



From Evidence to Policy Action for Uganda's Growth

Lessons, impact and the road to Tenfold Growth

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Motivation

**At the 9th Economic Growth Forum,
someone asked:**

*These conferences are great, but is the government
implementing any of the policy ideas?*

By extension: Is evidence-based policymaking actually changing Uganda's economy?



I will account for...

- 1. WHAT EGF SAID**
- 2. WHAT GOVERNMENT DID**
- 3. WHAT CHANGED**
- 4. WHAT NEXT**



Why the Economic Growth Forum?

- 1 The challenge**

Government observed a decline in economic growth rates, which constrained revenue mobilisation, reduced the resources available for public investment and limited the financing of other priority areas, including the social sectors. This, in turn, made it more difficult to achieve the country's aspirations of transitioning from low-income to lower-middle-income status.
- 2 The response**

MoFPED and IGC launched the EGF in 2017 as an inclusive national forum for open, evidence-based dialogue.
- 3 The model**

Priority policy questions are defined; researchers and practitioners bring evidence; implementers test feasibility.
- 4 The institutional gain**

Recommendations feed into the budget calendar, NDPs and subsequent policy work.

Key Achievement: The forum has increased the whole of government focus on the importance of economic growth in the socioeconomic transformation process.



Nine editions have moved the growth conversation from *recovery to transformation*

The agenda has adapted to Uganda's changing constraints while remaining anchored in productivity, competitiveness and inclusion.

Foundations			Response		
2017	EGF I		2020	EGF IV	
Inclusive growth			COVID response		
Growth diagnosis; agriculture, industry, trade			Recovery, resilience and sector support		
2018	EGF II		2021	EGF V	
Budget + growth			Resurgent growth		
National Budget Conference; priority sectors			Regional integration, exports, climate		
2019	EGF III				
Shared prosperity					
Wider dissemination; high-level uptake					
Resilience			Transformation		
2022	EGF VI		2024	EGF VIII	
Self-sustaining economy			Structural transformation		
Domestic resilience and future shocks			Tenfold growth, cities, services, finance		
2023	EGF VII		2025	EGF IX	
Competitiveness			Compete in a changing world		
Tax, trade and climate mainstreaming			Revenue, spending, exports and green growth		



Takeaway #1

The first nine EGFs helped Uganda identify what constrains growth.

The next phase must be about execution: turning evidence into reforms, reforms into investment, and investment into productivity, exports, jobs and incomes



Strategies do not transform economies – implementation does

Three questions for today:

- 1 What did the EGF recommend?**
- 2 What has Government actually implemented — and what results followed?**
- 3 What must we now do differently to deliver Tenfold Growth?**



