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Mitigating Economic Impact of Global Oil Supply Disruptions: A Rapid Response Brief

What measures can the government take to ensure continuity of social and economic activities amidst a scarcity of oil and gas in Uganda

REVIEW OBJECTIVE

The objective of this review is to synthesize evidence on policy options that the government of Uganda can implement to minimize economic disruption, stabilize fuel access, and protect households and businesses in the context of prolonged oil and gas supply disruptions and rising fuel prices triggered by the ongoing conflict in Iran. The review aims to identify actionable measures that ensure the continuity of social and economic activities amidst fuel scarcity and strengthen economic resilience during the crisis period.

PRIMARY KEY FINDING

Over this period, Uganda has experienced rising oil prices, and it is imperative that, in implementing these options, the government focus first on immediate response actions to ensure continuity of the economy and society. In the short term, governments can cushion oil shocks with price caps and subsidies, stock releases, and demand-restraint measures such as promoting working from home, imposing speed limits, and encouraging public transportation use. Some of these tools are fiscally costly, distort markets, and often create shortages. Targeted cash transfers, however, provide fairer, more efficient relief, while transparent communication builds public support for reform. For stabilization, shifting to automatic, formula-based pricing, strengthening social protection, introducing competition, and improving transparency help depoliticize prices and limit mounting subsidies. Over the longer term, resilience rests on structural measures, energy efficiency, fuel diversification, and market-based pricing. While evidence suggests that targeted tariff reductions can manage immediate spikes and that firm subsidies speed recovery, these measures risk medium-term instability if overused. Therefore, the direction must be carefully considered to manage shocks and sustain stability over a longer period.

What is a Rapid Response?

Rapid Responses address the needs of policymakers and managers for research evidence that has been appraised and contextualised in a matter of hours or days, if it is going to be of value to them. This document was created in response to a specific question from a policymaker in Uganda in 2026.

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Abstract

Background

As of February 2026, the Strait of Hormuz has been closed due to the ongoing conflict, which involved military strikes by the United States of America and Israel against Iran. The ongoing conflict has directly impacted Uganda's energy sector, the global oil and gas supply chain disruption. Uganda has already begun to experience rising fuel prices and heightened market uncertainty. As a result, the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development urgently requires policy guidance to ensure continuity of economic and social activities in the face of ongoing and potential future oil and gas scarcity.

This review aims to identify and synthesize evidence-informed policy options that could minimize economic disruption, stabilize fuel access, and protect both households and businesses from the adverse effects of prolonged fuel price increases and supply instability. The findings are intended to directly inform cabinet-level decisions on how best to prepare for and respond to the challenge of escalating oil and gas scarcity in Uganda, as well as to provide actionable recommendations for both immediate and medium-term resilience.

Key Messages

- Short-term crisis responses can rapidly cushion households and firms, but untargeted price caps and broad subsidies are fiscally costly, regressive, and hard to unwind; targeted cash transfers and clearly time bound instruments are more effective and sustainable.
- Rapid demand restraint measures deliver immediate fuel savings at low fiscal cost: remote work, lower highway speed limits, carpooling/eco driving, alternate day access in large cities, preserving LPG for cooking, and faster information sharing and public campaigns.
- Near term supply stabilization hinges on emergency stock releases, mandated minimum commercial stocks, temporary production management and reallocation, and swift diversification of carriers/suppliers; these actions reduce shortages and panic buying.
- Intermediate options should pivot from blanket shielding to durable stabilization: adopt automatic formula based pricing as retail prices approach market parity; replace price controls with targeted social protection; expand competition and transparency; and deploy calibrated policy mixes.
- Trade, logistics and market reforms can deliver material price reductions and supply security in the medium term: coordinated procurement (CIF focus), shifting inland transport from road to rail, restructuring concentrated fuel markets, and improving trucking sector efficiency and driver training.
- Long term resilience requires structural transformation: diversify energy (renewables, gas, sustainable fuels, electrification), modernize infrastructure (ports, storage, pipelines/rail, grids), institutionalize competition and transparent pricing, and scale energy efficiency and demand side management across sectors.

- Communication, transparency, and quick, visible wins (e.g., shorter queues, anti adulteration crackdowns) build social license for reform from crisis to recovery; well designed safety nets are pre conditions for subsidy reform without harming the poor.
- Macro fiscal tools matter: stabilization funds can buffer shocks briefly if well governed; tight monetary and exchange rate policy can contain pass through; however, poorly targeted austerity and ad hoc borrowing pose risks.

