research, including its objectives, data collection methods, estimated duration of the discussion, and the use of audio recording and note-taking. Participants were also informed about how the data would be managed and used. They were given the opportunity to ask any questions and received clear answers to ensure understanding. Afterward, they provided informed consent by signing a consent form, or for participants unable to write, by using a thumbprint as a substitute for a signature. All participants were 18 years or older, ensuring that the researcher engaged individuals of legal age.

### PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

**Figure 1: Benefits of Parish Development Funds in Selected Places of Banda and Kyambogo Upper Estate Parishes.**



From the focus group discussion, respondents highlighted the numerous socio-economic benefits of PDM. These included enhanced access to financial services, improved agricultural

productivity, job creation, poverty reduction, empowerment of vulnerable groups, improved infrastructure such as markets and stalls, increased social capital and community cohesion, and the promotion of local economic development.

### Theme 1: Enhanced Access to Financial Services

Access to financial services was among the many benefits reported by respondents as a positive outcome PDM so far. Kapaire from the Mushroom Group had this to say;

*When the President launched PDM, local leaders visited our area for mobilization. We were invited to attend several meetings and training sessions where we were informed of the requirements. During these sessions, I learned how to access financial support, such as loans from the bank or SACCOs, and the necessary requirements to qualify. Additionally, we were trained in financial literacy, which included lessons on saving the little resources we earn and managing finances effectively. For example, I was taught how to record daily sales accurately and how to separate profits from the main capital. These insights have significantly transformed my financial perspective, enabling me to manage my business better and plan for a more secure future.*

June, a member of the Mushroom Group, interjected to support Kapaire's submission, stating:

*Before anyone could receive money, we were trained in financial literacy. While some members found the training tiresome, I gained a lot from it. For instance, I had never handled one million shillings (380 dollars) before, and the training helped me understand how to use it wisely. Without that knowledge, I might have wasted the funds and even ended up avoiding government officials. Through PDM, I accessed funds, which I have put to good use. Take a look at my mushroom garden—it is thriving!*

*Customers come daily to buy, providing me with a steady income.*

Musiime, a member of the Snack A Group, shared how the PDM funds enhanced access to financial services, saying:

*My chicken roasting business was struggling because I lacked the capital to expand. Initially, I was hesitant to engage with the PDM team because I belong to the opposition group and I thought the funds were only for supporters of the ruling party. However, my chairperson convinced me to attend a meeting with the government team. To my surprise, I was warmly welcomed, and the financial literacy training was very beneficial. Encouraged by this experience, I continued attending the meetings and eventually received my one million shillings. This support has made a big difference in my business.*

Julao, a member of the hard corn group, explained:

*“Madam, with my business of hawking hard corn and roasted groundnuts, it was becoming more difficult each day. I had to walk long distances, from Banda to town, under the scorching sun, constantly searching for customers. My capital kept diminishing because of rent at home and upkeep. However, when I was registered in the PDM group, I was hopeful that once I received the financial support, my life would change. Indeed, after I finally accessed the funds, my condition improved. I even opened an account at our SACCO, and now I have savings.*

However, regarding financial accessibility, some members revealed that they have not yet received the funds but remain hopeful that their time will come, as they have fulfilled all the requirements. Others mentioned lacking essential documents, such as a national identification card, and not belonging to any group.

In an excerpt, Hatima shared her experience:



*When my chairperson approached me about accessing PDM funds, he advised me to identify a group. Since I was already in the Snack A group and running a cake and cookies-making business, everything was going well until I was told I needed to present an ID, which I did not have. I have tried following up with NIRA (Agency that processes National IDs), but I have not been successful yet. However, I am confident that once I get my ID, I will be able to access the funds.*

However, Konte from the Snack A group was demotivated by the lengthy and complicated process involved. He explained:

*When the PDM funds were announced, I showed interest, and we were called for a meeting at a hotel near Nalya. From that point, they kept bombarding us with meetings. I would be at my chapatti stall, and then they would call me about another meeting. It became overwhelming, and my business was being affected because I could not always be there. When I heard that even the chairperson was suspected of siphoning funds and was arrested, I decided to stop chasing after the PDM funds. If one day they decide to call me and the process*