Key policy areas of Uganda's growth strategy since EGF 2017

EGF POLICY AREAS

ICT and Tchnology transfer

Revenue mobilisation

Public investment efficiency

Trade, tourism, and export competitiveness

Productive urbanisation

Climate resilience & green growth

Private sector development

Agro-industrialisation

Mineral, oil & gas

PRIORITIZED GROWTH SECTORS

1 Agro-industrialisation

2 Tourism

3 Minerals, oil & gas

4 ICT

TENFOLD GROWTH OUTCOMES

Higher productivity

Private investment

Higher-value exports

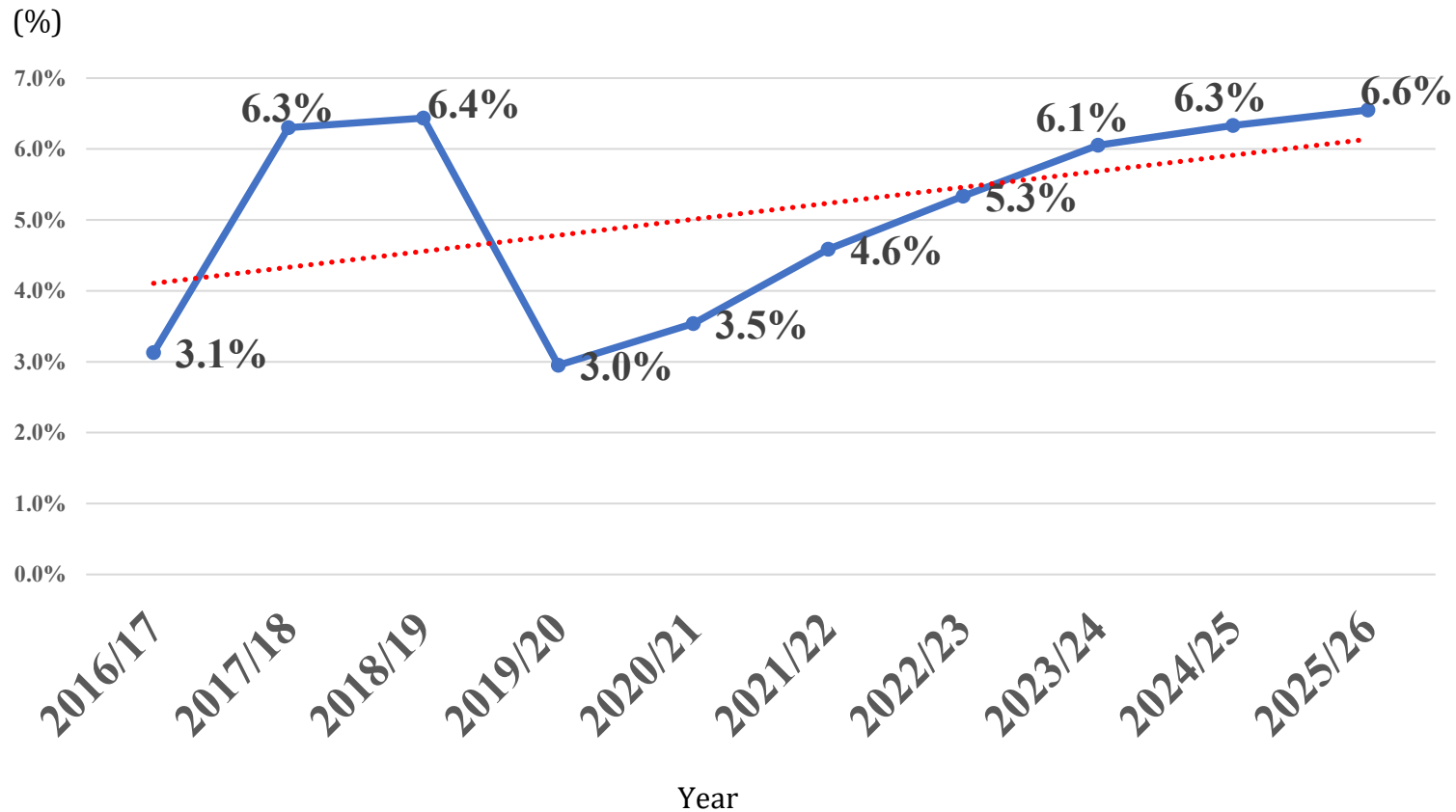
Jobs & incomes

Structural transformation



Uganda has restored growth. The challenge now is to raise its quality and speed.

Figure 1: Real GDP growth rate from 2017 to 2026



Source: MoFPED (2026).

SHOCKS

2016/17 drought and COVID-19 interrupted - but did not reverse the long-term trend.

RECOVERY

Growth recovered to above 6% by 2024, supported by macroeconomic resilience.

NEXT STEP

Convert stability into productivity, private investment, higher-value exports, jobs and structural transformation.



Takeaway #2

Recovery has been achieved: growth is back to above 6%.