Conclusion

The government has several options to maintain social and economic stability in Uganda, categorized as short-, mid-, and long-term measures. For immediate response, short-term actions like targeted cash transfers, support to vulnerable households, and clear price interventions are most effective and equitable. Mid-term strategies should strengthen social safety nets, shift from universal subsidies to targeted transfers, and implement automatic pricing linked to international markets. Long-term resilience requires investing in energy diversification, expanding renewables, electrification, and supporting clean energy technologies. Currently, the best approach for immediate needs is to focus on short-term measures.

Background

As of February 2026, the Strait of Hormuz has been closed due to the ongoing and protracted conflict involving Iran, which has created significant instability across global oil and gas supply chains, directly impacting Uganda's energy sector. Uganda, which relies heavily on imported petroleum products transported primarily through Gulf shipping routes, has already begun to experience rising fuel prices and heightened market uncertainty [1, 2]. This is all demonstrated in the chain price rise following the insurance costs rise, global oil prices rise, and eventually, the increase reaches the fuel pumps in Uganda [1, 2].

Between the years ending April 2026 and May 2026, annual Liquid Energy Fuels Inflation more than doubled, surging from 7.7% to 16.6%. This dramatic increase was driven by across-the-board spikes in fuel prices. Specifically, the annual price of Diesel increased by 21.5% (up from 10.8%), the price of Kerosene skyrocketed by 25.4% (up from just 7.5%), and the price of Petrol rose by 16.6% (up from 8.7%). On a monthly basis alone, from April to May 2026, petrol prices jumped 8.8%, diesel jumped 10.6%, and kerosene jumped a staggering 16.6%. Consequently, the national average retail price of petrol rose from 5,428 Ugandan Shillings per litre in April 2026 to 5,940 Shillings in May 2026, while diesel climbed from 5,222 to 5,756 Shillings over the same single month [3]. Since then, major fuel retailers such as shell and Total Energies, increased the prices of petrol to 6,619 per litre and diesel to about 6,490 [4]. Overall Annual Energy, Fuel and Utilities (EFU) Inflation rose to 9.1% in May 2026 from 6.1% in April 2026, driven entirely by liquid fuels. Even if hostilities in Iran were to cease immediately, logistical realities mean that oil shipments to the East African coast—requiring up to four weeks—would result in continued supply disruptions and price volatility for at least 6 months following the conflict's resolution [3].

Due to this supply disruption, the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development (MEMD) and the Uganda National Oil Company (UNOC) have opted to reroute Uganda's supply routes and have been working with international suppliers, including Vitol, to source fuel from West Africa, Europe, India, and America to avoid dependence on a single supplier [5]. However, this has not curbed rising oil prices, and additional policy options are required to respond to this challenge.

As a result, the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development urgently requires evidence to discuss policy options to ensure continuity of economic and social activities in the face of ongoing and potential future oil and gas scarcity. This review aims to identify and synthesize policy options to minimize economic disruption, stabilize fuel access, and protect households and businesses from the adverse effects of prolonged fuel price increases and supply instability. The findings are intended to directly inform cabinet-level decisions on how best to prepare for and respond to the challenge of escalating oil and gas scarcity in Uganda, as well as to provide actionable recommendations for both immediate and medium-term resilience.

The evidence base for this review is drawn from a wide range of economic contexts, reflecting the global nature of the current fuel supply and price crisis. While the primary focus is on informing options for Uganda, evidence has been drawn from countries across high-income, low- and middle-income strata due to the shared nature of fuel supply challenges and the limited availability of context-specific research for Uganda. To ensure the relevance of findings, a process of contextualization has been applied, particularly in the domain of renewable energy. Uganda is at an earlier stage of renewable energy adoption compared to developed countries, which influences the feasibility and potential impact of certain interventions. Evidence and policy options drawn from advanced economies have been carefully adapted to account for Uganda's specific infrastructure, market maturity, and policy environment.

Research Question. What measures can the government take to ensure continuity of social and economic activities amidst a scarcity of oil and gas in Uganda?

Findings

Countries worldwide face recurrent disruptions in oil supply and volatile energy prices, posing significant economic, fiscal, and social challenges. These shocks have direct impacts on household welfare, business viability, and government budgets, especially in import-dependent economies. However, the literature has reported policy options to consider to alleviate the impacts of oil and gas supply disruptions and high fuel prices. Find the evidence summary below.

