

# Government Wealth Creation Projects in Uganda: Are They for Economic Empowerment or Political Expediency? A Citizen-Centric Perspective

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**Abstract:** The Government of Uganda (GOU) has invested in Wealth Creation Projects (WCPs) since 1986, aiming to reduce poverty and enhance economic empowerment. Previous research has assessed these projects largely in terms of implementation, progress, challenges, citizen participation, and socioeconomic impact. However, limited scholarly attention has been given to the political motives behind their initiation, particularly from a citizen perspective. This article addresses this gap by analysing whether citizens perceive WCPs as instruments of economic empowerment or political expediency. Guided by empowerment theory and political clientelism, the study draws on a cross-sectional comparative survey of household heads in three rural districts—Kaliro (N = 350), Kibaale (N = 300), and Luweero (N = 325)—representing eastern, western, and central Uganda. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analysed through one-way ANOVA. Findings indicate that while citizens recognize elements of economic empowerment, they strongly perceive political expediency as the dominant driver of WCPs. The study concludes that the credibility and effectiveness of such projects will remain limited unless government reduces political manipulation and prioritises genuine empowerment outcomes.

## I. Introduction

Governments all over the world initiate projects to pursue different political motives, which may be divided in three broad categories. First, the motive may be to genuinely empower citizens in which case government initiates projects to enable citizens to overcome poverty and improve their welfare by themselves regardless of their diversity differences (Blanken *et al.*, 2025; Sun *et al.*, 2025). Second, the motive may be political expediency in which case the incumbent government initiates projects as instruments for patronage and clientelism intended to build a political base necessary to win elections and hold on to power for as long as possible (Apuuli, 2025; Upward & Wright, 2024; Sweid, 2021; Mengotti & Gago-Cortés, 2019). Third, the motive may be economic empowerment mixed with political expediency (Okpanachi & Mathieu, 2024; Addison *et al.*, 2016).

Political motives that underlie initiation of projects by incumbent governments have been analysed in previous research (Zuo *et al.*, 2023; Wang & Guo, 2022; Diaz-Cayeros *et al.*, 2016). These studies motives have however, not received much scholarly attention in the context of Wealth Creation Projects (WCPs) initiated by the Government of Uganda (GOU), especially from the perspective of ordinary citizens. Previous research on WCPs has tended to analyse them from the project management, parliamentary political rhetoric, socioeconomic and econometric perspectives (Arinaitwe & Ariyo, 2023; Kyambadde, 2022; Ejang, 2021; Kyambadde, 2019). Therefore, the citizen-centric perspective on whether WCPs are initiated to empower citizens to overcome poverty as the GOU presents them to the public or for political expediency is still understudied. This dearth has not been addressed despite the fact that the sitting GOU has initiated different WCPs for close to four decades.

When the incumbent GOU assumed power in 1986, over a half of the population of Ugandan ordinary citizens (56%) were living in conditions of abject poverty (Omona, 2021). Indeed, out of the estimated total population of 15.47 million Ugandans at the time, 8.76 million were living below the poverty line of \$1 (Kabuye & Mukasa, 2019). This widespread poverty had been created by the economic decay that resulted from the economic sanctions that the West had imposed on Idi Amin's military autocracy coupled with gross macroeconomic mismanagement as well as the colossal corruption, high inflation and internal civil conflict that characterised Obote II and Tito Okello governments (Jaywant, 2014; Sejjaaka, 2004). Following its original 10-Points Programme, the GOU embarked on economic recovery guided by the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) it had designed to guide national economic rehabilitation and development. This plan focused on promoting democracy, utilities and infrastructure development, privatisation and liberalisation of the economy to make it private-sector led, and most of all, introduction of Wealth Creation Projects (WCPs) intended to enable households to shift from subsistence to the money economy (Wandawa, 2024).