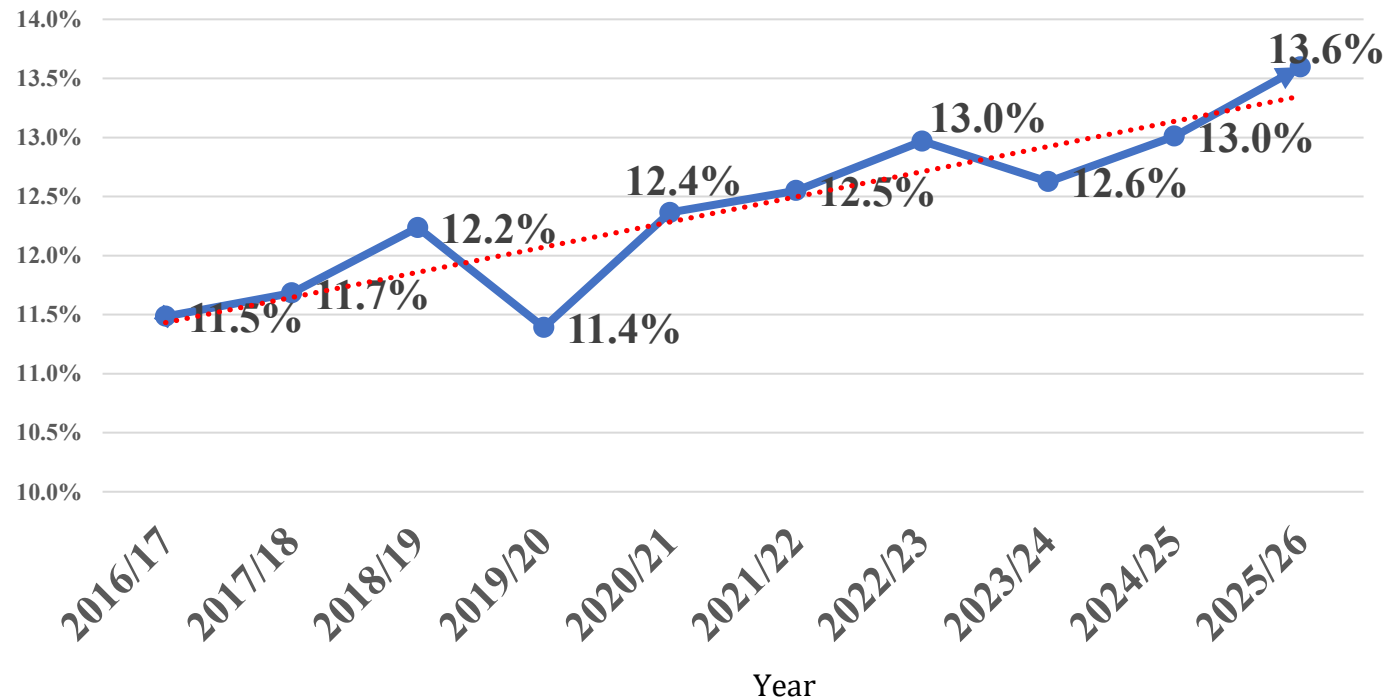
But Tenfold Growth requires productivity, investment, exports, and good jobs.



Policy Area 1 – From tax debate to stronger administration and scrutiny

Domestic revenue mobilisation has strengthened — but Tenfold Growth requires a much broader, fairer and more productive tax base.

Figure 2: Tax revenue (% GDP)



Source: MoFPED (2026).

Revenue target: 20% over the next five years.



Tax reforms have advanced significantly; the next test is deeper compliance, a broader base and better value for money.

EGF evidence has helped elevate compliance, tax incentives and value for money.

What the EGF advanced

Broader tax base

Strengthen compliance and domestic revenue mobilisation.

Better-designed incentives

Move toward more transparent, predictable and evidence-based tax incentives.

Greater scrutiny of tax expenditures

Assess the fiscal cost and value for money of exemptions and incentives.

Growth-friendly taxation

Mobilise more revenue while safeguarding formalisation, investment and competitiveness.

What government implemented

Digital tax administration

EFRIS and expanded online tax services.

Broader taxpayer registration

Improved registration and formalisation of taxpayers.

Tax expenditure monitoring

A coordinated framework to track tax measures, exemptions and incentives.

Stronger incentive scrutiny

More systematic assessment of whether incentives deliver value for money.

What changed — and what remains

Tax administration is assessed at 80% implementation. Digitalisation has strengthened compliance and revenue mobilisation.

Remaining priorities:

Deepen compliance.

