

**Country Specific Information:
Uganda Multi-Year Development Food Security Activity – Graduation Pilot
Fiscal Years 2017 – 24**

Summary

The U.S. Agency for International Development’s (USAID’s) Office of Food for Peace (FFP) intends to award one cooperative agreement to implement a pilot, multi-year “graduation” activity with the goal of improving food and nutrition security and self-reliance among extremely poor households in refugee settlements and host communities in Kamwenge District in western Uganda. As a pilot for USAID, this activity includes a significant learning and research component as well as substantial engagement on the part of FFP and USAID/Uganda.

FFP investments are intended to contribute to the achievement of [USAID/Uganda’s Country Development Cooperation Strategy \(CDCS\) 2.0](#), the Government of Uganda’s Settlement Transformation Agenda (STA), and the Refugee and Host Population Empowerment (ReHoPE) Strategic Framework. USAID/Uganda’s CDCS 2.0 is built around three integrated development objectives that aim to improve household and community resilience, strengthen country systems, and address the demographic drivers of change. This activity supports all three of those development objectives however it is most closely aligned with the objectives of Development Objective One, Community and Household Resilience. Applicants should refer to USAID/Uganda CDCS 2.0 to gain a fuller understanding of the context, constraints, and opportunities for successful, integrated programming.

Subject to availability, the anticipated funding for this new multi-year development food security activity is approximately \$33 million in Enhanced Section 202(e) resources for a seven-year period. This activity will complement and enhance a variety of ongoing food security activities in Uganda funded under Title II of the Food for Peace Act, especially emergency Title II resources programmed through the United Nation’s World Food Program (WFP) for refugee assistance activities. However, this activity is not expected to include the importation of Title II commodities. Monetization is not authorized. Applicants may propose to include the distribution of locally and/or regionally procured foods and/or cash transfers and/or food vouchers. Any and all transfer modalities that are proposed must be adequately explained and justified.

The activity design will be guided by the “graduation into sustainable livelihoods approach” first piloted by BRAC in Bangladesh and subsequently replicated in ten pilots implemented in eight countries and described on page 5.¹ Randomized control trials in several countries have found that the approach is effective at helping extremely poor households overcome multiple barriers

¹ Montesquiou and Sheldon, with DeGiovanni and Hashem, [From Extreme Poverty to Sustainable Livelihoods: A Technical Guide to the Graduation Approach](#), (CGAP & Ford Foundation, 2014).

and deprivations, increase consumption, and contribute to long-term progress out of extreme poverty.² The implementing partner will adapt the approach to local conditions.

As part of the learning agenda, USAID will separately fund a third party to conduct a randomized control trial (RCT) to study components of this activity (as further described on page 9). In submitting a proposal for this activity, applicants agree to partner with a research institution of USAID's choice in the design and implementation of the RCT in order to assess the cost-effectiveness of alternative graduation model implementation strategies.

This multi-year pilot activity will entail a modified version of FFP's Refine and Implement (R&I) process for development activities. This will allow for the validation of proposed adaptations to the graduation model, a collaborative design of the activity's research component, a rigorous identification of activity/research participants, and the implementation of a comprehensive baseline survey. The activity will have a robust learning and evidence-based adaptive management strategy that consists of two key components:

- The first will be managed by the implementing partner and embedded in the activity's R&I approach.
- The second will be related to the rigorous RCT, managed by an independent research organization selected by USAID, examining the cost effectiveness of alternative graduation model implementation strategies. In consultation with USAID, the awardee of this solicitation will engage in adaptive management utilizing knowledge generated by the RCT.

The successful applicant will fully engage in USAID/Uganda's learning agenda, including, but not limited to, partner meetings, regional coordination activities, and knowledge sharing dissemination opportunities and events.

The pilot activity will equally target participants among both refugees and host community populations.