The GOU has implemented several WCPs, including the pioneering Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of the War-Ravaged Luweero Triangle Project initiated in 1987 followed by the *Entandikwa* Scheme launched in 1990 with the aim of providing seed capital for reducing rural poverty at household level (Katusiime, 2022). Other introduced WCPs included: the National Agricultural Advisory Services Programme (NAADS) initiated in 2001 with a goal of reducing poverty by empowering subsistence farmers with skills and inputs for improving agricultural practices, farm productivity, output commercialisation and subsequent household incomes (Mpangwire *et al.*, 2023; Benin *et al.*, 2018). The GOU also introduced the Prosperity for All, Poverty Action Fund (PAF), Special Grants for Persons with Disabilities, Social Assistance Grant for Empowerment (SAGE), Northern Uganda Reconstruction Project (NURP), and Operation Wealth Creation (OWC) (Scott *et al.*, 2016). Other GOU-initiated WCPs were the Youth Development Fund (YDF), Youth Livelihood Project (YLP), Uganda Women Entrepreneurship project (UWEP), Skilling Uganda, the Four-Acre Model project, and the Generating Growth Opportunities and Productivity for Women Enterprises (GROW) (Ntakyio & Van Den Berg, 2022). Other initiated WCPs were: the Uganda Cooperative Savings and Credit Union (UCSCU) whose aim was to finance the Savings and Credit Cooperative Organizations (SACCOs) formed by small and medium scale enterprises, and Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Programme (UWEP) (Onen, 2023). The GOU further introduced the *Emyooga* in 2018 and the Parish Development Model (PDM) in 2022.

Common to all the WCPs that the GOU has been initiating is that they are presented to the general public as initiatives for eradicating poverty by empowering poor citizens with start-up capital in the form of capital assets, which include seed finance, productive hands-on skills, seedlings and start-up services needed to facilitate these citizens to create jobs, improve their productivity, shift from the subsistence to the money economy, and increase household incomes (Kayizzi-Mugerwa, 2024; Kalyesubula, 2019). Uganda's national abject poverty level has been reducing during the period the GOU has initiated the WCPs. Uganda's poverty line is estimated at \$1.04 (World Bank, 2025). Ugandans who are unable to earn or spend \$1.04 or its equivalent in local currency are considered to be below this poverty line (Nafula *et al.*, 2025). The available statistics reveal that these Ugandans were 56% of the 15 million people in Uganda in 1982, declined to 53% of the 33.4 million Ugandans in 2011, to 35.5% of the 42.3 million Ugandans in 2022/23, to 33% of the 43.7 Ugandans in 2023/24 and to 16.1% of the 45.8 million Ugandans – equivalent to 7 million people in 2024/25 (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2024, 2025). While these national statistics indicate that poverty has been declining, empirical studies indicate mixed results about the contribution of the WCPs on poverty reduction at the local community level. Illustrations abound.

Wandawa's (2024) study indicates that WCPs reduced poverty in Bukiendo Sub County in Mbale District in eastern Uganda. Mpangwire *et al.* (2023) found a link by which WCPs reduced poverty among dairy farmers in Mbarara District. Similarly, Kyambadde's (2022) findings suggest that WCPs moderately reduced poverty in terms of the progress it had registered in achieving the set wealth creation objectives. Ejang (2021) observed that WCPs reduced poverty among farmers in Apac District in northern Uganda. Omona (2021) found that SACCOs contributed to poverty reduction. In contrast, Katusiime's (2022) findings indicate that WCPs did not contribute significantly to poverty reduction in Rubaya Sub-County in Kabale District. Similarly, Arinaitwe and Ariyo (2023) found no significant link between WCPs programme and poverty reduction in Kirima Sub-County, Kanungu District. Likewise, Elaete (2021) found no significant link between WCPs and poverty reduction among beneficiaries in Atatur sub-county, Kumi district.

The empirical evidence presented above demonstrates that WCPs have not reduced poverty as uniformly across Uganda as their objectives indicate. There are marked disparities, which previous research has attributed to different factors including uneven distribution of the WCPs, their poor implementation characterised by poor quality inputs and weak coordination coupled with colossal corruption, challenging local terrain and soils, poor infrastructure, natural hazards, limited access to markets, weak farmer participation, and insufficient financing, among others (Kayizzi-Mugerwa, 2024; Crispa, 2023; Kyambadde, 2023; Katusiime, 2022; Omona, 2021; Robert & Katusiimeh, 2018). A close examination of these causes suggests that the political motives underlying government initiation of WCPs are not among them. One may argue that these motives are the stated objectives of the WCPs and are therefore, so obvious that they do not need any scholarly effort to understand. While this argument may not be dispelled, it ignores a view that some of the projects that governments initiated are intended to serve not necessarily their stated objectives, but a hidden agenda, also referred to as latent or unstated political motive (Schib *et al.*, 2025; Stirling, 2024; Hudon & Floricel, 2023; Ali *et al.*, 2021; Akwei *et al.*, 2020; Nisar & Bashir, 2020). It is in this sense that the objective of this article is to investigate whether, from the citizen-centric perspective, political expediency, is among the latent motives the GOU has for initiating WCPs.