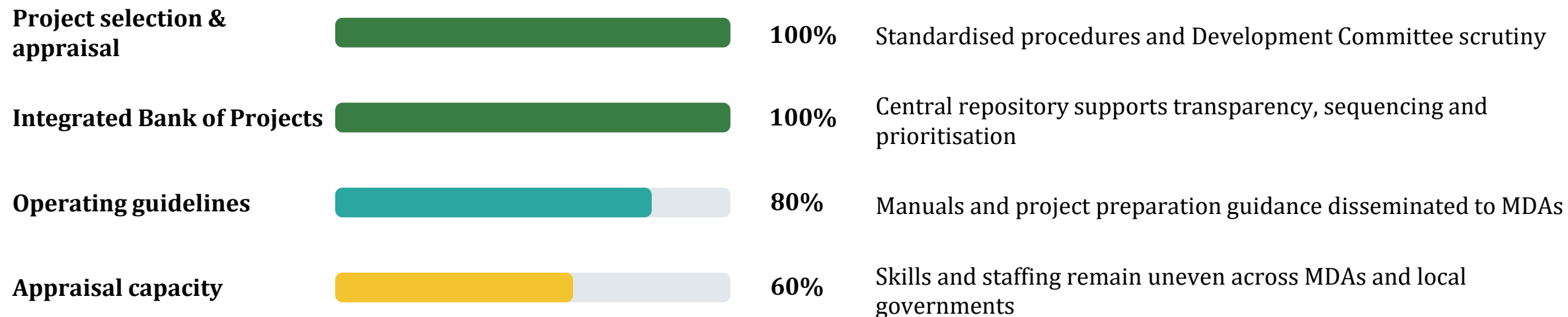
Broaden the effective tax base.

Strengthen evaluation of incentives, and continue building taxpayer trust.



Public investment: the architecture is stronger; execution must catch up

Government has improved project selection and appraisal, but growth depends on readiness, delivery and results.



The systems largely exist. Value now depends on enforcing readiness, delivery discipline and results.



Infrastructure has expanded. The test is whether it raises productivity.

+97%

Paved national roads

- 3,121 km in FY2012/13 → 6,133 km in FY2022/23.
- Share of the national road network paved increased from 15% → 29%.
- That is roughly a 97% increase in paved-road stock over a decade.

+54%

Generation capacity

- 1,361.6 MW in 2021 → 2,098.2 MW in 2025.
- Equivalent to a 54% increase in only five years.
- Looking over a longer horizon, capacity has more than doubled from ~850 MW in 2014 to more than 2,050 MW in 2025.

2×+

Public capital spending

More than doubled;
decade to FY20/21.



Takeaway #3

Uganda's PIM problem is no longer mainly the absence of systems. It is failure to enforce them.

Going forward: No readiness, no Budget; no lifecycle funding, no project; no performance, no additional allocation; and we shall measure outputs and outcomes, not absorption alone.



Policy Area 3 – Trade: Uganda’s export basket is becoming larger and more diversified

Figure 5: Exports of goods and services (% of GDP)