Country Context

For nearly twenty-five years, Uganda has experienced a remarkable period of sustained economic growth. Since the 1990s, market liberalization, prudent macroeconomic management, and investment in infrastructure and improved public services have encouraged investment in agriculture, tourism, financial services and the energy sector. During the 1990s and early 2000s, annual growth rates in GDP consistently exceeded six percent. Over the last decade, economic growth has been closer to four percent per annum.

This economic transformation is the background to a long-term decline in poverty rates.³ From 1993 to 2006, the percentage of people living in poverty fell nearly two percent per year.

² Banerjee, Abhijit, Esther Duflo, Nathanael Goldberg, Dean Karlan, Robert Osei, William pariente, Jeremy Shapiro, Bram Thuysbaert and Christoher Udry, "A Multifaceted Program Causes Lasting Progress for the Very Poor: Evidence from Six Countries," *Science*, 15, May 2015.

Since 2006, as economic growth slowed, the overall rate of poverty reduction has declined to about 1.6 percent per annum, but the decline in *extreme* poverty appears to have increased to 2.7 percent per year.⁴ This decline in extreme poverty is attributable to increased income from agriculture during a period of good harvests and favorable market conditions.

Despite this progress, high levels of extreme poverty persist in Uganda. According to the most recent Uganda Poverty Assessment Report, in 2013 more than a third of Uganda's citizens lived below the international extreme poverty line of US\$1.90 a day⁵. The report also finds that, for every three individuals who have moved out of poverty, two more have fallen back into it. This implies that many of those who have moved out of extreme poverty remain acutely vulnerable to shocks and tend to cycle in and out of extreme poverty.⁶ This trend is likely to be exacerbated by the unmanaged demographic growth that is putting downward pressure on the ability of households to get out of poverty and stay out of poverty.⁷

The overwhelming majority of extremely poor households in Uganda are smallholder farmers. Many have complex livelihood strategies that combine agriculture, wage labor, and small-scale commerce.

The population of extremely poor households residing in rural Uganda includes a substantial number of economically active long-term refugees. The Government of Uganda's progressive refugee policy offers refugees more generous support than is the case in most refugee-hosting countries: refugees are granted a right to work and freedom of movement. Refugees in Uganda receive humanitarian assistance in the form of food or cash transfers as well as an initial package of non-food items. They are also allocated (but cannot own) small plots of government-owned or community-owned land for subsistence agriculture and market gardens. Refugees have access to primary health care and education subsidized by humanitarian agencies. Refugees are supposed to receive full humanitarian rations for three years upon arrival and half rations for two additional years. After five years, long-term refugees are expected to support themselves. However, they do continue to have access to basic social services and infrastructure, including health, education, and other referral services. The Government of Uganda's Settlement Transformation Agenda (STA) also requires that host communities have access to the social services provided to refugees.

While the Government of Uganda, implementing partners, and donors encourage both refugees and members of host communities to pursue sustainable livelihoods and become self-reliant, it

³ World Bank, *The Uganda Poverty Assessment Report 2016: Farms, Cities and Good Fortune, Assessing Poverty Reduction in Uganda from 2006 to 2013*, (Washington, 2016).

⁴ "USAID defines extreme poverty as the inability to meet basic consumption needs on a sustainable basis. People who live in extreme poverty lack both income and assets and typically suffer from interrelated, chronic deprivations, including hunger and malnutrition, poor health, limited education and marginalization or exclusion." USAID, *Vision for Ending Extreme Poverty*, (Washington, DC, 2015). <https://www.usaid.gov/ending-extreme-poverty>

⁵ Ibid. See also: International Futures Group paper prepared for USAID Uganda.

⁶ Refer to the [Office of Food for Peace's 2016 – 2025 Food Assistance and Food Security Strategy](#) for a definition of vulnerability.