## **II. Literature review**

This section covers the two theories – empowerment theory and theory of political clientelism – which underpin this study as well as a review of empirical studies on empowerment and political expediency.

**2.1.1 Empowerment theory:** The empowerment theory was proposed by Solomon (1976) from the concept of empowerment, which she had coined in her groundbreaking seminal publication titled, *Black empowerment: Social work in oppressed communities*. Further developed by Zimmerman (2000), this theory advances a view that people can be exposed to mindset or attitude change and be equipped with knowledge, skills and other capital assets, which enable them to improve themselves productively from a position of powerlessness or disadvantage to a position of advantage. This theory advances five assertions on which its rationale is based. The first assertion is that personal powerlessness is due to exclusion and oppression of the surrounding environment; the second is that there are barriers in the social environment that prevent people from being able to perform, but the barriers can be changed (Xiyu & Shuwen, 2020). The third assertion is that individual capabilities can be continuously increased through social interaction; the fourth is that the service recipients are capable, valuable, and have access to capacity enhancement; and the relationship between empowerment agents and clients is a partnership (Huang & Huang, 2023; Xiyu & Shuwen, 2020).

Applied to this study, a position of disadvantage or personal powerlessness explained in the first assertion was operationalised as a situation of abject poverty in which any Ugandan household lives as a result of exclusion from the money economy. The barriers explained in the second assertion were contextualised as lack of capital resources such as a productive mindset, practical knowledge and skills, constructive social networks, financial resources and others needed by any household to shift from subsistence to the money economy. The GOU could change these barriers by initiating WCPs. The fourth assertion was operationalised as the assumption that households had the potential that could be enhanced through WCPs that could increase access to necessary capital resources. The fifth assertion was applied by assuming that the GOU and households worked as partners with government providing necessary capital resources and households reciprocating by using these resources to start income-generating projects for overcoming poverty.

Generally, the empowerment theory is about genuine enablement of citizens by increasing their access to capital assets that can make it possible for them to improve themselves from a position of deprivation to a position of advantage. The theory could therefore guide analysing whether or not the political motive of the GOU's initiation of WCPs was genuine achievement of their stated economic objectives. The theory of empowerment is however, criticised for being more theoretical than practical because it assumes perfect conditions in which empowerment promoters are impartial in distributing capital resources that enable citizens to salvage themselves from powerlessness to a position of advantage without discrimination (Diaz & Paceley, 2024; Joseph, 2019). However, it cannot guide the analysis of other motives such as political expediency. For this reason, the empowerment theory was complemented by the theory of political clientelism.

**2.1.2 The theory of political clientelism.** This theory was developed to explain political behaviour that emerges from a reciprocal exchange between politicians and voters (da Silva, 2024; Bardhan, 2021). The theory explains the swap characterised by an asymmetric power relation in which politicians offer gifts to citizens as means of persuading them to reciprocate by voting for the politicians (da Silva, 2024). The exchange also involves politicians making pre-election promises for rewarding voters in post-election period in reciprocation for their support that translates into winning an election (Gisselquist *et al.*, 2024). It explains actions politicians in the form of giving practical benefits or immediate advantages to citizens, sometimes at the cost of a politician's principles or the common good in exchange for votes (Bardhan, 2021). In this study, this theory was applied to analyse whether WCPs were initiated as gifts for persuading citizens to vote for the politicians in the ruling party, or as pre-election promises fulfilled in the post-election period to reciprocate political support citizens give to the politicians to continue in government. Clientelism also claims that citizens engage in politics as a vehicle for demanding social recognition in the form of not only being heard by their leaders, respected as agents in the political process, included in the decision-making process and protected from harm, but also maximising political benefits from the leaders (Klaus *et al.*, 2023). In this study, this theory guided the analysis of whether the GOU initiated WCPs as political benefits arising from demands citizens make after voting for it.