*is smooth, I will access the funds. But for now, I am focusing on my work.*

## Theme 2: Improved Agricultural Productivity

Members of the hard corn group shared their experiences; Kakuma, the chairperson of the group, stated:

*“As a group, we decided to rent land and grow our own maize, since buying dry maize from others had become quite expensive. This season, we managed to rent 20 acres of land in Zirobwe, where we grew our own maize. At harvest, each one of us will receive around 10 bags. From this, we expect to thrive in our business. If there’s an excess of dry maize, we might even consider grinding posho to sell.”*

The Mushroom group member Tutu also reported significant improvements in the business,

*When we received cash, we hired people who were highly trained in mushroom growing. I can tell you that my mushrooms are thriving. The improved technology I have adopted has made a huge difference, and now I even distribute mushrooms to local hotels.*

**Figure 2: A Photo Showing Mushroom Garden and Methods used in Mushroom Growing at Tutu’s Home**



Similarly, members of the Vegetable and Tomato group indicated that PDM funds have positively

impacted the people from whom they buy their products:



Jacinta shared:

*I usually buy my vegetables from Gayaza, and the woman who sells to me told me that she received PDM funds. With the funds, she was able to increase her production. She told me that she bought fertilizers from Namulonge and adopted an irrigation scheme, which greatly improved her greens. Now, she sells tons of greens daily, along with over 100 cabbages.*

### Theme 3: Creation of Job Opportunities

Due to the high unemployment rates in Uganda, many youths resort to crime as a means of survival. However, with the introduction of PDM, several opportunities have emerged, providing jobs, skill development, and even capital for young people. The chairperson of the Hard Corn Group explained;

*When we started, there were individuals who were completely unemployed. We encouraged them to learn the skill of roasting corns and groundnuts. By the time the funds came, they were already in a better position, having acquired valuable skills and created their own sources of income. Now, they are actively involved in the hard corn business and also sell fresh maize in the evening.*

Kalibala, from the Vegetable and Tomato Group, noted:

*The PDM funds have helped many of us who were unemployed. I can confidently say that I am very comfortable now. When I received my funds, I was able to revive my tomato-selling business, which I had completely given up due to lack of capital but now I can proudly say that I have a job, since I received PDM funds.*

A member from Snack B narrated;

*I went to school and earned a diploma in accounting, but despite my qualifications, I struggled very hard to find a job but in vain. When I heard about PDM. I decided to join, although I was not entirely sure if I would*

*actually receive the funds. Thank God, I received the money in the middle of this year. Without wasting any time, I started a business selling snacks. Now I buy in bulk and supply university students, as well as my friends. My products include mandazi, chapatti, sausages, and cakes, which I complement with juice. Today, I feel more secure and independent than ever before. I do not think I will ever look for a formal job again because this business has given me stability and a sense of purpose.*

While many members have experienced life-changing benefits through the PDM, some shared their challenges, particularly those who have not yet received funds. Nalweyiso, a degree holder, expressed her frustrations:

*I finished my degree two years ago and have been unable to find a job. A few months back, I was invited by my friends to join a group to access PDM funds, and I was hopeful that this would allow me to start something tangible. However, up to now, I have not received the money. My chairperson has assured me that I will not miss out in the next release, so I am holding on to hope.” Katulinde (let us wait).*

### Theme 4: Reduction in Poverty

PDM has contributed to reducing poverty by empowering vulnerable groups, enhancing access to financial services, and creating jobs. Respondents noted that these initiatives have improved their livelihoods and fostered economic independence. Maku, a member in the Vegetable and Tomatoes Group, shared her testimony about how PDM transformed her life:

*I was completely poverty-stricken and, as a single mother, I could not even provide my children with basic needs. The struggle was unbearable. I desperately sought work wherever I could find it and even tried working as a maid in Oman, but it led to nothing. Madam, you cannot underestimate the burden*

*of poverty in Uganda—it can push you to the edge, to the point where even sleeping hungry becomes a normal thing. But then came PDM, like a parent stepping in to save a child. With the funds I received, I opened a vegetable and tomato stall, and life began to change. For the first time in years, I felt a sense of hope. Over the last two years, my children and I have seen significant improvement.*

In the rejoinder from Carlo from Snack B group had this to say;