Summary of Findings

A Short-term options

The Ugandan government should prioritize targeted cash transfers and lifeline style relief to shield vulnerable households, avoiding regressive, fiscally heavy universal price subsidies; evidence from Indonesia and the Philippines shows that targeted schemes cushion the poor more efficiently which applies in our setting appropriately [6, 7]. If price caps[1] are used, keep them strictly temporary with clear exit criteria; repeated caps and price subsidies impose very large fiscal costs and delay adjustment [8, 9]. Temporary fuel tax reductions or tariff adjustments can soften spikes but must include clear clauses to protect revenues for the long run [10, 11].

It is also important that the government implements demand restraint on household and firm behavior. This involves implementing actionable measures such as remote work mandates or

[1] A price cap is a government-imposed or regulatory limit on how high a price can be charged for a product or service

encouragement, lower highway speed limits, alternate day access in large cities, and carpooling[2] and eco driving[3], encouraging the use of public transportation and efficient driving for freight; these yield measurable oil savings within weeks [6, 12, 13]. Additionally, we should preserve scarce Liquid Petroleum Gases for essential cooking by temporarily switching bi-fuel vehicles to gasoline, and where feasible, shift to electric or modern cooking to avoid reversion to polluting fuels [6, 13].

The government should authorize the release of emergency stocks and activate mandated minimum commercial stock levels. This will entail the release of emergency oil stocks from strategic reserves to stabilize markets and build strategic crude oil storage capacity for the long-term cushioning of oil shock prices. These prevent physical shortages and stabilize expectations [13, 14].

Through the governance structures, the government should communicate pricing methods, cost components, and anti-adulteration[4] actions. In this process it is important to deliver quick wins (e.g., fewer queues, reduced black markets) to sustain public trust [8].

We can draw on stabilization funds if available, deploy a tight monetary policy to limit inflation pass-through, and adjust exchange rates prudently to avert misalignment [15, 16]. Stabilization funds (fiscal buffers) serve as the primary countercyclical tool to absorb the shock and sustain growth. However, this tool is only sustainable for short-lived shocks. Tight monetary policy alongside prudent exchange rate adjustments help contain inflation pass-through and correct currency misalignment. For Uganda, the implication is certain, in a prolonged oil price downturn, an active exchange rate policy (allowing depreciation to restore external balance) must be paired with monetary contraction to prevent second-round inflationary effects, while avoiding over-reliance on fiscal buffers that are being rapidly drawn down. [15, 16] .

Immediate logistics and sector measures can include, for example, coordinating procurement (single buyer, Cost Insurance and Freight-based) to cut prices, shifting inland fuel transport from road to rail where applicable, and starting driver training for quick 5% fuel savings [17]. Temporarily reduce diesel taxes while raising gasoline taxes to revenue neutral levels to support exporters, food systems, implementing changes gradually to maintain acceptability [17].

[2] Carpooling is the shared use of a car by multiple people traveling to a common destination, like a workplace or school, to save on costs and reduce environmental impact

[3] Eco-driving is a set of simple, practical driving techniques designed to reduce fuel consumption, lower emissions, and save you money. It essentially means driving in a smoother, more thoughtful way

[4] Anti-adulteration pricing is the practice of using price controls (like taxes or caps) to remove the financial incentive for cutting or contaminating a product.