⁷ Moyer, J.D., et al., *Advancing development in Uganda: evaluating policy choices for 2016-2021 and selected impacts to 2040*. 2015, Frederick S. Pardee Center for International Futures: Denver, Colorado, USA

is difficult for extremely poor people to do so. The Ugandan host communities have few assets, high levels of malnutrition, low levels of formal educational attainment, and few opportunities for formal employment. In spite of food assistance and other humanitarian support, large numbers of long-term refugees remain vulnerable. Most refugees remain in extreme poverty and are unable to maintain adequate levels of food consumption without humanitarian food assistance.⁸

Recognizing that extreme poverty is pervasive and entrenched and cuts across both host communities and refugee settlements, the Government of Uganda's STA and multi-stakeholder ReHoPE strategy call for a developmental approach to help host communities and refugees achieve self-reliance.

The Activity Area

Kamwenge District in western Uganda has been chosen as the geographic focus for the activity. Site selection criteria for this activity included:

- the proximity and mingling of refugee and host communities;
- high levels of food insecurity and malnutrition, and emerging opportunities for economic prosperity and strengthened resilience; and
- opportunities for alignment with USAID/Feed the Future economic development initiatives and other development activities.

The Rwamwanja refugee settlement, located within Kamwenge District, is home to approximately 57,000 Congolese refugees, most of whom arrived in or after 2012 and are therefore nearing the end of their eligibility for food assistance. The majority of refugees engage in livelihood activities associated with low incomes and no job security, and conduct business within the Rwamwanja settlement. The average household size in the settlement is 4.7 people, and 18 percent of households are female-headed (compared to 4.8 people and 31 percent in surrounding host communities). Approximately 41 percent of refugee children in the settlement are stunted and 15 percent are underweight. The surrounding non-refugee population in the district was estimated to be 451,500 in 2016 and also faces significant development challenges. While benefitting from social services provided to the refugees, the non-refugee population remains chronically vulnerable to food insecurity and malnutrition; up to two-thirds of the population in the Mid-Western sub-region experience some level of chronic food insecurity. Eighty-five percent of households in the district practice subsistence farming as their primary economic activity.

Applicants should refer to FANTA's food security desk review, [Opportunities to Provide Refugees and Ugandans with Alternative Livelihood Activities in Uganda's Kamwenge District](#), for additional background on patterns of poverty, food security, health, nutrition, and development opportunities in Kamwenge District.

⁸ World Food Program, "An Analysis of WFP's Cash & Food Interventions Across Select Refugee Settlements", (Kampala, 2014)

A Focus on Working Households Living in Extreme Poverty

The overarching goal of this development food security activity is to improve the food and nutrition security and economic self-reliance of extremely poor households. Its focus is on households that are economically active, but are chronically unable to meet their basic needs and have little chance of improving their circumstances without some form of assistance. Any of these factors can hamper their ability to take advantage of emerging opportunities in Uganda's developing economy.

This development food security activity will:

- Focus on households from both the Rwamwanja refugee settlement and neighboring host communities.
- Target extremely poor households.
- Enroll and graduate one adult per household, usually the woman of the household; (research of the graduation approach shows that the effects of the intervention are felt across the entire household).

Recognizing that some hazards and barriers are gender-specific, and that others occur at different stages of the life cycle, applicants must take into consideration the context-specific constraints faced by women and youth in the Kamwenge communities benefitting from this activity.

The Graduation Approach

The **Graduation Approach** is a proven strategy designed to lift people out of extreme poverty and promote economic inclusion. It does so through a combination of precise targeting and conditional assistance that is delivered in a series of carefully sequenced interventions. The approach is grounded in microeconomic and behavioral research into the challenges that extremely poor people face and the economic choices that they commonly make. The approach focuses on building the confidence, capabilities, economic assets, and agency of extremely poor individuals and households. In doing so, it helps them form effective self-help groups, and promotes inclusion and effective participation in community-based organizations. It also enables the poor to expand their networks and deepen their social capital, and it tends to increase their access to formal and informal social services as well as to markets.

Specific graduation activities are adapted to local circumstances but are always designed to systematically address the multiple constraints that participants face. Standard elements include efforts to: smooth consumption; increase ownership of liquid and productive assets; build confidence and life skills; reduce exposure to risk and enhance the ability to cope with shocks; build economic capabilities; and link participants to new economic opportunities.