*I was in school, but when Covid-19 struck, my life changed drastically. I got pregnant, and the father of my child abandoned us. With no support, I could not return to school, and life became extremely difficult. My parents advised me to go to and look for a maid job. But my boss was very tough, and the payment was meagre. To survive, I began working on people's stalls, struggling to make ends meet. When PDM was introduced, I seized the opportunity and registered. With the funds I received, I started a small business making chips. When I invested one million shillings into my business, I began to see real improvement. Now, my business is thriving, and my life is finally moving in a positive direction.*

The chairperson of the Mushroom Group shared profound insights into the impact of PDM on their community:

*Poverty is one of the major reasons why many Ugandan youths struggle to find maid jobs abroad, often risking their lives in the process. However, with PDM funds, most of them have started businesses, and we are already seeing lives improve. In my group, many people are now free from poverty and can manage the basic needs of life. Unfortunately, some members who received the funds disappeared and switched off their phones. We are working with local councilors to trace them and ensure they account for the money. Therefore, my call*

*to people is that they should receive money but must invest it wisely.*

Katuntu, a member of the tomato and vegetable group shared his personal journey of transformation:

*Before joining the PDM program, my capital was only 100,000 UGX (about \$26). I could barely afford one basin of tomatoes and a few other items for my stall, making life incredibly difficult. I struggled to pay the market taxes because my sales were limited. Even when customers came to my stall, I often lacked the variety they needed. Now, my situation has completely changed. With the support from PDM, I can afford up to four boxes of tomatoes and stock fresh greens regularly, significantly increasing my profits. In our group, we save 5,000 UGX (about \$1.30) every day with plans to establish a Savings and Credit Cooperative Organization (SACCO) in the near future.*

The chairperson of snack B highlighted;

*Personally, I believe that adopting PDM has greatly transformed our lives, enabling us to achieve socio-economic development. I know that some beneficiaries have experienced remarkable progress, but there are some with challenges but they will be rectified.*

Fiti, a member of the Snack A group, highlighted the significant changes she has experienced:

*Before PDM, poverty was choking me. The little money my husband left on the kameza (table) was never enough to cover our basic needs. I often relied on the small income from my chips business, but it was barely sustainable, and sometimes we went without food. When I received my one million shillings, it gave my business a much-needed boost. I expanded my menu to include beef and chicken alongside the chips, which now brings in a reasonably good profit.*

The chairperson of the Snack B group also shared her story, supporting Fiti's sentiments:

*I am not saying we are entirely comfortable, but at least we are now seeing a light at the end of the tunnel. Our stalls and shops have seen major improvements, and more people in the community can afford basic necessities, which is a step toward reducing poverty. Personally, I used part of my funds to buy a small fridge for 500,000 UGX (about \$190). Previously, customers avoided my shop because I could not offer cold drinks with my snacks. With the fridge, customers now sit, enjoy snacks, and have drinks. The remaining money was reinvested into my business.*

Despite these successes, some members shared challenges stemming from poor investment decisions or misuse of funds. Katoto, who runs a tomato business, admitted to making mistakes:

*When I received my funds, I decided to buy many boxes of tomatoes and clear the market taxes. However, I made the mistake of buying too many tomatoes instead of diversifying into onions, fruits, and vegetables. The tomatoes got spoiled because there was already an oversupply in the market, and many people were selling them cheaply so I incurred a big loss. I now do not know where I will get money to PDM funds when time comes. I am in trouble (looks worried).*

Switina expressed skepticism about the adequacy of the funds:

*One million shillings is not enough to lift someone out of poverty because the demands are too many. I am yet to receive my share, but I do not think it will solve all the issues I face. For instance, I need to pay rent, buy a large charcoal stove, purchase a bag of charcoal, and get plates to serve kikomando (chapatti mixed with beans). When you add up all these costs,*

*the one million is already gone, and I might remain poor but let me hope for the best.*

The chairperson of Snack B interjected to address other reasons why some members are still struggling:

*Some members are still poor because they used the funds for other purposes other than what their groups recommended. For example, while the money was meant for development, some people bought home appliances like TVs and hoofers, while others purchased boda bodas (motorbikes), married new wives, or started building houses. A few even used the money to buy chicken and meat for home consumption. We advised them to use the funds for productive business ventures, but human beings are complicated—they prioritize immediate needs over long-term investments. If the government comes to assess how the funds were used, this could cause serious issues for those who mismanaged their money.*

While the PDM has shown great potential to alleviate poverty and support socio-economic development, these stories underscore the importance of financial literacy, proper planning, and adherence to guidelines. With continued support and education, more beneficiaries can maximize the program's impact and secure sustainable livelihoods.