SHORT-TERM OPTIONS					
Category	**Intervention**	**Description**	**Impact**	**Barriers**	**Facilitators**
Demand-Side Management & Energy Conservation	Work from Home & Remote Work [6, 12, 13]	Mandate or encourage remote work for public and/or private sector workers to reduce commuting fuel demand.	Can reduce car oil consumption by 2-6% nationally; up to 20% per individual driver.	Not all jobs suitable (only 1/3 in advanced economies, 1/5 in developing).	Government mandates; existing digital infrastructure.
	Transport Demand Management [6, 12, 13, 18]	Fuel rationing; odd-even driving restrictions; public transport promotion; carpooling; car sharing.	Can reduce national car oil use by 1-8% depending on measures combined; Philippines achieved 8% reduction.	Requires enforcement; exceptions for essential vehicles; political unpopularity.	Existing public transport; ride-sharing apps; dedicated carpool lanes.
	Public Awareness & Energy-Saving Campaigns [7, 11, 12, 18, 19]	Government-led campaigns encouraging voluntary fuel reduction; declarations of energy emergency; information dissemination.	Philippines achieved 8% reduction; Ghana won public opinion for subsidy elimination.	Impact difficult to attribute; requires sustained effort.	Government leadership; media engagement.
	Efficient Driving for Commercial Vehicles [6, 13, 17]	Better driving practices, load optimization, reduced idling, regular maintenance for trucks and delivery vehicles.	Eco-driving + load optimization can reduce diesel demand by 3-5%; maintenance can cut fuel use by 15%.	Difficult when majority are owner-operators; requires training.	Digital technology; IRU train-the-trainer schemes.
	Reduce Highway Speed Limits [6, 13]	Lower speed limits on highways by at least 10 km/h to reduce fuel consumption.	Reduces individual driver oil use by 5-10%; national car oil use by 1-6%; heavy freight trucks by ~5%.	Impact depends on local infrastructure and driving habits.	Government mandates; awareness campaigns.
Fuel Price Stabilization & Consumer Protection	Price Controls & Price Ceilings [8-12]	Government-imposed maximum prices on fuel products; price freezes; limits on pass-through to protect consumers from price spikes.	Shields consumers from immediate price increases; may contain output losses.	Unsustainable fiscal burden; causes shortages; distorts market signals; risk becoming permanent.	Political motivation to protect consumers.
	Fuel Subsidies (Universal) [7, 9-12]	Government subsidies to keep retail fuel prices low; includes budget financing, tax reductions, price differential claims, and direct price support.	Immediate consumer relief; Pakistan shielded consumers with Rs 69.5 billion total hit.	Significant fiscal burden; large leakages; regressive (benefits rich more than poor); risk of becoming permanent.	Strong foreign reserves; political will.
	Tax Reductions on Fuel [7, 8, 11, 12, 17]	Temporary reduction or suspension of fuel taxes (VAT, excise duties, import tariffs) to lower consumer prices.	Lowers consumer prices immediately; Austria cut petrol tax by 5 euro cents/litre.	Fiscal revenue loss; may be difficult to reverse.	Political acceptability; existing tax mechanisms.
	Targeted Cash Transfers to Vulnerable Households [6-8, 10, 11]	Direct cash payments or vouchers to low-income households to compensate for fuel price increases; expanded benefit schemes.	More cost-effective than universal subsidies; protects poorest without distorting prices; Indonesia's program more than compensated the poor.	Requires existing social protection infrastructure; institutional capacity to identify beneficiaries.	Existing social safety nets; transparency in targeting.
	Reduced Margins for Oil Companies [7]	Adjust prices so oil companies receive lower margins per unit sold.	Can reduce consumer prices without direct fiscal cost.	May discourage investment and supply;	Government regulatory authority.

				companies may cut imports or shut stations.	
	Price Discrimination by Consumer Category [7]	Set lower prices for targeted consumers (farmers, fishermen, public transport, households, smaller LPG cylinders).	Protects vulnerable and essential sectors.	Risk of diversion and smuggling; requires administration.	Government authority to set differentiated prices.
	Exchange Rate Management & Currency Devaluation [9, 15, 16, 20]	Central bank intervention or currency devaluation to offset oil payment impacts; active exchange rate policy.	Avoids speculative attacks; cushions external imbalance; South Korea exports surged 33% after 21% devaluation.	May fuel inflation; devaluation can harm imports; pass-through inflationary pressures.	Central bank reserves; active exchange rate policy.
Macroeconomic Measures	Tight Monetary Policy [9, 16]	Tighten money supply to counter temporary price upsurges; high interest rates to contain inflation.	Algeria: M2 growth fell from double to single digits (4.8% in 2009, 2.7% in 2015).	Can affect exports and industrial growth; continuous fiscal expansion dilutes impact.	Central bank authority.
	Emergency Oil Stock Releases [14, 17, 21, 22]	Release of emergency oil stocks from strategic reserves to stabilize markets; building strategic crude oil storage capacity.	Supply-side stabilization; Egypt building 29 strategic tanks (175,000 m^3 each) to become regional hub.	Supply measures alone cannot offset full disruption scale.	IEA coordination; national strategic plans.
Supply Chain & Market Management	Government Administrative Actions [9, 12, 21]	Rescheduling maintenance; reducing PSDP; reallocating resources; capping retailer margins; price gouging prevention.	Maintains operations; provides fiscal relief; prevents profiteering.	Requires government authority; may reduce development investment.	Government regulatory authority; ministerial powers.
	Reallocation of Resources Between Companies [21]	Using government authority to reallocate surplus stocks from one company to cover shortages in another.	Optimizes supply chain; covers shortages from surpluses.	Requires government visibility into company stocks and authority.	Government shareholding in operating companies (e.g., EGPC 51%).
	Bulking Procurement & Coordinated Contracting [11, 17]	Single buyer or coordinated purchasing on behalf of multiple importers to exploit economies of scale.	FOB prices could be reduced up to 10% for landlocked, 8% for coastal countries.	Small market size; limited storage; transparency requirements.	Kenya's Open Tender System model.

