



ANNUAL REPORT

Agency for Cooperation in Research and Development
Fostering Sustainable Community Development

2024

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ABOUT ACORD UGANDA

INTRODUCTION:

The Agency for Cooperation in Research and Development Uganda (ACORD Uganda) is a national non-governmental organisation (NGO) that has been active in Uganda since 1979, initially serving as the implementing arm of ACORD International. In 2019, it was officially registered as an indigenous NGO with Uganda's National Bureau for NGOs. ACORD Uganda's primary objective is to contribute to Uganda's development and humanitarian responses for marginalized communities, particularly the most vulnerable groups, including the poor, children, youth, and women. The organisation partners with government entities, communities, civil society organisations, and the private sector to create positive changes in the lives of vulnerable groups in Uganda. It strives to foster active participation from these groups and communities to tackle the underlying causes of poverty and factors that perpetuate various forms of vulnerability in the communities it serves, both locally and nationally.

VISION

A society where people are engaged, live in peaceful and just communities, have sustainable livelihoods, and lead healthy and productive lives with their rights upheld.

MISSION

We work in partnership with marginalized communities and those who have been denied their rights to analyze their situation and jointly find sustainable solutions to improve their well-being.

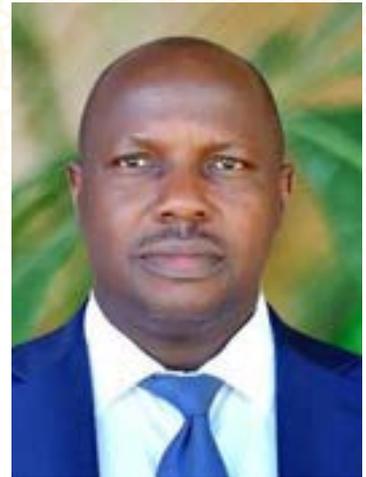
TARGET DISTRICT:

| Region | Districts |
|---------------|---|
| Central | Kampala, Luwero, Kiboga, Nakaseke, Mityana, Gomba, Kasanda, Mubende |
| Eastern | Nakapiripirit, Napak, Tororo, Mbale, Namisindwa |
| Northern | Gulu, Lamwo, Omoro, Yumbe, Adjumani, Kiryandongo |
| South Western | Kitagwenda, Ibanda, Kazo, Kiruhura, Shema, Mutoma |
| Western | Kyenjojo, Kyegegwa, Kabarole, Fort Portal, Bunyangabu, Kakumiro |



REMARKS BY CHAIRPERSON BOARD OF DIRECTORS

As I reflect on the year 2024 as the Board Chairperson of ACORD Uganda, I acknowledge the efforts of various players who have collectively contributed to the performance recorded. During the year, I have seen growth in the organisation's annual budget thanks to the commitment of all our development partners. Their contribution demonstrates the trust vested in ACORD Uganda to effectively deliver on the work entrusted to us.



As the working environment continues to evolve with increasing humanitarian crises and reduction in both humanitarian and development financing, ACORD Uganda acknowledges the need to further adopt innovations and approaches which will maximise the limited resources through effective delivery of the services to communities, strengthened accountability and compliance systems.

While the future portrays increased challenges in financing for both development and humanitarian programs, I have no doubt this has been possible due to the increased commitment of the team of staff, management and the Board of Directors.

This report presents the organisation's work, the milestones we are proud of and areas we need to improve. Building on the longer-term priorities enshrined in the organisation's strategic plan 2021-2025, the team, together with various partners, have collectively delivered some ground-breaking achievements as will be seen in the report.

Dr. Denis Muhangi,
Chairman Board of Directors, ACORD Uganda

REMARKS BY THE COUNTRY DIRECTOR

I am delighted to present the ACORD Uganda report for the year 2024. It highlights key achievements during the year and showcases ACORD Uganda's commitment to working with marginal communities to realise transformational change. Over the year 2024, we continued to advance the organisation's mission of working with communities to analyse their situations and individually or collectively find sustainable solutions for their wellbeing. Our emphasis on reaching the most marginalised communities laid the foundation for both our development and humanitarian interventions among 3.5 million women, men, girls and boys.



ACORD Uganda's resolve to support communities along their journey to self-reliance demonstrates our belief that people are in the best position and have what it takes to reach their aspirations if they are guided.

With the support of our development partners, ACORD Uganda recorded remarkable milestones in enhancing health, education, resilience, and safety for 74,689 Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) and their caregivers in selected districts in the West, South western and Central regions in Uganda; Strengthening 10,230 youth and women small holder Agribusiness enterprises in the agricultural communities in Karamoja region; supporting 12,448 women care givers towards building financial independence through Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) in over 18 districts in South, South Western and Central regions of Uganda and working with rural communities in water stressed regions in South western Uganda to strengthen their resilience to climate change through water harvestings and adoption of climate smart agriculture.

These achievements are products of significant financial investment from our development partners; comprehensive technical guidance from the Line ministries and District Local government technical staff; commitment from a dedicated team of staff; good leadership by the Senior Management team, and overall strategic guidance from the Board of Directors.

Despite the fast-evolving working environment and increasing crises and challenges that come along with them, we at ACORD Uganda remain resolute in our conviction to build collaborations for reaching communities we serve to uplift their lives as well as raise their voice and agency.

We acknowledge our development partners who include USAID, UNFPA, World Food Programme, Bread for the World, Kindernothilfe, TPO and IRC for contributing to the organisation's vision, goal and objectives during the year 2024. We look forward to further strengthening our partnerships in 2025.

Ellen Kajura Bajenja
Country Director, ACORD Uganda

2024 ACHIEVEMENTS BY STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Strategic Objective One: To contribute to health and well-being and access to universal health care.

1. Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)

We facilitated SRH Self-care Initiatives adoption by the Refugee and Host communities:

- We promoted self-care interventions for sexual and reproductive health services (SHR) in Bidi Bidi refugee settlement. We trained 168 self-care promoters, including peer mentor mothers, Village Health Teams, drugstore owners, youth champions, and health workers, on the SHE CARES self-care programme to encourage self-care and enhance community well-being.
- 34 SRHR workshops were held in 16 Bidi Bidi health facilities, involving 1,220 girls and women. This initiative encouraged 68 to choose family planning, and over 700 received self-care eligibility cards. Among Sayana Press users, 80% reported being confident in self-injection, highlighting the popularity of Self-Care and positive community impact created by ACORD.

Does not need a health worker

Repeat after 3 months to avoid pregnancy

Take daily to avoid pregnancy

Take daily to avoid pregnancy

Take morning after sex to avoid pregnancy

The promise of Self-Managed Family Planning.

We enhanced health staff capacity for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) services, improving support for underserved groups in refugee and host communities.

- A total of 25 midwives are actively providing quality care to over 230,000 refugees through the Minimum Initial Service Package for SRHR and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in various transit and reception centres.
- Additionally, 83 health workers have been trained in Clinical Management of Rape services, and a comprehensive three-day training on the prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation has engaged 84 participants, further strengthening the response capacity of officials and GBV stakeholders.
- Training initiatives were also implemented, such as instruction on point-of-care ultrasound for six midwives, MISP, and BEmONC training for 28 healthcare workers to better manage obstetric emergencies, and mental health training for community-level response.
- The multifaceted approach includes training on postpartum haemorrhage management and practical sessions aimed at improving maternal health outcomes.

Targeted interventions have reached diverse populations, with 6,683 individuals receiving integrated SRHR services. Young people aged 10-24 have seen significant outreach, with 8,429 participants attending sessions on SRH, HIV, teenage pregnancy, and GBV. Additionally, 2,278 younger individuals received family planning support, emphasising the focus on empowering youth with important health resources. These efforts included sensitising 1,921 young individuals in schools about SRHR, HIV, and GBV, along with HIV testing and STI screening.



Our Self-Care Family Planning initiatives were implemented in Partnerships with IRC and WORUDET. We spoke to women and girls to learn from their experience of seeking and using family planning

We strengthened Referrals for refugees with Emergency Maternal Health Related Complications in Refugee Settlements in Western, West Nile and Northern Uganda:

- In a significant boost to emergency healthcare, two fully-equipped ambulances were acquired, complete with essential life-saving devices and supplies. These lifesaving vehicles are now deployed, ready to respond swiftly and effectively to emergency referrals, ensuring that help is always just a call away.

2. Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)

Improved access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene

An impressive 74% of our rainwater harvesting tanks (10,000 liters) were successfully constructed, with 85% funded by ACORD and 63% by community groups. Additionally, we exceeded expectations with our institutional rainwater tanks (20,000 liters), achieving a remarkable 125% completion rate at three targeted Primary Schools and one Church in Southwestern Uganda. This significantly enhanced access to clean water in the communities and supported our shared goals.



A Completed 10,000 Cubic Liter Institutional Rainwater Harvesting Tank at Byanamira Primary School in Kashongi, Kiruhura District

3. HIV and AIDS

74,689 HIV affected and infected vulnerable children, youth, and caregivers achieve better health, education, resilience, and safety

In 2024, the USAID OVC West Central initiative focused on 12 districts in Central and Western regions, helping 63,512 people. Of these, 61,262 received comprehensive HIV services and 2,250 received preventive care. The USAID KCHS Activity, implemented in six districts in Southwestern Uganda, supported 11,177 individuals, empowering them to achieve better health, education, resilience, and safety.

18,798 selected staff, community members and caregivers skilled and enhanced their support to the education, mental health, nutrition and safety of children affected by HIV

An inspiring 16,354 beneficiaries embraced the SINOVUYO curriculum. This transformative journey nurtured openness, trust, and improved communication between caregivers and teens, resulting in a remarkable 9% drop in violence and school dropout rates within target households.

A total of 2,404 dedicated caregivers successfully completed their Early Childhood Development sessions, empowering them to track their children's growth and significantly reduce malnutrition rates. Among the 1,296 children assessed, only 15 were found to have acute malnutrition, down from 60 in Q2. This initiative demonstrates the positive outcomes of ECD sessions among HIV caregivers and their children.

A five-day Training of Trainers (TOT) equipped 40 participants, comprising 19 OVC activity staff and 21 community members, with skills in delivering group-based mental health support, exploring group formation strategies, and utilizing monitoring tools to track activities.



HIV self-testing activity at CLHIV household in Kalagala Subcounty, Luwero District.

Improved Epidemic Management Strategies:

A total of 124 facility case conference meetings were held across 18 districts and 1 city, addressing 960 cases related to the 95:95:95 cascade.