### **Theme 5: Empowerment of Vulnerable Groups**

Empowerment of vulnerable groups involves equipping individuals and communities facing socio-economic, political, or cultural disadvantages with the tools, resources, and opportunities needed to improve their lives and assert their rights. PDM is a transformative initiative that upholds inclusivity and ensures no one is left behind, including persons with disabilities and marginalized groups like women. In the Mushroom Group, a member with a physical disability shared her success story after receiving funds:

*I have already received the funds and am now growing mushrooms successfully. This initiative has truly empowered me.*

The chairperson of the group added:

*From the beginning of PDM, everyone was welcomed, including people with disabilities. In our group, we have a physically handicapped member, but that did not stop the government from giving her funds. Disability is not inability.*

Similarly, in the hard corn Group, a member with a sensory disability expressed appreciation for the program:

*My sensory disability never deterred the members or the government from providing me with funds. I received my share and continue steadily with my business. This era has truly empowered us. I work hard to ensure I repay the money when the time comes, especially since the interest rate is so low.*

A member from the Tomatoes and Vegetable Group highlighted the focus on women:

*When PDM started, it emphasized empowering women. Marginalized groups, especially women, were given first priority, which is why the majority of beneficiaries so far have been women. They have benefited greatly.*

The pillars of the PDM—mindset change, provision of social services, and financial inclusion—are designed to accommodate everyone, regardless of their status. This inclusive approach ensures that all individuals, regardless of disability, gender, or background, are welcomed to participate and benefit.

### **Theme 6: Improved Infrastructure**

There has been a significant improvement in infrastructure, particularly in the markets and stalls where members who received PDM funds operate. For example, Achen, a member of the tomato and vegetable stall group, shared her experience:

*During one of the training sessions we attended, our leaders mentioned that they would inspect our stalls to ensure they met the required standards. When I told them I needed funds to upgrade my stall, they assured me that once I received my PDM funds, I could use some money for such improvements. Now, my stall looks great!*

PDM funds have made vendors enjoy well-constructed and organized spaces for selling their products. Achen further noted:

*In the past, people avoided buying tomatoes and vegetables from us due to the disorganized and dirty market environment. But now, even the leaders recognize our efforts to support PDM initiatives. This acknowledgment has brought us more assistance and improved our sales.*

Katono, another vendor, added:

*The properly designed markets and stalls we now have as a result of PDM funds attract more customers. These improvements create a vibrant economic environment and significantly boost sales for vendors.*

All members of the tomato and vegetable stall group agreed that their stalls are now properly organised and up to standard. They operate in clean spaces, have comfortable seating, and maintain clean produce. Kulika highlighted the motivation behind these upgrades:

*With PDM funds, we ensure everything looks good to attract customers because we must repay the money at the end of the year.*

However, not all groups have experienced the same level of success. Members of the hard corn and snack groups continue to face challenges related to organized spaces. Their operations are often disrupted by law enforcement officials, who sometimes confiscate their goods, particularly when they sell on the roadside.

Nakut, a member of the Snack B group, explained:



*The Kampala City Council law enforcement officers make life hard, especially when we decide to sell on the roads. Even my friends who sell bananas and mangoes face the same challenge. They are always taking our merchandise, which makes us lose a lot.*

### **Theme 7: Increased Social Capital and Community Cohesion**

Increased social capital refers to the strengthening of relationships, networks, and trust within a community, enabling individuals to work together effectively to achieve shared goals. Community cohesion, on the other hand, emphasizes unity, shared values, and mutual respect among diverse groups. Together, these elements form the foundation for a harmonious and resilient society. During a focus group discussion (FGD), members explained that the groups formed under PDM have achieved more than financial benefits. These groups have fostered mutual support, unity, and friendship, particularly during times of need or celebration. Bahati, a member of the Snack B group, shared her heartfelt experience during the FGD. She recounted how the group not only provided financial opportunities but also became a source of emotional and social support.