B Intermediate options

Adopt automatic formula based pricing once domestic prices are within ~20% of market levels to depoliticize adjustments and prevent subsidy drift. This generally entails domestic prices linked to world oil prices via an automatic formula [8, 11]. This is applicable because it sets a pricing standard based on world oil prices that are faster. Additionally, replace universal subsidies with targeted transfers through social protection systems, as seen in the short-term options, to maintain stability in the intermediate term [7, 8].

The government can introduce competition in downstream markets to ensure the best price is achieved. Following this, measures to reduce the costs of supply include hedging, bulk procurement, infrastructure modernization and expansion, reducing regulatory barriers, and price disclosure to promote price competition [9, 11]. Restructure concentrated transport fuel markets and expand third party access to storage and transport to reduce marketing costs and end-user prices [17].

Evidence indicates that promptly implemented energy tariff reductions mitigate the root cause of price spikes. Combined with windfall taxes, they speed recovery at lower public cost, and with time-limited firm subsidies, they shorten the time back to pre-shock GDP [23]. Prudent fiscal measures, including import licenses to curb the bill, gradual subsidy reductions, and provisions for external borrowing where debt space exists, stabilize balances during transition [16].

Continue Cost Insurance and Freight-based coordinated procurement, diversify carriers to reduce inland logistics costs by shifting fuel to rail, and reform international trucking rules (contract criteria) to lift utilization and lower delivered prices [17]. Encourage outsourcing of non-critical functions with flexible contracts and portfolio diversification to enhance agility and reduce dependence on single suppliers [24].

Use targeted government incentives and timing (e.g., lifeline tariffs[5]) to protect basic needs while enabling cost recovery. Additionally, expand consumer awareness and the public sector should lead by example to cement conservation gains [10, 13].

Improve communications and transparency to manage expectations, recognizing that public support is pivotal for the shift from crisis shielding to market consistent reform [18].

Deploy state guaranteed loan funds to unlock private investment in local solar. Advance energy efficient urban programs and alternative propulsion pilots to reduce medium-term oil demand [25]. Use hedging carefully to manage residual price risk, noting benefits and well documented pitfalls from past programs [11].

[5] Lifeline tariffs are subsidized, low-cost electricity rates designed to ensure that low-income and vulnerable households can afford basic energy needs like lighting and minimal cooking

C Long-term options

Scale renewable deployment with stable policy frameworks including feed-in tariffs, priority grid access, and export promotion for clean tech value chains. These can be complemented with biofuels quotas and standards where appropriate [26]. Remove barriers to solar siting, expand distribution networks, develop energetic resilience centers and EV infrastructure to support electrification [25].

Modernize energy logistics, including accelerating unloading, increasing storage (strategic and commercial), and shift bulk movements to pipelines and rail to reduce system costs and demurrage [11]. Institutionalize competitive markets with transparent, market based pricing once competition is credible, however, continue price disclosure to sustain public confidence [11].

Enact economy wide efficiency policies and international standards, such as Demand Side Management programs in power, and accelerate energy management systems in industry [6, 27]. Promote EVs, heat pumps, and modern cooking solutions with enabling incentives and grid upgrades to structurally reduce oil demand [6, 12, 13].

Governance, pricing reform, and social protection Complete energy pricing reform: transparent, rules-based, and inclusive; build durable social safety nets to protect the poor during and after reform, avoiding a relapse into broad subsidies [8, 10]. Foster long term trade/investment cooperation and technology transfer to diversify supply and strengthen resilience [14].

Conclusion

There are multiple options the government can take to ensure the continuity of social and economic life in Uganda. Better yet, we consider them as short-, mid-, and long-term measures with different outcomes. When it comes to immediate response, short-term measures, such as targeted cash transfers, direct support to vulnerable households, and temporary, well-communicated price interventions, are more effective and equitable. For mid-term stabilisation, focus on strengthening social safety nets, transitioning from universal subsidies to targeted cash transfers, and introducing automatic pricing mechanisms that adjust to international prices. Lastly, long-term resilience requires structural investment in energy diversification, expanding renewables, electrification, and non-oil energy sources. Policies should include robust support for new technologies, infrastructure modernization, and regulatory frameworks that promote clean energy and reduce oil dependency. If carefully considered, Uganda will build a resilient oil and gas supply chain, able to absorb price shocks and unforeseen disruption. But currently, the best measures would be the short term for purposes of immediate response.

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