

Uganda

Female Farmers Gain Knowledge, Respect in Uganda



Uganda's agricultural potential is tremendous. The land is fertile, the climate is mild, there is enough rain for two growing seasons and there are nearby markets that are nowhere near saturated. Most of Uganda's agricultural activity, however, is conducted by smallholder farmers—usually women—at a subsistence level. Women in rural Uganda give birth to an average of seven children and are responsible for caring for the children while also hauling water and growing and cooking food. When all her other responsibilities are taken care of, the most a woman can typically cultivate is about one hectare of land, usually just enough to feed her family.

Since 1989 ACDI/VOCA has been helping Ugandan smallholder farmers through the USAID-funded PL 480 Title II program. These programs have helped farmers increase and improve production so that they can not only achieve food security but also make money selling part of their crops to nearby markets. Currently, ACDI/VOCA is implementing a Title II program in Uganda that started in 2007 and will end in 2011.

Katie Saram serves as a leader for her farmer group.

Many of the beneficiaries of the program are women like Katie Saram (left), from Mbale. Like most rural Ugandan women, Saram used to work alone, cultivating a small plot of land using traditional techniques. In July 2007, Saram learned about a demonstration garden created by a Ugandan NGO called Farming for Food and Development-Eastern Uganda, known as FADEP. ACDI/VOCA supports this organization through its Title II project in Uganda. FADEP helps farmers form farmer groups, grow better crops, reduce waste in post-harvest handling and storage of their crops, and sell their surplus. Its field extension workers and trainers conduct training for farmers in modern farming techniques, farmer group formation and management, nutrition and hygiene, and post-harvest handling and management. It also offers training in *Farming as a Business*, ACDI/VOCA's signature curriculum, which exposes smallholder farmers to advantageous business principles and practices.

Saram took the training offered by FADEP and learned new techniques, such as proper spacing and weeding of crops, cultivation of better vari-



Success Story

eties of vegetables and the use of technologies such as maize cribs and elevated cassava-drying racks to reduce post-harvest losses. She also learned about improving the health of her family by growing vitamin A-rich foods in the family's kitchen garden. Her farm now has a pit latrine, shower and tippy tap (a simple device for washing hands), which reduce the risk of diarrhea, typhoid and cholera.

Today, Saram is the contact farmer for her group, which means that her home serves as a model of good farming, health and hygiene for the other farmers in the group, as well as her neighbors. She is responsible for gathering data on how much land is cultivated by her group, how much they spend on inputs, and how much they plant, harvest, sell and keep for their own use. She is also a main point of contact for sellers of inputs, buyers of the group's produce and FADEP.

Katie Saram no longer farms in isolation. Under the Title II program, her hard work, skills and knowledge have given her a position of responsibility—and, hopefully, respect—in her community and enabled her to play a significant role in achieving local food security.