*When my husband fell critically ill, I felt completely overwhelmed. It was my group members who stood by me, offering financial assistance and moral support. They visited me at the hospital, contributed towards medical bills, and kept me company when I felt alone. Their kindness and unity gave me the strength to pull through that difficult time.*

Bahati's story reflects the essence of increased social capital and community cohesion that PDM has nurtured. The groups formed under PDM extend beyond economic empowerment; they create safe spaces for members to connect, support one another, and build lasting friendships. Members celebrate together and come together in solidarity and during challenging times, fostering a spirit of collective

resilience. Nantale, a member of the Hard Corn group, shared her story as well:

*Last month, I lost a relative, and my group members were incredibly supportive. They pooled money to assist with the burial arrangements, hired a car, and even attended the burial in my village, Rakai.*

Similarly, Simuka, who operates a tomato and vegetable stall, reflected on the group's impact:

*Apart from coming together to access the PDM funds, we have gone further to maintain our friendship. We even decided to form a credit and savings group where each member contributes 20,000 Ugandan shillings (approximately \$9) weekly. It may seem small, but we believe we will achieve great things together. After all, one by one makes a bundle.*

The chairperson of the Hard Corn group highlighted how their maize cultivation project has brought members closer:

*The land we rented to cultivate maize has united us deeply. For example, when we go to the fields, we prepare meals together and share them after our work. We have visited each other's homes and now feel like a happy, big family. Just being there for one another is part of our plan.*

Nankiga, a member of the Snack B group, shared a personal milestone:

*During my son's graduation, all the group members contributed to the function and helped me with the preparations. Now, I have people I can truly call friends. We come from different parts of Uganda, but the PDM program have united us. This is very encouraging and impressive.*

The testimonies from PDM group members demonstrate how the initiative has gone beyond economic empowerment to foster meaningful social bonds. By promoting mutual support, shared goals,

and trust, these groups have significantly increased social capital and enhanced community cohesion.

### Theme 8: Promotion of Local Economic Development

Promoting local economic development (LED) is crucial for improving livelihoods, reducing poverty, and fostering sustainable growth. LED initiatives have demonstrated their effectiveness through targeted support for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), as seen in testimonies from various beneficiaries. PDM has been instrumental in enabling these successes by providing financial support, training, and other resources. PDM has also encouraged members to participate in community projects, leading to knowledge-sharing and skill development. Nalunga, a member of the mushroom group, shared her success story:

*These days I am invited to different places to train other groups in mushroom growing, and from this, I have made a lot of money. When I am taken out to train others, I charge between 50,000-100,000 Ugandan shillings (approximately \$13-\$26). Apart from accessing funds from PDM, I now have knowledge that I share with others but at a small fee.*

Nalunga's experience demonstrates how skill dissemination can create economic opportunities and foster community growth.

The chairperson of Snack A group highlighted the role of innovative initiatives in creating new opportunities for members:

*Some members in our group were invited two months back to participate in a Rolex competition, and one of our members emerged the winner. They gave him cooking oil and baking flour which has been a big push to his business. This initiative is opening opportunities and facilitating local economic development.*

Such competitions not only showcase local talent but also create platforms for networking and resource access, further driving economic development.

Lutale, a member of the tomatoes and vegetable group, emphasized the importance of supporting local producers:

*When you get PDM funds and you buy produce from other Ugandans to support your business, we call it BUBU—Buy Uganda and Build Uganda—which is part of economic development and socio-economic development.*

This principle fosters a circular economy by encouraging local production and consumption, ultimately enhancing economic resilience and self-reliance. The majority of respondents reported significant improvements in their lives within two years of PDM implementation. However, some members suggested increasing the funds available through PDM to two million Ugandan shillings, arguing that this would guarantee even greater development outcomes.

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The Parish Development Model (PDM) is a recent initiative in Uganda aimed at addressing poverty and improving livelihoods through localized development programs. A growing body of scholarly research highlights the benefits of PDM to beneficiaries, emphasizing its positive impact on grassroots poverty reduction, local economic development, and income generation (Kayizzi-Mugerwa, 2024; Kattel, & Mohan, 2021). PDM's focus on microfinance, agribusiness development, and other income-generating projects aligns with community needs, offering vital economic opportunities (Arora, 2024). Furthermore, PDM empowers marginalized groups, including women, youth, and persons with disabilities, by providing access to resources and opportunities for skill development (Bbale et al., 2023). This approach aims to reduce inequality and promote social justice,

enabling these groups to participate in decision-making processes and influence the development agenda within their communities (Bell, & Reed, 2022).