All of these elements are common features in FFP development food security activities. What is less common is the establishment of a social contract between implementers and participants, and the implementation of each of these elements with every participant as part of an integrated package that is designed to methodically build confidence, increase capabilities, and change behavior. A complete implementation model includes the following types of assistance:

1. Coaching

Coaching, sometimes through a caseworker and sometimes through group-based training, supports confidence-building, life skills development, and referrals to health services and psychosocial support, as needed. Confidence building often begins during the outreach and orientation phase of activity start-up and continues throughout the life of the activity. This component will include nutrition education to encourage positive behavior change. Intensive coaching, with its reliance on caseworkers for each activity participant, is one of the costlier elements of the graduation model.

2. Consumption smoothing

Activity implementation will begin with the provision of food assistance for a finite, clearly communicated period of time (30 months). Various food assistance modalities will be considered including local and regional procurement, food vouchers, and/or cash transfers.

Chronic food insecurity is widespread in Kamwenge District. In the face of periodic scarcity, extremely poor households commonly resort to short-term coping strategies that have harmful long-term consequences (e.g., taking out loans for food purchases, holding children out of school, liquidating productive assets). Early, reliable food assistance is intended to provide a temporary safety net that alleviates the need for such desperate choices and enables participants to focus on setting and meeting longer-term goals.

3. Savings

Coaching and consumption smoothing lays the groundwork for enrollment in Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs). The savings component of the activity will need be introduced as early as possible, with participant readiness assessed through the coaching process. Savings helps to develop financial literacy, smooth consumption, cope with shocks, pay school fees, acquire assets, fund small-scale economic activities and build social capital. Building financial assets also tends to expand planning horizons, enabling participants to visualize and pursue longer term economic goals. Promotion of savings should be accompanied by training in cost control, goal setting, and financial planning. The “Saving with a Purpose” methodology implemented by USAID/Uganda’s Community Connector activity in Kamwenge District may serve as a useful source of locally relevant experience in this area.

4. Risk management

Successful applicants will identify the most common sources of risk in the activity area and will offer an appropriate package of technical assistance, referral services, and behavior change support to help reduce participants’ exposure to risks and enhance their capacity to cope with and recover from shocks.

Examples of measures designed to reduce exposure to shocks and to enhance capacity to cope with and recover from shocks might include:

- Preventive medicine, water and sanitation measures, or behavior change and communication activities intended to reduce exposure to health shocks

- Early warning and preparedness
- Promotion of climate smart technologies and farming practices such as water harvesting, micro-irrigation, or short-cycle or drought-resistant crop varieties, as appropriate
- Savings and improved management of food stocks

5. Technical/vocation training

Value chains and labor market assessments will be undertaken during the initial refinement year in order to identify livelihood opportunities. Taking into account that participants are free to engage in mobile livelihood strategies, these assessments should consider trends and opportunities in rural-rural and rural-urban migration, and are not limited to the boundaries of Kamwenge District. Synergies and opportunities emerging from USAID/Uganda Feed the Future and other development activities—potentially a “pull” factor—should be explored. As mentioned above, understanding the particular needs and potential of participants, with particular attention to women and youth, will be critical to their successful uptake of new skills.

Once promising opportunities have been identified, participants will choose from a menu of training options. Basic training and technical assistance in agricultural production and storage, commerce, small enterprise management, specific vocations (e.g. mechanics, construction, mobile phone repair and use, hair dressing, tailoring) are likely to be of interest. Basic/functional literacy and numeracy, as well financial and business skills may be considered as part of this training component. The provided training and technical assistance will be based on the labor market assessments of demanded skills. Additionally, all training will be gender and age appropriate, seek to maximize potential return of the training, be sensitive to existing workload demands of participants and, if appropriate and feasible, complement or expand existing vocational training in Rwamwanja and the surrounding communities.