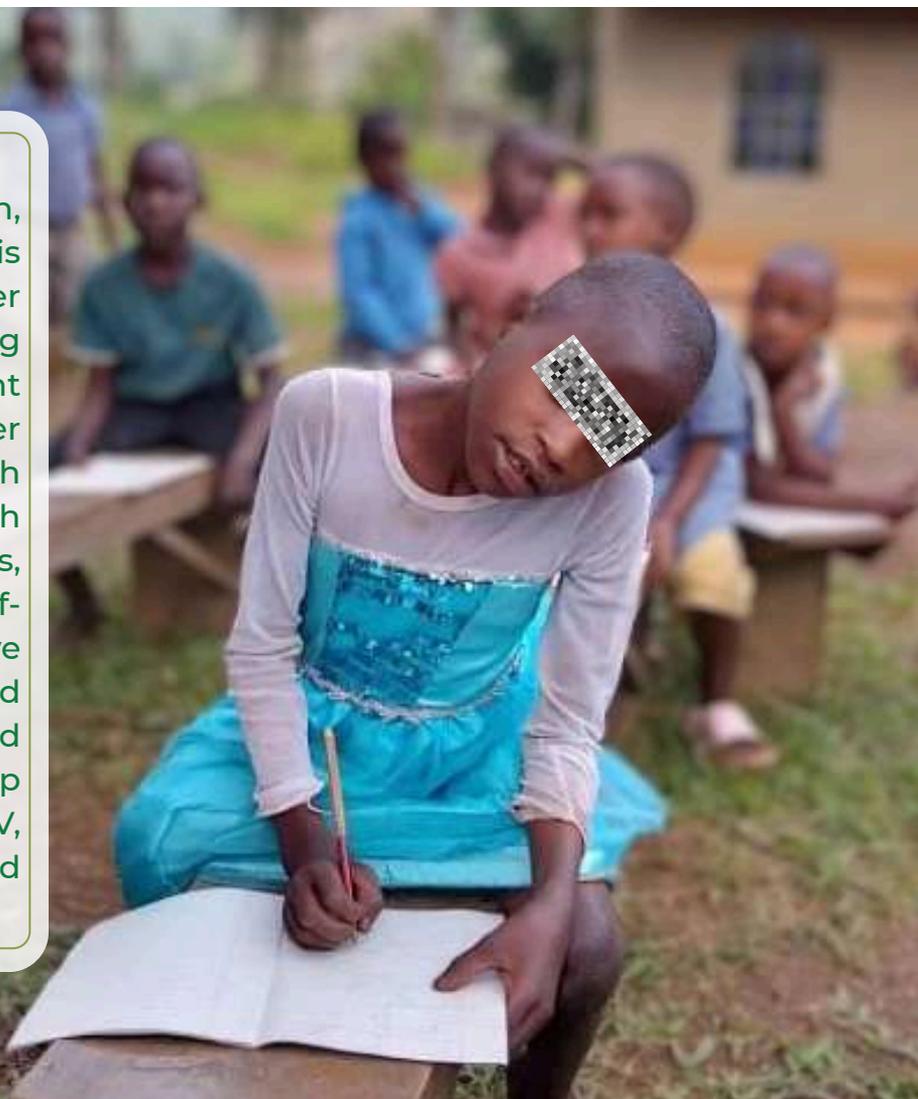
Contributing to knowing your HIV status – 1st 95: The HIV risk assessment for 785 beneficiaries revealed 270 eligible for HIV testing and 515 ineligible individuals. A total of 159 eligible individuals were referred for testing, while 111 self-tested at home, resulting in 9 new positive cases.

Contributing to Retention on ART: - 2nd 95: 8,354 children and adolescents living with HIV received essential services, with 8,163 attending their appointments. Despite 191 missed appointments, our team successfully assisted 183 individuals in returning to care, with 8 receiving follow-up support.

Contribution to Viral Load Suppression 3rd 95: 9,673 C/ALHIV tests were conducted, achieving a remarkable 95% viral load suppression in 9,097 cases. 555 participants (5%) received additional support, resulting in viral load suppression rising to 97% through collaboration and referrals with clinical partners.

Amina's Story of Suppression

Since achieving viral suppression, Amina is flourishing at school! She is forming new friendships, and her teachers have noticed her growing confidence. Adhering to a consistent school routine has helped her remain committed to her ART, which she takes each morning. Through counselling and regular check-ins, Amina has become increasingly self-assured. Thanks to her supportive social worker, she has connected with treatment supporters and joined a community support group for individuals living with HIV, finding both encouragement and motivation.



Strategic Objective Two: To build sustainable livelihoods, increase climate change resilience and enhance natural resource management.

1. Promoting Sustainable Livelihoods:



11,042, Smallholder in Southern Karamoja Equipped with Agrobusiness, Food Security and Nutrition Skills:

- 10,230 smallholder farmers - 4,100 male, 6,130 female, and 7,120 youth, in Napak, Nakapiripirit, and Nabilatuk are now empowered with post-harvest management skills that enhance food safety and reduce losses through effective drying, handling, and storage solutions, such as tarpaulins and hermetic bags.
- 812 farmer leaders - 447 men, 365 women, (370 youth), from 13 farmer organisations in Nabilatuk, Nakapiripirit, and Napak are able to negotiate better prices and access larger markets more effectively, having been equipped with market negotiation skills, business management and marketing.
- Strengthened Marketing and Aggregation Services: 450 farmer groups and 12 farmer organizations improved their collective marketing, negotiated better prices, and enhanced financial sustainability.

Over 2.8 billion shillings accumulated by groups due to the financial literacy and access to finance support from ACORD:

- 22,793 individuals from across the country, including smallholder farmers, caregivers, vulnerable women and youth, were mentored in Village Savings and Loan Associations, Business Development, and Financial Literacy, helping them build a remarkable savings portfolio of 2,810,728,500 UGX. Sessions were focused on empowering households to improve their financial management and foster lasting economic resilience. The investments have enabled households to meet basic needs, achieve financial independence, and sustain treatment outcomes.
- 324 Participants in Napak, Nakapiripirit and Nabilatuk were trained on leveraging financial services to support their agricultural ventures, including how to use insurance as a tool for managing risks in their farming operations.

| Region/ Project | No. Groups | No. Female | No. Male | Total | Saving Portfolio Amount -UGX |
|--|------------|------------|----------|--------|------------------------------|
| OVC West Central – (Western and Central Uganda) | 556 | 9332 | 3116 | 12,448 | 910,554,850 |
| Self-Help Groups (SHG) – Omoro district, Northern Uganda | 95 | 1650 | 0 | 1650 | 101,136,750 |
| AMS Project, Southern Karamoja | 100 | 1,477 | 1,398 | 2,875 | 731,311,000 |
| KCHS – Western Uganda | 300 | | | 5,820 | 1,067,725,900 |
| Total | | | | 22,793 | 2,810,728,500 |

BEYOND SURVIVAL

FROM 500K TO A LEGACY OF HER OWN – AISHA’S TRIUMPH WITH VSLA

Allow me to introduce you to Nakubulwa Aisha, a 42-year-old widow and devoted mother of six, currently residing in Katale Ward of Wobulenzi Town Council, Luwero District, Uganda. Aisha has become a cherished member of the ACORD-supported Banamukisa Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) group, where she has discovered a wonderful community of support.