The theory of political clientelism asserts that individual politicians or political parties in government distribute resources, jobs in civil service or political appointments, goods, services and favours on the condition that their recipients reciprocate by voting for them to keep in power (Soni *et al.*, 2025; Hicken & Nathan, 2020). Therefore, the distribution of these maternal benefits is conditional, although it can also be unconditional (Gherghina & Volintiru, 2023). Conditional benefits are provided by political leaders or parties to voters in direct exchange for political support expressed in the form of continued voting for them to stay in power (Bardhan *et al.*, 2024). Unconditional benefits are not explicitly exchanged for political support, but are used for political mobilisation, which translates into indirect exchange for the same support (Xu & Dai, 2024).

Applying the preceding assertions to this study, the theory of political clientelism implies that a politician or party in government can initiate WCPs in the post-election period unconditionally, but for political mobilisation intended to prepare citizens to vote for those already in power in the next election. The theory also implies that WCPs can also be initiated to fulfil pre-election promises made to citizens, but in reciprocation for their votes. The theory further suggests that politicians or the party in government can initiate WCPs to reward citizens in stronghold areas for voting for them, or to persuade them to vote for keeping the politicians or ruling party in power. This theory is however, criticised for being populist in that it fails to distinguish between genuine government-efforts to promote economic growth and citizens' welfare by claiming that whatever government does is directly or indirectly intended to exchange public resources with political support (Bardhan, 2024; Bardhan & Mookherjee, 2023; Pellicer & Wegner, 2023; Staffan *et al.*, 2022). Despite this criticism, this theory underpinned the analysis of the extent to which the GOU initiates WCPs for political expediency.

**2.2 Political expediency:** Different scholars have analysed political expediency. Cohen *et al.* (2025), for instance, observed that political expediency involves the use of the national purse to keep the ruling elite in power instead of distributing them to promote genuine and long-term socio-economic development evenly. According to Finan and Mazzocco (2021), the ruling elites apply political expediency by distributing national resources according to voting patterns, allocating more resources to areas that highly vote and enable the incumbent government to win elections and less of resources to areas in which the sitting government loses elections. These researchers suggested that such political expediency could be minimised by imposing a one-term limit and redistricting. To Anaxagorou *et al.* (2020), politicians and parties apply political expediency to garner political support for winning elections to remain in power by even diverting foreign aid donated for even national progress to develop regions with a high concentration of political support, to areas targeted to change their political support from Opposition to the ruling party.

Similarly, Okpanachi and Mathieu (2024) analysed the tension between national unity and political expediency and found that instead of implementing policies that promote this unity by blurring differences between majority and minority identities, politicians apply political expediency to side with and resource groups that re-elect them to retain power. To Makanya (2023), budgetary allocation can start as a process facilitating genuine and uniform national development, but it can also be conducted to promote political expediency for keeping those in government in power. Estrada and Bastida's (2021) study indicates that because voters and local government leaders prefer increased budgetary share and greater transfers from higher levels of government have more chance of being re-elected. When it comes to political factors, progressive parties and mayors with a majority have more chance of being re-elected.

However, while Cohen *et al.* (2025) made this observation in the context of Angola, Anaxagorou *et al.* (2020) analysed how political expediency led to diversion and misallocation of Chinese foreign aid for political expediency in Ghana. Finan and Mazzocco (2021) analysed political expediency in the context of Brazil. Okpanachi and Mathieu's (2024) interest was in how political expediency promoted re-election of the politicians in government at the expense of promoting cultural diversity while Makanya's (2023) study focused on how political expediency intended to keep the Zuma government in power influenced national resource allocation in the context of South Africa. Estrada and Bastida's (2021) study was in the context of Honduras. The question thus, that these studies left unanswered is whether their observations hold in the context of Uganda or not. This is the question answered in this paper.

**2.3 Economic empowerment:** Scholars who have shown interest in analysing economic empowerment through government projects include Mambosho *et al.* (2024) whose findings indicate that government projects that involved the provision of start-up capital, financial literacy training, technical skilling, and business capacity building had a statistically significant influence on economic empowerment of the youth and women to enable them to reduce poverty through entrepreneurial activities. Mambosho *et al.*'s (2024) study was however, conducted about Tanzanian government projects for women and youth economic empowerment for poverty reduction in Tanzania in general and in Arusha in particular. Similarly, Ukeyima's (2024) study indicates that government educational projects successfully equipped ordinary citizens with transferable skills, thereby empowering them to participate in broader economic activities, create jobs and increase incomes that enabled them to reduce poverty at household and national levels. Ukeyima's (2024) study was however, conducted about government educational projects for economic empowerment of the youths in Nigeria, but not Uganda. Likewise, Gibbons *et al.* (2021) found that government projects for improving economic outcomes in deprived neighbourhoods can create jobs but they do not cause significant effect on employment status of ordinary citizens in general. These researchers however, made these observations in the context of the UK.