6. Asset Transfer

Each participant receives an appropriate asset transfer for her household (e.g., a lump sum cash transfer, livestock, tools, or inventory for retailing). The applicant will propose a process for determining the timing and nature of the assets to be transferred. Labor market and value chain assessments carried out during the refinement year should be part of this process. Participants will choose from a menu of locally relevant assets.

The transfer of substantial productive assets, similar to participant coaching, is one of the more costly components of the full graduation approach.

Due to USAID’s particular interest in addressing malnutrition, applicants are encouraged to tailor the graduation approach to include appropriate nutrition-specific and -sensitive interventions to enhance nutritional outcomes.

Adapted Version of Refine and Implement

FFP will utilize an adapted version of its Refine and Implement (R&I) approach for this cooperative agreement. R&I will include:

1. The refinement period

In collaboration with USAID, during the first year the successful applicant will:

- undertake preparation for implementation (e.g., hiring, training, procurements)
- carry out pre-implementation studies (e.g., assessment of labor market and demand for different forms of skills training);
- refine the activity's design;
- jointly determine targeting criteria for participant identification with USAID and the RCT evaluator;
- based on the jointly agreed upon targeting criteria, identify a sufficient number of eligible participants for this activity. The evaluator will randomly assign participants to the cohorts and treatment arms;
- for participants of this activity, communicate the activity's purpose, methods and duration, participants' entitlements, and obligations of eligible members. The participant enrollment process will culminate in a social contract between the activity and the participants. Experience shows that this orientation and enrollment process motivates participants and builds their confidence;
- share detailed information relating to the cost and targeting approach of the activity with USAID and the evaluator; and
- explore opportunities for layering and/or leveraging other Mission activities, leading to joint work planning and identification of learning streams contributing the Mission's resilience objectives and learning agenda.

The refinement period will be followed by:

2. The implementation period

Activity implementation will take place in two separate phases of 30 months each, separated by a six month data collection and analysis period (for the RCT of the alternative graduation models, as described on page 9) and refinement period – in which the analysis of the RCT will inform which treatment model the awardee will implement among the second cohort. See page 11 for further explanation of the activity's anticipated timeline.

Targeting, Outreach, Beneficiary Registration, and Baseline

Targeting, outreach, beneficiary registration, and the activity baseline will be completed during the activity's initial (refinement) year. Targeting will be needs-based. Successful applicants will propose an appropriate, participatory wealth-ranking and quantitative indicator-based targeting methodology that will minimize exclusion errors and ensure inclusion of vulnerable working households living in extreme poverty. Participants will be drawn in roughly equal numbers from both host communities and refugee settlements. USAID anticipates approximately 6,000 households will be targeted in each cohort. Applicants are encouraged to propose a higher number of applicants if deemed appropriate. The final target number will be determined during the refinement period, along with input from USAID and the evaluator.

During the initial outreach and orientation phase, the successful applicant will clearly communicate the activity purpose, methods, duration, participant entitlements, and obligations to eligible community members, as well as to community leaders, local government counterparts, and other key stakeholders. The entire community will also require sensitization regarding participant selection to ensure that non-participants are supportive of the overarching goals and that tensions are avoided within the community over a non-transparent participant selection process. USAID will help explain the rationale for the graduation pilot and research component to national and local Ugandan authorities.

Participation in the activity will be voluntary and conditional. The enrollment process will culminate in participant registration and with a mutual understanding and commitment between participating residents and the activity implementers. This understanding is captured as a “social contract.”

The evaluator will carry out the activity’s baseline study. The baseline will be drawn from the activity’s roster of registered participants.

Target-Setting

As stated in the Request for Applications, applicants must propose ambitious yet achievable targets for higher level impact and outcome indicators. The targets should be based on the proposed interventions for the graduation model and the anticipated quality of implementation. The suggested percentage point annual reduction listed on the Request for Applications are primarily for the Karamoja CSI and not specific to this CSI.

Two Cohorts

Participants will be randomly divided into two cohorts. Each group will participate in the intervention for 30 months. The participation of these two groups will be staggered. Cohort 1 will begin the intervention at the beginning of Year 2 (October 2018). Cohort 2 will do so at the beginning of Year 4 (October 2021).

