

Uganda

Uganda gained independence from Great Britain in 1962, but suffered long periods of political instability and intense conflict for decades afterwards. In the 1970s, the dictator Idi Amin enforced brutal military rule, leading to over 300,000 deaths and economic ruin. The Uganda-Tanzania War brought an end to his reign in 1979, but competition for power led to more fighting. Between 1981 and 1986, the National Resistance Army waged an armed rebellion against the government.

Soon after Yoweri Kaguta Museveni became president in 1986, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) was born, leading a 20-year civil war in northern Uganda. At the height of the conflict, 1.8 million Ugandans were living in displaced person camps. Since peace talks began in 2006, the LRA has left, and Uganda has experienced relative peace and stability. Since the early 1960s, with only a hiatus due to Amin's terror, ACDI/VOCA has implemented programs promoting cooperative development, natural resource management and food security.

Developing Agricultural Cooperatives

One of ACDI's predecessor organizations, Farmers Union International Assistance Corporation (FUIAC), first began providing



training and technical assistance to Ugandan cooperatives with the **Agricultural Cooperative Leadership Training** project (1962-1964), followed by the **Cooperative Development Program** (1964-1973). The projects increased technical, financial and management capacity of the newly formed Uganda Central Cooperative Union and established 24 cooperatives for beef and pork production.

With support from ACDI, the Uganda Cooperative Alliance (UCA) became an effective cooperative education organization. By the early 1970s, Ugandan co-ops were ginning all the country's cotton and processing half of its coffee, providing most farm inputs and the only available farm credit. The number of savings and credit societies had increased

from 30 to 200, with deposits totaling nearly half a million dollars. It was considered the best and most comprehensive cooperative system in any African country. However, the project ended in 1973 due to hostility incited by Idi Amin.

Cooperative programs picked up once again in the 1980s with the USAID-funded **Food Production Support** project (1982-1988), which advised and trained the Ugandan Ministry of Cooperatives and Marketing and various cooperatives. Building on this project's success, ACDI managed the USAID-funded **Cooperative Agriculture and Agribusiness Support Project (CAAS)** from 1988-1996, promoting agribusiness; food distribution, importation and marketing; and financial management. CAAS piloted a high-value export operation in snow peas and sugar snaps with local cooperatives and developed new export products. CAAS also improved efficiencies in the coffee sector by establishing the Union Export Services (UNEX) of the UCA. In 1995, UCA converted UNEX to a limited liability company, owned by UCA and the 12 coffee and cotton district unions.

Volunteers Provide Technical Expertise in Production and Marketing

As ACDI's cooperative presence was growing in Uganda, VOCA was also increasing the number of volunteer assignments in the country. Between 1984 and 1990, VOCA conducted 11 volunteer assignments, providing technical assistance to the Uganda Cooperative Transport Union, the Ministry of

Agriculture, the Cooperative Bank, cooperative societies and private companies.

During three successive phases of the **Farmer-to-Farmer (F2F) Program** from 1990 to 2008, 168 volunteer experts advised agribusinesses, farmer groups and local NGOs and produced far-reaching impact. For example, RECO Industries began producing ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF) to treat those with acute malnutrition, especially people living with HIV, for the USAID-funded **Food and Nutrition Interventions (NuLife)** project managed by University Research Co., Ltd (URC). ACDI/VOCA was a subrecipient for this project, providing logistical support to distribute RUTF to health centers from 2008-2011.

Integration of Gender and Nutrition into Agriculture Programs

Several ACDI/VOCA programs in Uganda have targeted gender. The USAID's Women in Development Office funded ACDI's **Women's Cooperative Activities Program** (1983-1984), which provided training in nutrition and income generation to 1,800 women in 60 groups and 9 registered women's cooperatives. The \$1 million USAID-funded **Food Security and Markets for Smallholders** project (1997-2001) addressed gender issues in agriculture by boosting gender awareness and promoting the construction of more efficient and economical stoves. The program also improved nutrition by demonstrating ways to process soybeans and cassava for consumption.

Natural Resource Management and Conservation

One of our longest-running programs in Uganda, the **Environmental Planning and Economic Development Project (EPED)** targeted natural resource management and community building. From 1996-2002, EPED built Masindi District's capacity to manage, monitor and protect its natural resources, which included Murchison Falls National Park. More than one thousand individuals were voluntarily relocated from within the park and the neighboring Bunungu and Karuma Wildlife Reserve. Host communities donated land to the relocated families, and extension agents trained communities in improved cropping practices, marketing and cooperative management.

This relocation process ensured that encroachers can be resettled humanely and effectively integrated into host communities. The project mitigated human threats to ecosystems and limited untenable charcoal-production, thus preserving the region's biological diversity.

Leveraging Assistance and Monetization to Achieve Food Security

Since the late 1980s, ACDI/VOCA has implemented several food security programs with funds generated through monetization of wheat and vegetable oil. In 1989, ACDI began its first PL 480 Title II program in Uganda, selling edible oil via public auction to generate funds. This \$10 million project broke an earlier monopoly of the state and a few large traders

and also provided production credit to cooperatives and local farmers. A second PL 480 Monetization Program (1996-2001) strengthened smallholder production of maize, beans, cassava, soy and oil seeds to improve nutrition and food security. The project also provided assistance to two commercial banks to facilitate their movement into the agricultural sector.

Since September 2010, ACDI/VOCA has been implementing the \$6.9 million **Literacy Enhancement and Rural Nutrition (Uganda-LEARN)** program. We have worked with schools and local communities to deliver a comprehensive package of school feeding, school gardens, community training and infrastructure rehabilitation. The project has increased enrollment and retention by 30 percent, and school attendance by girls is currently at 80 percent.

ACDI/VOCA was recently awarded a five-year, \$50 million PL 480 Title II Development Food Aid Program named **Resiliency through Wealth, Agriculture and Nutrition in Karamoja (RWANU)**. It will improve access to food for men and women as well as reduce malnutrition among pregnant and lactating women and children under 5 in 16 subcounties in South Karamoja. Specifically, RWANU will increase access to appropriate seed varieties and support apiculture.

By increasing livestock ownership among women's groups, the program will generate income and increase access to nutritious goat milk. Furthermore, RWANU will train producer groups in agriculture, savings, business and

marketing. The project will improve health service delivery by providing training, logistical and material support to the Ministry of Health.

Looking Ahead

ACDI/VOCA has become a respected leader in monetization and food security in Uganda. Programs like Uganda-LEARN and RWANU will shape our future in the African country, providing necessary organization, training and resources to vulnerable populations.

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