Generally, despite not being conducted in the context of Uganda, the preceding studies demonstrate that governments can initiate projects for genuine economic empowerment of their citizens. In Uganda however, empirical studies reveal mixed results. Some studies have shown that government projects empower ordinary citizens

economically (Wandawa, 2024; Mpangwire *et al.*, 2023; Kyambadde, 2022; Ejang, 2021; Omona, 2021). Others have contrasted this view by showing that the projects do not have a significant effect on ordinary citizens' economic empowerment (Arinaitwe & Ariyo, 2023; Katusiime, 2022; Elaete, 2021). These contradicting results suggest that not all government projects could be initiated in Uganda for economic empowerment. Using the research methods explained in the next section, this paper analyses whether the other motive is political expediency.

### III. Research Methods

The study employed a cross-sectional comparative survey whose study population involved ordinary citizens living in three rural districts, which included Kibaale in western Uganda, Kaliro in eastern Uganda and Luweero in central Uganda. Only rural districts were considered because the incumbent GOU was more popular in rural than in urban areas and also because most of WCPs it initiated targeted ordinary citizens in rural areas more than those in urban areas (Ninsiima *et al.*, 2021; Tumwesigye *et al.*, 2021). According to the National Census results published by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2024), there were 172,578 households in Kaliro District, 55,887 households in Kibaale District and 46,630 households in Luweero District. From these figures, the sample, which consisted of household heads, was selected at the 95% level of significance after determining its size per district using Slovin's formula below.

$$n = \frac{N}{[1 + N(e)^2]}$$

*n* = Sample size that is desired

*N* = Target population (given in the district population)

*e* = Margin of error (at 95% Confidence Interval, i.e., *e* = 5% or 0.05)

Therefore, for Kaliro District,  $n = \frac{172578}{[1 + 172578(0.05)^2]} = 399.07502688 \approx 399$

For Kibaale District,  $n = \frac{55887}{[1 + 55887(0.05)^2]} = 397.15742533 \approx 397$

For Luweero District,  $n = \frac{46630}{[1 + 46630(0.05)^2]} = 396.59791622 \approx 397$

The households were selected from 10 randomly selected parishes of each district to give each parish and each household an equal chance of participating in the study based on the view that the WCPs initiated by GOU targeted all parishes and households without discrimination. The expected sample was however not realised. Household heads who participated were *N* = 350 from Kaliro District, *N* = 300 from Kibaale District and *N* = 325 from Luweero District. Data was collected from the selected households using a self-administered structured questionnaire whose content validity index was 0.868 and Cronbach Alpha coefficient was 0.844. The data was analysed using one-way ANOVA in order to determine how respondents assessed the motives of the WCPs initiated by the GOU and whether the assessment differed cross the selected districts.

### IV. Findings and Discussion

The objective of this study was to establish whether the GOU initiated WCPs for genuine economic empowerment or for political expediency. This objective was met by asking the selected household heads to use a 5-point Likert scale of responses running from Strongly Disagree (1) through Disagree (2), Neutral (3) and Agree (A) to Strongly Agree (SA) to indicate their assessment of the motives of these projects. Results obtained from descriptive and ANOVA analysis of the responses are summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1: Political expediency and economic empowerment as assessed by ordinary citizens**

Indicators	ANOVA statistics						
	Districts	N	Mean	Std.	df	F	Sig.
<b>Political Expediency:</b> Politicians in government promise to start wealth creation projects for only citizens who vote for them to continue in power.	Kaliro	350	4.55	.111	2	.361	.698
	Kibaale	300	4.68	.232	972		
	Luweero	325	4.79	.222	974		