Aisha shares her journey with a social worker as she stands proudly in front of her new home, built through weekly savings and the support of her VSLA group.

In a bold move, she secured a loan of 500,000 UGX to start her very own business selling second-hand clothes. Her dedication bore fruit during the first cycle share-out, where she earned an impressive 2 million UGX. With this success, Aisha was able to purchase a small piece of land. Her journey continued brilliantly, and in the second cycle share-out, she was delighted to receive 3 million UGX, leading her to sell her initial plot for 3.2 million UGX. This savvy decision enabled her to acquire a new plot, where she is building her dream home.

Expressing her gratitude, Aisha shares, “Joining Banamukisa VSLA has been a game-changer. I can now manage school fees, rent, food, clothing, and medical care—all while saving weekly.” With remarkable confidence, she looks forward to moving into her new home by June 2025.

29,497 children, at-risk youth, caregivers, and women improved livelihoods and gained skills through ACORD's vocational training and educational support.

- In Southwestern, Central, and Western Uganda, 28,919 school-aged children from disadvantaged families received crucial support to help them remain in school, succeed, and graduate. This support included educational subsidies, funds for school fees, and necessary materials, with a particular emphasis on improving attendance and retention rates for girls.



- A total of 555 vulnerable youth, women, and caregivers now earn monthly incomes of 120,000 to 260,000 Ugandan shillings. Thirty youths from Lwala Parish in Omoro District are using their skills in construction, tailoring, and baking. In southwestern Uganda, 66 youths and 344 caregivers produce marketable items like liquid soap, crafts, and baked goods. Additionally, 50 individuals in Western and Central Uganda work in motorcycle mechanics, hairdressing, and tailoring. In South Karamoja, 50 youths trained in agricultural installation and horticulture, fostering employment and entrepreneurship in agriculture.

Training Groups in Different Trades



FIXING ENGINES, FUELING FUTURES: MICHAEL'S DUAL PATH TO IMPACT

Michael is an automotive technician at a garage in Kiboga, where he earns to support his family. With his savings, he opened a vegetable stall in his village, employing a local youth. Michael shares his story at youth events, encouraging others to pursue their dreams despite challenges, inspiring the young people's community.



Michael is one of the beneficiaries of the ACORD Uganda economic package for

Youth and Adolescent Peer Support (YAPS) groups, provided through USAID-OVC West Central, to support their independence. A total of 774 adolescents, including 246 males and 528 females, received training in trades such as soap production and baking. This training enabled them to start small income-generating projects, promoting self-employment and economic stability. The trained YAPS shared their skills with peers, enhancing their opportunities for sustainability.



*Start
small,
dream big,
and lift
others as
you rise.*

2. Food Security:

28,386 individuals, including caregivers and youth, received support to adopt backyard gardening, ensuring their food security, improving nutrition, and providing additional income.



- 557 caregivers and youths in ACORD districts of Southwestern Uganda completed kitchen gardening training, enhancing food security and nutrition. We distributed vegetable seeds to 3,514 beneficiaries in Central and Western Uganda, empowering them to establish backyard gardens. This initiative enabled 24 individuals to earn an income from vegetable sales, which assisted with school fees and medical expenses.
- In total, 24,315 people from 8,105 low-income households in West and Central Uganda received cash transfers, impacting, specifically, 1,021 individuals (649 females, 372 males), seeds were distributed to 3,514 recipients (2,646 females, 868 males), and temporary food assistance was provided to 384 households (150 females, 234 males). This initiative fosters a healthier and more sustainable future environment.

3. Climate Change Resilience:

We facilitated the integration of environmental management strategies in farming interventions in all our operation areas in Uganda:

- ACORD promoted the use of organic pesticides and fertilizers to support environmental conservation. Through engaging trainings, farmers were empowered with best agronomic practices, in line with PERSUAP and EMMP guidelines.
- Climate-smart techniques like kitchen gardening, mulching, agroforestry, intercropping, and crop rotation were introduced. Participants eagerly learned to make their own manure and organic pesticides.
- Strong collaboration with government agricultural extension workers ensured sustainability and community ownership of the agro-initiatives.



"I'm excited to share that I've set up a rainwater harvesting tank, courtesy of ACORD Uganda. This system has truly transformed my approach to micro-irrigation, particularly during the challenging dry season. I've connected a perforated plastic pipe to the tank, and when I turn on the tap, it gently waters my vegetable garden. Last season, I grew some amazing onions, enough for my family and to sell at the local market. I'm incredibly grateful to ACORD Uganda for their fantastic work in our community. We've learned a great deal about restoring soil fertility and are now embracing climate-resilient farming techniques, such as trenching and mulching. These practices are empowering us to ensure food security throughout the year, and I couldn't be more optimistic about the future." Tofas, Kengyeya, 45, member of the Twetungure Women's group, Kamukaki Village, Kagongi Subcounty, Mbarara District.

We enhanced the adoption of low-cost climate adaptation technologies:

- 110 out of the 216 efficient cooking stoves planned for the project were built and are benefiting households in Southwestern Uganda. ACORD constructed 80 of these, and the community groups installed an additional 40.
- In Southwestern Uganda, ACORD facilitated the installation of seven micro-irrigation tanks in different sub-counties to enhance local farmers' access to water resources. Each tank collects and stores rainwater, ensuring water supply during dry spells. These systems enhance crop productivity and bolster climate resilience, enabling farmers to adapt to a changing climate and ultimately achieve sustainable agriculture.
- We selected and planted 700 fruit trees across schools and communities in Southwestern Uganda to enhance sustainability and improve nutrition. This initiative fosters a greener environment, improves air quality, and supports biodiversity. The trees provide fresh produce, encouraging healthy eating habits. Through education and participation, the project promotes sustainable practices and nutritional awareness in the community.

We enhanced the knowledge and skills of selected community groups related to climate change and adaptation.