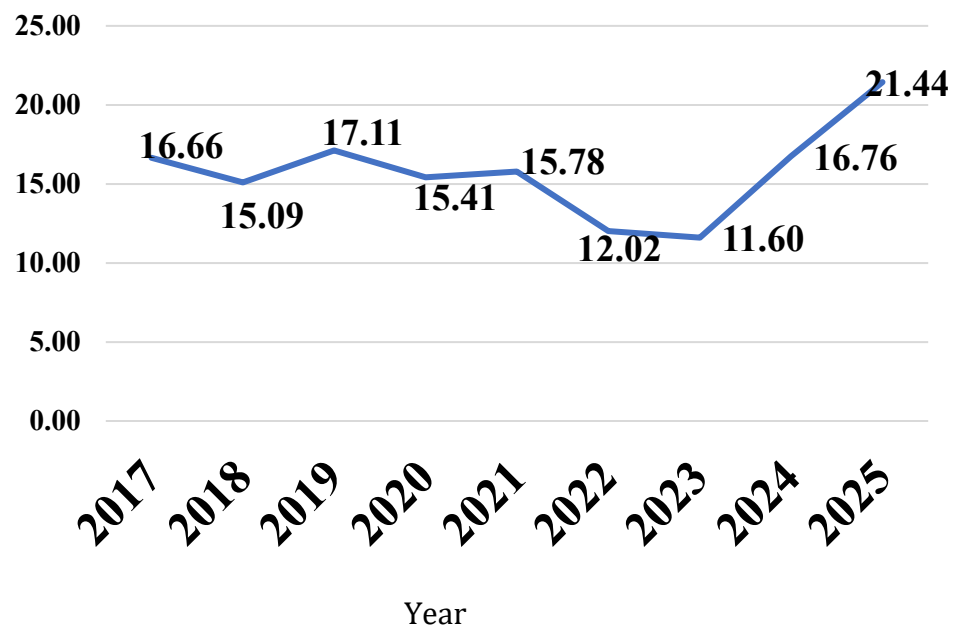
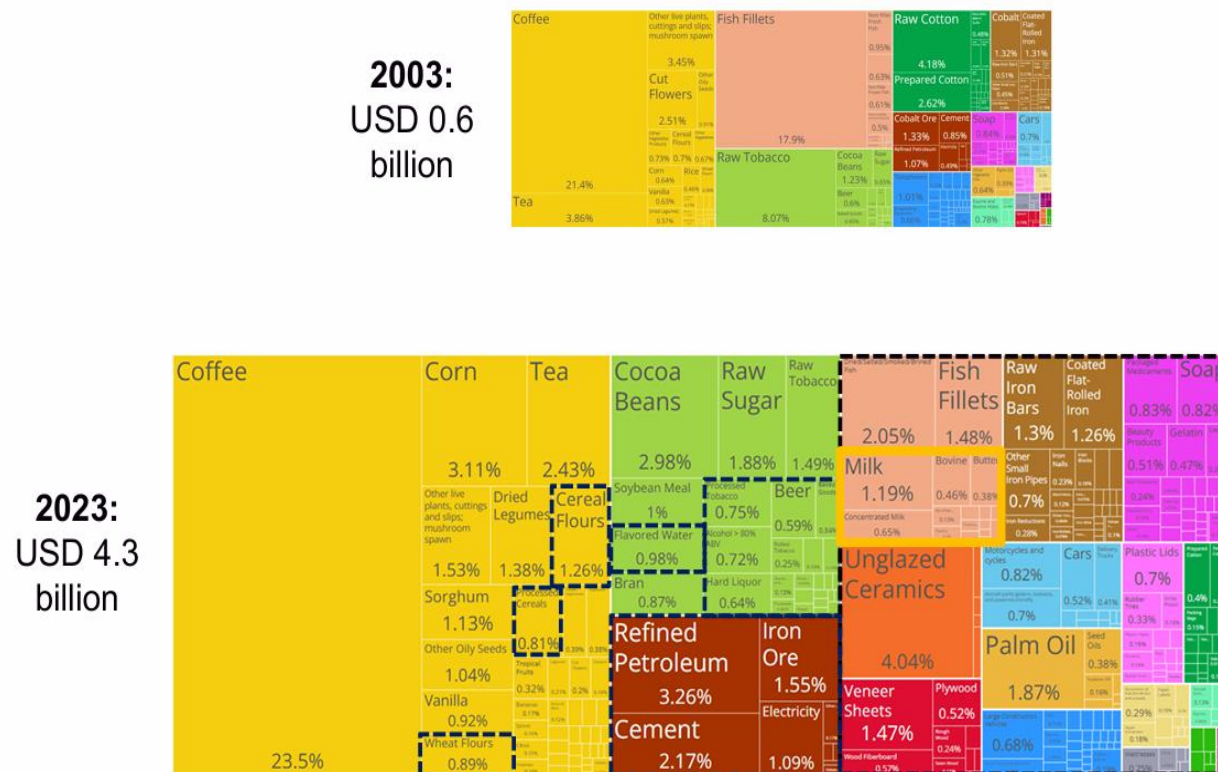


Figure 6: Composition of Uganda’s export basket, 2003 and 2023



Source: OEC (2025), excludes gold.