A significant benefit of PDM is the improvement in access to essential services such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure (Gizaw et al., 2022). Establishing parish-level development hubs ensures that services are closer to beneficiaries, reducing barriers to access, particularly in rural areas where access to services has traditionally been limited (Kayizzi-Mugerwa, 2024). PDM strengthens local governance and encourages active community participation in the planning and execution of development projects (Kyambadde, n.d.). This participatory approach ensures that interventions are more responsive to the actual needs of beneficiaries and fosters a sense of ownership among community members, enhancing the sustainability of development projects. Scholars like Rwigema (2022) highlight PDM's role in enhancing education and skills development at the parish level.

PDM facilitates capacity-building programs offering both formal and informal education, vocational training, and business development courses, enabling beneficiaries to acquire new skills and improve employability. PDM promotes sustainability by integrating local knowledge and involving community members in managing development resources (Medeiros, & van der Zwet, 2020). Tailoring interventions to the specific needs of each parish ensures that development outcomes are sustainable, and beneficiaries are equipped to manage them independently over time (Rwigema, 2022). The benefits of PDM are multifaceted, and its implementation has the potential to drive transformative change in Uganda's rural communities. By focusing on poverty reduction, empowerment, service delivery, education, and local governance, PDM demonstrates the potential of development programs to improve the quality of life for beneficiaries. Scholars emphasize the

importance of local ownership and active participation in ensuring interventions meet the unique needs of each parish, contributing to sustainable and inclusive development outcomes.

### **Strengths and Limitations of the Study**

This study provides a foundational framework to enhance the implementation of the Parish Development Model (PDM), aligning with Uganda's strategic objective of achieving middle-income status. Through its qualitative approach, this research offers nuanced insights into the experiences and perspectives of stakeholders involved in the PDM, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of the program's dynamics.

However, to further elucidate the PDM's impact, future research endeavors should prioritize quantitative data analysis and focus on rural areas. Quantitative studies could systematically assess measurable outcomes, such as income levels, employment rates, and productivity improvements among PDM beneficiaries. Moreover, concentrating on rural areas would facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities faced by these communities.

Comparative analyses of the PDM's effectiveness in urban and rural settings could provide critical insights into the factors influencing its success, ultimately informing strategies for targeted interventions. By adopting a mixed-methods approach, future research can build upon this study's findings, offering a more robust and generalizable understanding of the PDM's impact on socio-economic development in Uganda.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This article concludes that the Parish Development Model (PDM) has demonstrated considerable potential in driving socio-economic transformation among beneficiaries. Key benefits identified include enhanced access to financial resources, increased community involvement, and

opportunities for income generation and poverty reduction. By targeting grassroots communities, the PDM empowers individuals and households to engage in productive activities, fostering economic self-reliance. However, despite its promising outcomes, the PDM's full impact is contingent upon addressing implementation challenges and ensuring consistent stakeholder support. Notably, technical stakeholders must streamline bureaucratic processes to reduce delays and associated costs. Currently, beneficiaries incur significant financial strain due to cumbersome prerequisites, which undermine the model's poverty alleviation objectives. Furthermore, the mindset pillar of the PDM requires effective implementation. Many beneficiaries prioritize accessing funds over utilizing them for productive, self-development purposes. Consequently, sensitization and education campaigns are necessary to guide beneficiaries on responsible and strategic resource utilization for economic growth.

Additionally, politicization of PDM operations must be mitigated to ensure equitable access to resources. The funds are intended for all Ugandans, regardless of tribe or political affiliation. Ensuring fairness and inclusivity will enable the PDM to serve its purpose as a unifying tool for national development. Addressing these challenges will facilitate the PDM's meaningful contribution to achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 1: "End poverty in all its forms everywhere." It will also align with Uganda's National Development Plan (NDP), particularly its emphasis on eradicating poverty and promoting inclusive growth. Ultimately, with streamlined processes, enhanced beneficiary education, and depoliticized implementation, the PDM can transform livelihoods, reduce poverty, and drive sustainable socio-economic development across Uganda.

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