- During the year, mobilized 645 community members, including 426 women and 219 men, from targeted districts in Southwestern Uganda, to participate in our engaging training sessions on water conservation technologies. The sessions were designed to empower attendees with innovative, practical skills and knowledge to enhance water efficiency and promote sustainability in their communities.
- We empowered 742 individuals, including 420 women and 330 men, in Southwestern Uganda with essential skills for sustainable agriculture and food security through engaging sessions on backyard farming techniques.

FARMING SMARTER, LIVING BETTER: RWIZI CATCHMENT'S JOURNEY TO ENVIRONMENTAL RECOVERY

Since 2017, ACORD Uganda's Southwestern programme has been making a remarkable impact in the Rwizi Catchment Area through its Integrated Water Resources Management initiatives. With a strong commitment to community involvement, we've engaged over 200 enthusiastic community members in creating vital soil and water conservation structures, such as stone bands and retention ditches. These efforts significantly enhance soil fertility and water retention, resulting in a substantial increase in crop production and income for local families.



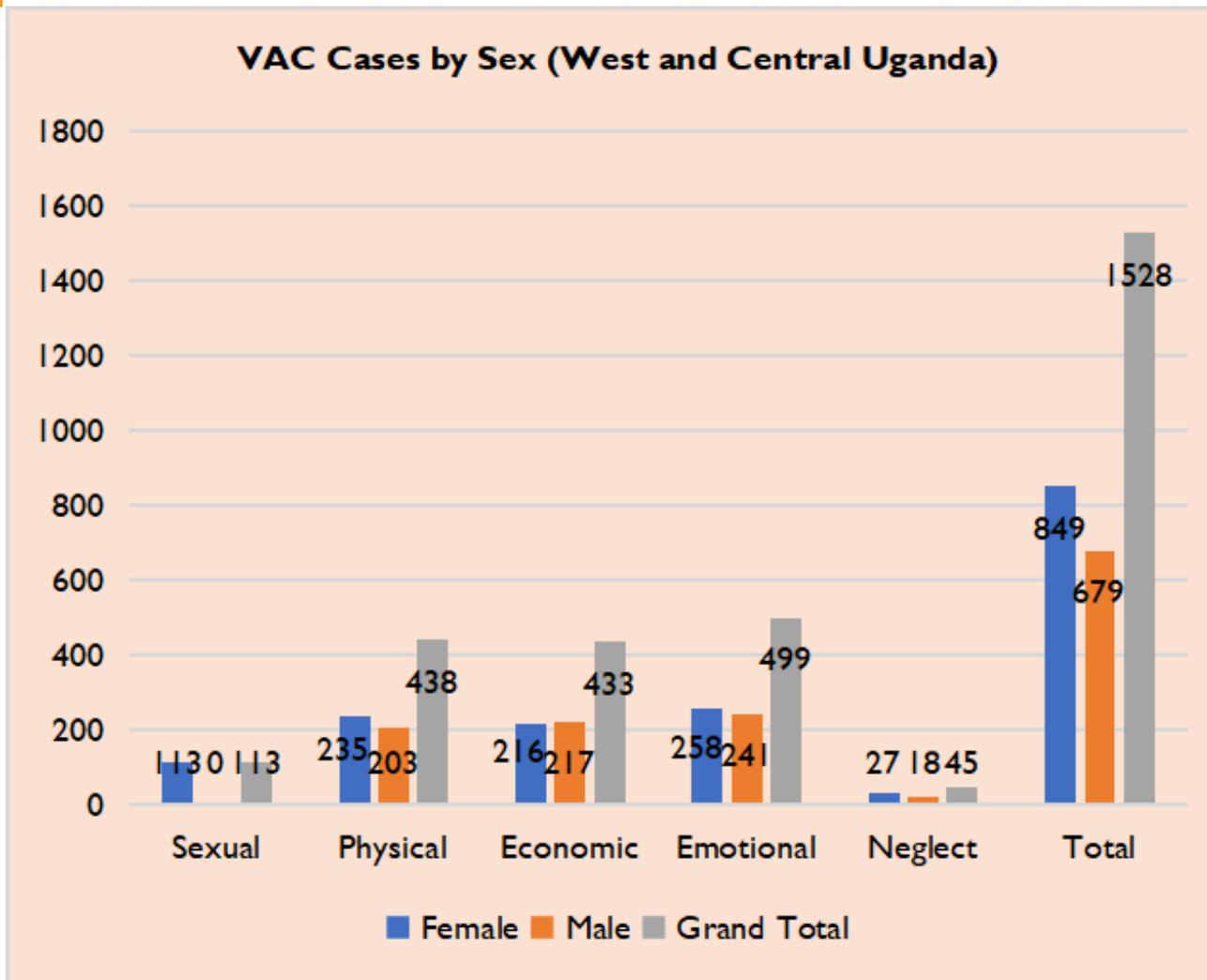
But that's not all. We're excited to support alternative livelihoods, such as beekeeping, goat rearing, backyard gardening, and tree planting, for former encroachers of wetlands. These initiatives not only boost environmental conservation but also provide community members with diverse and sustainable income sources. We're particularly proud of how these activities have encouraged encroachers to voluntarily step back from damaged wetlands, resulting in the revival of critical ecosystems like Kyabagyenzi and Rwamayaya.

A shining example of our success is Nakimuli Rosette, a beneficiary in the Bujaga Micro-catchment. Through her vibrant home-based vegetable garden, she has increased her crop variety to over five types and is now earning four times what she used to while farming in the wetlands.