Trade reforms must move from facilitating trade to building competitive exporting firms

What the EGF advanced

Reduce the cost of trading by addressing non-tariff barriers domestically and regionally.

Strengthen regional integration and improve Uganda's position within the EAC trading framework.

Review the EAC Common External Tariff to support competitiveness while addressing tariff misclassification and sensitive products.

Digitalise import and export procedures through stronger electronic trade systems.

Improve firms' access to information on export procedures, standards, regulations and financing.

What government implemented

Expanded the Uganda Electronic Single Window (UESW) for electronic submission and processing of trade documentation.

Improved coordination across key agencies including URA, UNBS, MAAIF and NDA.

Implemented the Single Customs Territory, alongside ASYCUDA World and centralised document processing.

Along with EAC partner states, the government reviewed and implemented the latest EAC Common External Tariff.

Established the Uganda Trade Portal (MTIC/NTFC) and expanded export-information and standards awareness.

What changed — and what remains

Remaining priorities:

Completion of interoperability across all trade-related agencies.

Reduce persistent NTBs, especially around standards, certification and rules of origin.

Improve awareness of export requirements among MSMEs.

Ensure that trade policies and interventions result into more firms exporting and higher-value exports.



Trade facilitation has improved; now convert lower trade costs into more exporters and higher-value exports

76%

EAC Common External Tariff reform

Revised tariff structure adopted; some harmonization issues remain.

66%

Reduction of non-tariff barriers

Monitoring and resolution mechanisms strengthened, but new procedural barriers continue to arise.

62%

Uganda Electronic Single Window

22 of 30 target agencies/operators automated.

Import clearance for selected institutions fell from about 14 days to 4 days.

38%*

Exporter awareness & finance information

Outreach remains limited, especially for MSMEs.

*Ongoing programs have been rolled out (INVITE & ECD) .

The next test is firm-level: more competitive firms, more exporters and deeper participation in regional and global markets.



Urbanisation: cities must become production systems, not merely concentrations of people

Figure 7: Number of people living in urban and rural areas, Uganda (millions)

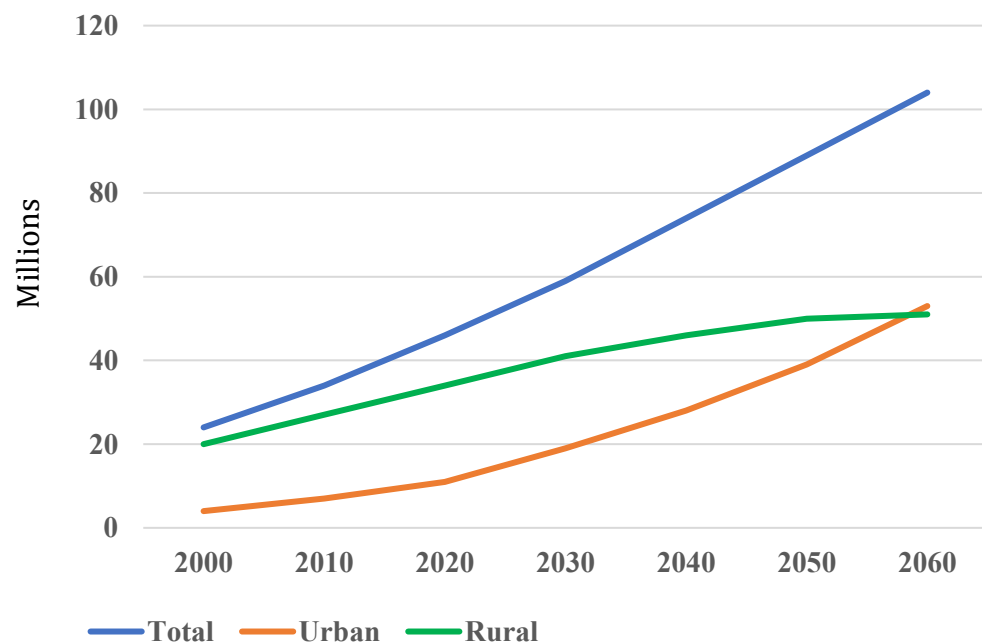
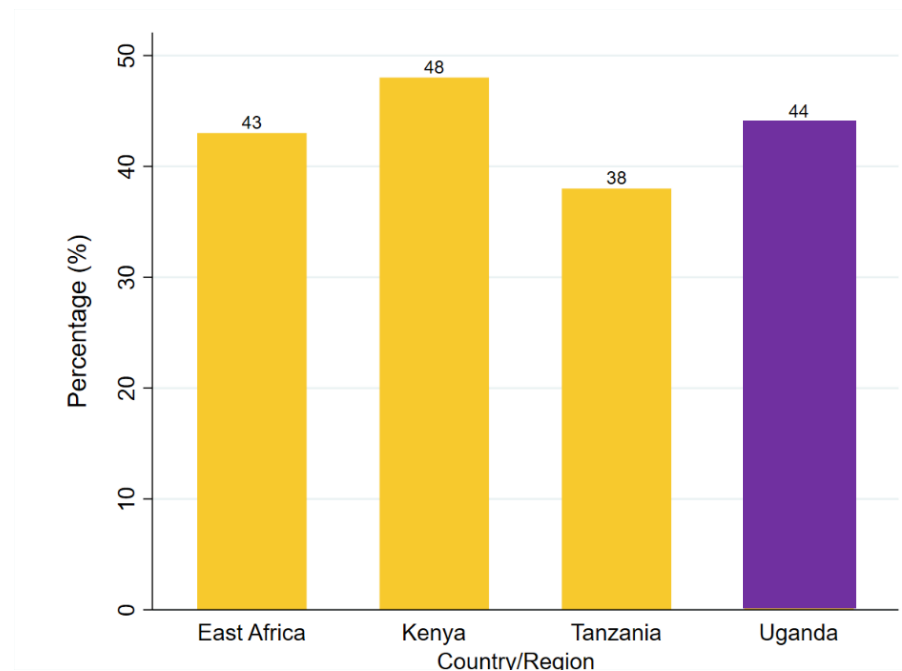