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Incumbent politicians start wealth creation projects only when they are rewarding citizens who vote for them to remain in government.	Kaliro	350	4.62	.244	2	.746	.475
	Kibaale	300	4.53	.254	972		
	Luweero	325	4.58	.309	974		
Citizens vote for politician only after he or she has started a wealth creation project for them.	Kaliro	350	4.63	.307	2	1.331	.265
	Kibaale	300	4.51	.040	972		
	Luweero	325	4.50	.144	974		
Politicians in government release budgeted wealth creation funds during election campaigns to woo citizens to vote for them again.	Kaliro	350	4.69	.155	2	2.319	.100
	Kibaale	300	4.70	.133	972		
	Luweero	325	4.79	.155	974		
Politicians in government distribute wealth creation resources to only citizens they are sure will vote for them again to remain in power.	Kaliro	350	4.69	.455	2	3.052	.048
	Kibaale	300	4.68	.487	972		
	Luweero	325	4.80	.501	974		
Politicians in government fund money-generating projects started by only the citizens who vote for them.	Kaliro	350	4.65	.654	2	1.410	.245
	Kibaale	300	4.67	.601	972		
	Luweero	325	4.76	.655	974		
Politicians in government use wealth creation funds to achieve short-term gains in form of boosting their popularity for winning elections.	Kaliro	350	4.79	.444	2	0.806	.448
	Kibaale	300	4.88	.431	972		
	Luweero	325	4.80	.409	974		
Politicians in government blame Opposition for sabotaging the success of wealth creation projects at household level.	Kaliro	350	4.92	.666	2	1.100	.334
	Kibaale	300	4.89	.348	972		
	Luweero	325	4.87	.542	974		
<b>Economic Empowerment:</b> Government of Uganda initiates training projects to genuinely equip citizens with hands-on skills needed to improve economic productivity	Kaliro	350	3.52	.523	2	1.140	.246
	Kibaale	300	3.67	.335	972		
	Luweero	325	3.50	.650	974		
Government of Uganda initiates training projects to genuinely equip citizens with practical knowledge needed to improve economic productivity	Kaliro	350	3.51	.676	2	1.546	.230
	Kibaale	300	3.64	.712	972		
	Luweero	325	3.50	.761	974		
Government of Uganda provides financial literacy to citizens to improve the basic financial management of their enterprises	Kaliro	350	3.60	.555	2	.004	.996
	Kibaale	300	3.60	.387	972		
	Luweero	325	3.61	.411	974		
Government of Uganda provides start-up financial capital to citizens to enable them to start new enterprises	Kaliro	350	3.64	.622	2	2.151	.118
	Kibaale	300	3.50	.606	972		
	Luweero	325	3.58	.655	974		
Government of Uganda provides ordinary farmers with farm inputs they need to improve their farm productivity	Kaliro	350	3.65	.538	2	1.310	.271
	Kibaale	300	3.55	.576	972		
	Luweero	325	3.58	.557	974		
Government of Uganda provides ordinary citizens with basic business management skills they need to manage the small businesses they start	Kaliro	350	3.65	.499	2	2.356	.096
	Kibaale	300	3.52	.511	972		
	Luweero	325	3.61	.588	974		
Government of Uganda initiates projects for genuinely mobilising citizens into viable savings groups whose enterprise capital can be boosted.	Kaliro	350	3.70	.701	2	1.948	.144
	Kibaale	300	3.57	.777	972		
	Luweero	325	3.62	.783	974		

All the F-values in Table 1 were not significant since their corresponding levels of significance (Sig.) were greater than the conventional 0.05. As illustrations, the F-value corresponding to 'Politicians in government promise to start wealth creation projects for only citizens who vote for them to continue in power' was not significant ( $F(2, 972) = .361, Sig. = .698 > 0.05$ ). Similarly, the F-value corresponding to 'Incumbent politicians start wealth creation projects only when they are rewarding citizens who vote for them to remain in government' was not significant ( $F(2, 972) = .746, Sig. = .475 > 0.05$ ). The same interpretation runs through all the results in Table 1. The insignificance of the F-values reveals that the selected citizens' assessment of whether the GOU initiated WCPs for political expediency or for genuine economic empowerment did not significantly differ as a result of the districts from which they were selected. Therefore, the political motives underlying the GOU's initiation of WCPs were assessed in the same way across the three selected districts.