Strategic Objective Three: To achieve peaceful, just, and inclusive communities that are free from violence

1. Violence Against Children (VAC):

1,624 Violence Against Children Cases Addressed in ACORD operation areas in Western, Southwestern and Central Uganda



| Violence Against Children Cases - Southwestern Uganda | # of Cases Reported | Child neglect | Deprived of their right to inheritance of property | Forced Marriage | Early pregnancy | Child labour | Physical Abuse | Sexual Abuse | Emotional Abuse | Psychosocial counselling | Economic Intervention | Problem solving | Parenting education to guardians or parents on child development needs | Supported to access justice | MIS & ITH Testing, treatment | Assisted to get PIP | Removed from child labour | Closed | Ongoing | Case Resolved | Case transferred to the probation officer after child relocated to another district |
|---|---------------------|---------------|--|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|--|-----------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|--------|---------|---------------|---|
| Numbers | 74 | 53 | 21 | 00 | 00 | 02 | 00 | 1 | 19 | 28 | 3 | 6 | 43 | 14 | 00 | 0 | 02 | 48 | 48 | 40 | 02 |

Eighteen (18) District Violence Against Children Committees supported in Southwestern, Western and Central Uganda.

- We successfully maintained the operations of 13 District Action Centers (DACs) and provided vital support to 159 Child Well-Being Committees (CWCs) in West-central. To ensure effective case tracking, we supplied 12 DACs in West-Central with monthly phone airtime and internet data.
- We trained 120 dedicated activity field staff (69 male and 51 female) in Western and Central and empowered 550 community members (155 male and 395 female) through the GBV-LIVES curriculum. This effort enhanced our ability to identify and respond to cases of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Violence Against Children (VAC).
- Furthermore, we trained 116 Community Development Officers (CDOs), 26 Provincial Social Welfare Officers (PSWOs), and 12 Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs) in data analysis. As a result, our OVC Management Information System (MIS) reporting rates significantly improved from 49% to 67%.

Increased community access to GBV prevention, mitigation information and services in Gender Based Violence in Emergency Minimum Standard

- Our Interventions highlighted the importance of community engagement approaches in preventing and responding to GBV. We conducted extensive awareness campaigns and reached 13,734 individuals. Through the Male Action approach, the program reached over 374,000 individuals, including refugees and nationals, promoting awareness and access to GBV services. Integrated reproductive health outreach services benefited 12,871 individuals, with significant participation among young adults.
- A dedicated team of 20 caseworkers was deployed to support 475 survivors with essential care, including case management and psychosocial support. Training of 36 sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) care providers and 60 health workers on GBV screening and referral processes was also conducted.
- *10 confidential reporting boxes were installed in strategic locations, promoting a community-based reporting mechanism. Additionally, 43 technical staff were trained to manage a National GBV database, aiding in effective case management.*
- *The establishment of safe spaces for women and girls and collaboration with cultural and religious leaders were vital to changing harmful gender norms. The initiative emphasized the significance of partnerships, regular coordination meetings with stakeholders, and the integration of GBV screening with broader health services.*

Strategic Objective Four: To strengthen the capacity of ACORD Uganda and partners for effective Management, Research and self-sustainability

1. Capacity Building:

- Five ACORD Uganda staff participated in an impactful advocacy workshop on sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) hosted by the International Rescue Committee in Arua. This experience has strengthened our capacity to deliver essential self-care information and services, significantly benefiting marginalized communities in Yumbe and Lamwo Districts, including Bidibidi and Palabek refugee settlements.
- Ninety PSWs (M=42, F=48) were trained in MHPSS to enhance their capacity to support eligible beneficiaries. This training was vital for delivering effective, accessible, and culturally appropriate mental health care for HIV-positive adolescents and caregivers of children aged 0-9 with high viral loads. Screening has led to improved mental health outcomes, increased resilience, and strengthened community care systems.
- A Training of Trainers (TOT) was held in five districts of southwestern Uganda for 169 field teams, comprising 86 males and 83 females, including social workers and M&E teams. This training was extended to 545 community structures, comprising 220 male and 325 female participants, to enhance skills in HIV care and case management. Topics included ART regimens, optimization, mental health, stigma, viral load monitoring, and patients' rights.
- The initiative enhanced the use of clinical tools, including medical records and adherence support. Mental health training increased awareness and enhanced screening and self-care practices. Training was conducted in accordance with the Consolidated Guidelines for HIV and AIDS Prevention and Treatment in Uganda (2020 and 2022), the Ministry of Health's HIV Training Curriculum (2022), and the Patients' Rights and Responsibilities Charter (2019).



Youth participating in the WFP-ACORD Agriculture and Market Support (AMS) programme during a training session on Post Harvest Management (PHM) machine fabrication at Nakapiripirit Technical Institute.

2. Participation in National Events:

- ACORD Uganda highlighted its involvement in International Women’s Day, World Refugee Day, Self-Care Month, and the National Safe Motherhood Conference. The SHE CARES consortium showcased innovations in self-managed contraception through drama performances, dialogue sessions with Adolescent Girls and Young Women, and participation in conferences, improving visibility and sharing best practices.
- The organization also commemorated the 16 days of activism, which increased community awareness on GBV, HIV and VAC.
- The Day of the African Child, commemorated with the theme, ‘Education for all children in Africa, the time is now,’ attracted the participation of community members, child rights activists, civil society organisations, and religious and cultural leaders. This event focused on advocacy to strengthen child protection by highlighting the rights and responsibilities of children, as well as the role of stakeholders in creating awareness to prevent and respond to violence against children.

PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

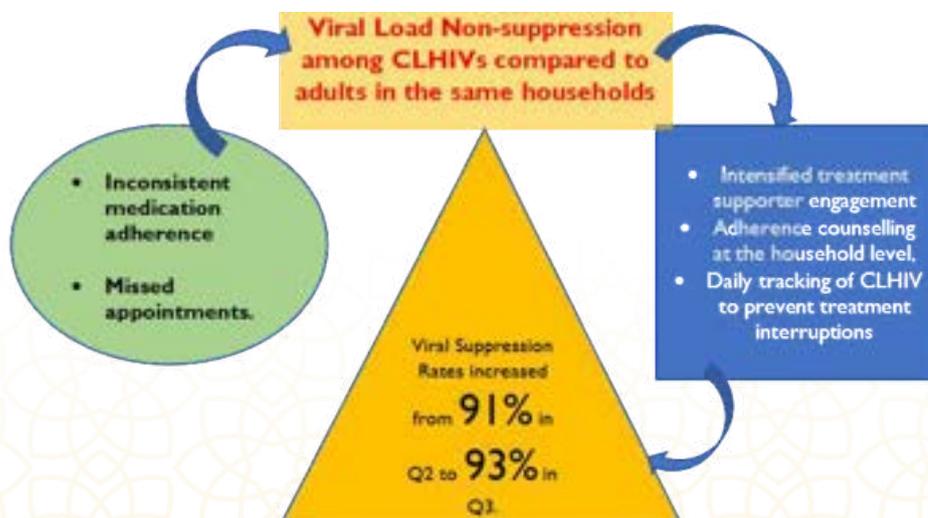
- We strengthened collaboration with the private sector, enabling us to deliver robust services and optimise resources within the target districts. This ultimately enhanced the quality of life for our target communities in areas such as economic growth, Education, Food Security, and Nutrition. This collaboration improved drug and nutrition uptake among non-suppressed HIV children, enhanced food security, increased access to financial services, and strengthened networking with other service providers.
- Collaboration with the private sector in Southwestern Uganda enhanced service delivery, production, and linkages, resulting in three groups establishing bank accounts with Savings and Credit Cooperative Societies. In Sheema district, four beneficiaries were linked to RIPPLE EFFECT for yoghurt production, while one apprentice was connected to the MARIANNE Foundation for tailoring training.

GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT

- Beneficiaries were linked to access support through government programs, including agricultural advisory services, food support, vocational training, and funding from the Uganda Women Enterprise Program (UWEP) and Parish Development Model (PDM)

RESEARCH AND LEARNING AGENDA

- Through its OVC projects, the organisation conducted studies to identify factors contributing to viral load non-suppression among CLHIVs compared to adults in the same households. The findings of one study on viral load non-suppression in Luwero are graphically represented below:



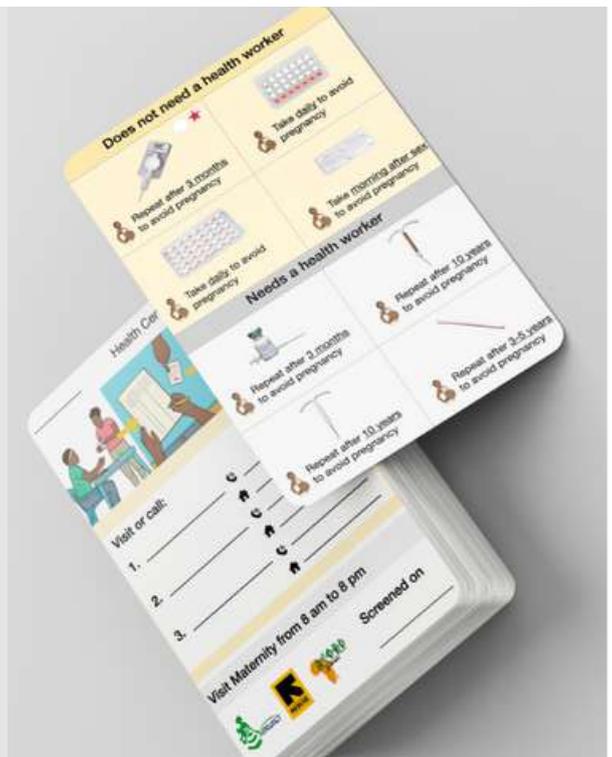
- Under the She-Cares project, we assessed the effectiveness of various family planning methods and found that 85% of refugees in the Palabek settlement, Lamwo District, and 57% in the Bidibidi settlement, Yumbe District, preferred Sayana Press self-injection due to its convenience and confidentiality.

PROMOTING GENDER, EQUALITY AND INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

- Our interventions in 2024 aimed to empower diverse groups, including girls with disabilities, child-headed households, out-of-school adolescents, and teenage mothers.
- Different implementation mechanisms were used to enhance access to services and benefits for different vulnerable groups. For instance, alternative service points, such as Village Health Teams (VHTs) and licensed drug shops, were established to increase accessibility to family planning (FP) methods to adolescents who feared visiting maternity wards. Self-care eligibility cards allowed AGYW to access FP methods confidently at any health facility without extensive questioning, encouraging those who previously avoided seeking help.

The SHE-CARES project FP Eligibility Card enables girls and women who have been counselled and screened to access contraceptives from community health workers and drugs shop, without needing to provide any other information.

Health workers screen all girls after community health education sessions and cross out any contraceptives she is not eligible for. The client can then use the card in the future to simply ask a method of choice, without providing any additional information.



A front and back printed A6 card - provided by a midwife after counselling and screening

ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE

- Beneficiaries in the agriculture interventions were trained in environmentally friendly agronomic practices focused on organic manure and pesticides. There was an emphasis on pest control with organic methods, such as red pepper and animal urine, and improving productivity with locally available organic manure.

PROGRAMME IMPACT

1. Enhanced Health Outcomes:

The SRHR programme has positively impacted health outcomes in vulnerable communities. Training 168 self-care promoters and holding 34 workshops improved knowledge and access to family planning. Notably, 68 women opted for family planning after the sessions, reflecting a shift toward informed reproductive choices. The use of self-care eligibility cards and high confidence in Sayana Press self-injection highlight strong community engagement and growing self-reliance in health management.

2. Strengthened Healthcare Capacity:

The training of 25 midwives and 83 health workers enhances the capacity of healthcare systems to respond to the needs of over 230,000 refugees. Improved quality of care in SRHR and GBV response services ensures that underserved populations receive the necessary support, leading to better health outcomes. The comprehensive training on the prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation has empowered officials and various stakeholders to address GBV more effectively, thus promoting safer community environments. Two fully-equipped ambulances were acquired, complete with essential life-saving devices and supplies. Two ambulance vehicles were deployed, to respond swiftly and effectively to emergency referrals, ensuring that help is always just a call away.