Figure 8: Rural to urban migration (%)





Climate: resilience is now fiscal policy, investment policy and competitiveness policy

The architecture is taking shape; the next frontier is bankable investment, financing and resilience at scale

What the EGF advanced

Mainstream climate into development planning - Integrate climate risks and resilience into national growth and budget priorities.

Climate as a fiscal issue - Link climate shocks to fiscal risk, public investment and macroeconomic resilience.

Mobilise climate finance - Strengthen access to domestic, international and private climate financing.

Use market mechanisms - Explore carbon pricing and credible carbon market mechanisms.

What government implemented

National Climate Change Act (2021)- Established a statutory framework for climate response and financing.

Climate Finance Unit in MoFPED (2023)- Created a dedicated institutional mechanism to mobilise and coordinate climate finance.

Climate Change Mechanisms Regulations (2025) - Implement rules for carbon-market and climate mechanisms.

Developed the Green Growth Strategy (UGGDS) - Green Taxonomy – to operationalize the tenets of a green economy.

What changed — and what remains

Remaining priorities:

Mobilise substantially more domestic and private capital for adaptation and resilient infrastructure.

Continue mainstreaming climate in PIM and building bankable pipelines so more climate projects can attract concessional and private finance.

Strengthen carbon markets and promote climate action to support Tenfold Growth.



From EGF to execution: five commitments for Tenfold Growth

The priority now is to complete reforms, close financing and capacity gaps, and measure economic results — not activity.

Revenue Broaden the base fairly; deepen compliance; evaluate incentives.

Public investment Fund fewer, better-prepared, high-return projects; enforce readiness and lifecycle costing.

Trade & firms Move from facilitating trade to building competitive exporters and suppliers.

Productive cities Turn urbanisation into productivity and jobs through serviced land, infrastructure and stronger city management.

Green growth Make resilience investible: build bankable pipelines, mobilise climate finance and measure outcomes.



Conclusion

The EGF has helped Uganda understand what must be done.

The next test is whether we can do it — faster, at scale and with measurable results.

Tenfold Growth will not be delivered by another strategy. It will be delivered by execution.



Thank You!