A scrutiny of the mean values suggests that the difference was in how the respondents assessed the political motives. These mean values reveal that respondents strongly agreed to all the indicators of political expediency. Indeed, when rounded off to the nearest whole number, all the mean values corresponding to these indicators were close to '5', the code for 'strongly agree'. The respondents however, agreed to all the indicators of economic empowerment since all the corresponding mean values were close to '4' the code for 'agree', when rounded off to the nearest whole number. This difference suggests that although ordinary citizens showed that both motives underlay the GOU's initiation of WCPs, political expediency was more pronounced than genuine political empowerment. Moreover, all the standard deviations (Std.) were less than '1', suggesting low dispersion in the sample, which implies that the assessment the selected citizens provided as individuals did not scatter much from their average assessment as a whole sample. The results therefore, resonate with the observations made by earlier researchers such as Okpanachi and Mathieu (2024) and Addison *et al.* (2016) that governments initiate WCPs for both genuine political empowerment and political expediency. Consequently, the results confirm both empowerment theory as proposed by Solomon (1976) and further developed by Zimmerman (2000) and the theory of political clientelism developed to explain political behaviour that emerges from a reciprocal exchange between politicians and voters (da Silva, 2024; Bardhan, 2021).

Respondents supported the theory of political clientelism by strongly agreeing (Mean = 4.55 for Kaliro, 4.68 for Kibaale and 4.79 for Luweero), thereby showing that politicians in Uganda government demonstrated strong political expediency by promising to start wealth creation projects for only citizens who voted for them to continue in power. The respondents also gave credence to this theory by strongly agreeing (Mean = 4.62 for Kaliro, 4.53 for Kibaale and 4.58 for Luweero), thereby indicating that incumbent politicians started wealth creation projects only when they were rewarding citizens who vote for them to remain in government. Similarly, respondents strongly agreed (Mean = 4.69 for Kaliro, 4.70 for Kibaale and 4.79 for Luweero) that politicians in government released budgeted wealth creation funds during election campaigns to woo citizens to vote for them again.

In the same way, there was strong agreement that politicians in government distributed wealth creation resources to only citizens they are sure will vote for them again to remain in power; funded money-generating projects started by only the citizens who vote for them; used wealth creation funds to achieve short-term gains in the form of boosting their popularity for winning elections; and blamed the Opposition for sabotaging the success of wealth creation projects at household level. These results are in clear support of the theory of political clientelism, which explains that incumbent governments initiate projects such as WCPs in exchange for votes they want from citizens to keep them in power. Respondents also strongly agreed (Mean = 4.63 for Kaliro, 4.51 for Kibaale and 4.50 for Luweero), thereby showing that even the citizens voted for politicians only after the latter had started wealth creation projects for the former. Therefore, clientelism was two-way, which gives credence to the observation made by Klaus *et al.* (2023) that clientelism also involves citizens engaging in politics as a vehicle for maximising political benefits from the leaders.

The results also support the empowerment theory, but moderately by showing that respondents agreed, thereby the GOU initiated training projects to genuinely equip citizens with hands-on skills (Mean = 3.52 for Kaliro, 3.67 for Kibaale and 3.50 for Luweero) and practical knowledge (Mean = 3.51 for Kaliro, 3.64 for Kibaale and 3.50 for Luweero) needed to improve economic productivity. The same statistics indicate that the GOU provided financial literacy to citizens to improve the basic financial management of their enterprises, start-up financial capital to enable them to start new enterprises, farm inputs farmers needed to improve their farm productivity. The respondents also agreed that the GOU provided ordinary citizens with basic business management skills they need to manage the small businesses they start and initiated projects for genuinely mobilising citizens into viable savings groups whose enterprise capital can be boosted.

Clearly, the preceding results indicate that the GOU genuinely empowered ordinary citizens to improve themselves economically. The results therefore, concur with Mambosho *et al.*'s (2024) and Ukeyima's (2024) earlier findings that governments genuinely empower ordinary citizens genuinely by initiating projects that equip them with hands-on skills, practical knowledge, start-up financial and other forms of capital assets needed to enable them to improve themselves economically. Moderate agreement to this empowerment suggests however, that it did not feature as prominently as political expediency the citizens associated with the projects the GOU initiated to promote it.

## **V. Conclusion and recommendations**

The findings indicate that without differing significantly as a result of their districts, ordinary Ugandans feel that WCPs are initiated by the GOU as projects intended to achieve dual political motives, which include political expediency and economic empowerment. However, political expediency overshadows economic empowerment at the former features more prominently than the latter. From these findings, it is concluded that the GOU needs to eliminate the political expediency that ordinary citizens associate with WCPs and strengthen these projects' economic

empowerment motive. This requires the GOU to ensure that all the initiated WCPs achieve their stated economic goals as they are presented to citizens.

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