3. Youth Empowerment and Awareness:

Targeted outreach efforts to young people aged 10-24 resulted in significant participation in sessions focused on SRH, HIV, and GBV. With 8,429 participants attending these sessions and 2,278 receiving family planning support, the programme is effectively equipping youth with critical health knowledge and resources. This empowerment is essential for fostering informed decision-making among the youth, particularly regarding reproductive health and prevention strategies.

4. Improved Access to Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH):

The construction of rainwater harvesting tanks has substantially improved access to safe water. With 74% of targeted tanks completed and a total of 125% of institutional tanks established, communities have experienced significant enhancements in their water supply. This not only meets immediate health needs but also contributes to broader public health improvements, decreasing instances of waterborne diseases and promoting better hygiene practices within households and schools.

5. Community Engagement and Cohesion:

The collaborative nature of ACORD's approach, involving partnerships with government entities, community groups, and civil society organisations, has strengthened community cohesion. The active participation of local stakeholders in project implementation fosters a sense of ownership and accountability, encouraging sustainable development practices that can continue beyond the lifecycle of specific programmes.

LESSONS

- Integrated water resources management skills are key for restoration projects: To ensure the sustainability of restoration projects, it is essential to develop capacity at the district and sub-county levels. This development will support communities in restoring catchments and other ecosystems.
- Community Engagement is Key: Actively involving local communities, including marginalized groups, ensures that programmes are tailored to their specific needs. Effectively implementing user-centred design (UCD) best practices addresses community challenges and fosters a sense of ownership and increases participation rates.
- Integrated Approaches Yield Better Outcomes: Integrating mental health and MHPSS services into our HIV response interventions was crucial for improving the emotional health of target groups, enhancing their capacity to manage HIV treatment, reducing stigma, fostering social and family relationships, promoting emotional well-being, and developing healthy coping mechanisms.
- Combining various health services (e.g., SRHR, mental health, and WASH) leads to more holistic support for communities. This multifaceted approach effectively addresses the interconnected issues faced by vulnerable populations.
- There is growing evidence that ensuring women and girls have sustainable access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities can enhance girls' continued access to schools and women's opportunities for decision-making. This form of women's empowerment promotes gender equality, social inclusion, and sustainable livelihoods.
- Group tasks build individual capabilities: Meaningful participation and engagement in group activities are essential for individual empowerment. They enable members to embrace effective practices and explore alternative solutions to challenges, fostering problem-solving skills and a sense of belonging. The sharing of common objectives and aspirations strengthens group cohesiveness.

CHALLENGES

- The different projects faced high community and stakeholder expectations that exceeded available budgets. As a result, requests for items like t-shirts, bags, and sanitary pads couldn't be met. Several meetings with local and district leaders were held to manage expectations and sustain hope despite limited resources.
- Group-based activities were affected by member migration and strict approach guidelines. In Northern Uganda, SHG savings groups struggled due to restrictions on sharing savings. In Southwestern Uganda, the OVC project's SILC groups faced similar setbacks, as caregiver migration hindered new group formation.

PROGRAMME SUSTAINABILITY

- **Coordination Mechanisms Established:** In all project areas, we established coordination mechanisms that will remain operational to sustain activity implementation. Growing evidence shows that collaboration with District Local Governments, ministries, departments, and agencies, as well as private sector actors, has created sustainable linkages with the target groups.
- **Community Structures Established:** We created community structures equipped with the necessary skills and attitudes to sustainably support the target group. Under the OVC interventions, the trained Parasocial Workers (PSWS) remain in the villages where the targeted children reside and will continue to visit these households even after the project phases out. The SRH and GBV projects include Male Action Groups, Peer Mentor Mothers, and youth champions who will sustain the support. We have established Operation and maintenance committees for the WASH structures, like the water sources, latrines and the like.
- **Formalisation of Groups:** Registering groups with the relevant authorities and transforming them into primary cooperatives like SACCOS has effectively sustained interventions. This mechanism will continue to be utilized in the future.
- **Capacity and skills enhancement of the target groups:** Training and skills development for the target groups have been the most effective elements in sustaining projects. We have employed various methods to enhance the skills necessary for sustaining interventions. Through the joint implementation of these interventions and the training of Operation and Maintenance committees, target communities have acquired the skills needed to maintain project structures. The entrepreneurship skills gained can empower target groups to pursue other businesses of their choice in the future.

DONORS - 2024:



2024 BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE

| Development Partners for 2024 | | 2024 | 2024 |
|-------------------------------|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| | | Expenditure | Budget |
| | | UGX | UGX |
| 1 | Kinder Not Hilfe | 99,551,240 | 173,096,039 |
| 2 | USAID - Keeping Children Healthy & Safe | 1,651,058,932 | 1,697,845,776 |
| 3 | Bread for The World - Water Catchment II | 377,411,400 | 594,282,663 |
| 4 | United Nations Fund for Population | 6,953,522,219 | 7,530,316,393 |
| 5 | Johanniter - PIN Project | 244,036,990 | 653,460,496 |
| 6 | USAID - OVC West Central | 11,755,868,851 | 12,026,663,278 |
| 7 | Bread for The World - Rain Water Harvesting | 637,488,375 | 683,140,151 |
| 8 | International Rescue Committee - SHIFT II | 359,350,120 | 304,611,969 |
| 9 | World Food Programme - AMS | 1,215,097,096 | 2,855,534,079 |
| 10 | Japanese Embassy | 261,232,140 | 249,031,488 |
| 11 | Bread for The World - Water Catchment III (Rwizi) | 270,630,000 | 296,167,675 |
| 12 | HEKS/Swiss Church Aid | (14,381,840) | |
| 13 | Belgium Development Agency - Abim | | |
| 14 | Bread for The World - Rain Water Harvesting | 80,805,656 | |
| 15 | Bread for The World - Water Catchment II (Rwizi) | 55,851,436 | |
| | | | |
| | Total | 23,947,522,615 | 27,064,150,008 |



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ACORD-U is regulated by The National Bureau for NGOs of Ministry of Internal Affairs



**Fostering Sustainable
Community Development**