Randomized Control Trials: A Rigorous Inquiry about Cost-Effectiveness

USAID seeks a rigorous comparison of the cost-effectiveness of the full graduation approach with alternative graduation models. USAID will separately fund a third party to conduct a RCT on this activity.

USAID is interested in learning whether the graduation model can be adapted in order to reduce the cost of implementation without substantially reducing activity effectiveness. Successful applicants may consider specific modifications in the graduation approach that are intended to reduce implementation costs without diluting its effectiveness. “Stripped-down” versions that deliver most, but not all of the elements of a standard approach, will be considered. Applicants may propose up to two research arms of a stripped-down graduation model to compare to the full intervention and control groups and are encouraged to consider peeling back the components of the graduation model with the highest costs. Also of interest

are innovations that offer economical ways of delivering counseling, training, or transfers. Proposals for alternative implementation approaches of the stripped-down model must be accompanied by a clearly articulated Theory of Change.

The stripped-down model RCT will utilize a stepped-wedge design that will involve sequential but random rollout of an intervention over two time periods. This method enables rigorous analysis without requiring a permanent non-treatment group that receives no benefit from activity participation.

After awarded, in consultation with USAID and the activity's research partners, the awardee will finalize specific modifications to the graduation approach that are intended to reduce implementation costs – without diluting its effectiveness. Alternative implementation strategies of the stripped-down model will be compared with the standard graduation model.

Each implementation approach will be evaluated in terms of its impact on short-term well-being and longer-term progress out of extreme poverty of participating individuals and their households.

Activity Timeline

- Phase 1 (12 months) – Pre-implementation activities
- Phase 2 (30 months) – Activity implementation for Cohort 1
- Phase 3 (6 months) – Data collection and potential modification
- Phase 4 (30 months) – Activity implementation for Cohort 2
- Phase 5 (6 months) – End line, lessons learned, activity close out

Anticipated Activity Timeline and Sequencing Livelihoods Interventions

Start Extreme Poverty										End Sustainable Livelihoods
	Refinement	Implementation			Refinement	Implementation				
Group	Household identification Finalization of treatment variations Market assessment	Cohort 1			Data Analysis Learning & Adapting	Cohort 2			Final Evaluation Data Analysis Closeout	
		Coaching				Coaching				
Activity Intervention		Asset Transfer				Asset Transfer				
		Skills Training				Skills Training				
		Savings				Savings				
		Consumption Support				Consumption Support				
Timing	12 months	12 months	24 months	30 months	6 months	12 months	24 months	30 months	6 months	
Dates	Oct 2017 - Sept 2018	Oct 2018 - Sept 2019	Oct 2019 - Sept 2020	Oct 2020 - Mar 2021	Apr - Sept 2021	Oct 2021 - Sept 2022	Oct 2022 - Sept 2023	Oct 2023 - Mar 2024	Mar - Sept 2024	
Data Collected	Baseline Data Treatment Variations (from Cohort 1) Non-Treatment (from Cohort 2)		Short Surveys Treatment Variations Non-treatment		Endline 1 Treatment Variations Non-treatment		Short Surveys Selected Treatment		Endline 2 Selected Treatment (from Cohort 2) Treatments (from Cohort 1)	

Activity Principles

1. Instrumental to the activity's success will be careful participant identification. Reaching the poorest and most deprived households can be challenging. Doing so requires commitment, rigorous outreach and verification methodologies, and effective quality assurance.
2. Participation is voluntary and conditional. Activity staff and participants are bound by a social contract. The awardee is accountable for providing all relevant assistance to each participant. In exchange for transfers, training, and all other technical assistance, participants agree to actively participate in the entire activity.
3. Participants must be ensured sufficient and reliable food assistance for a defined period of time. The purpose of food assistance is to smooth consumption and thus minimize the need for negative coping strategies that have harmful long-term consequences. As such, it is a necessary component for graduation.
4. Activity success will require good coordination with other institutional actors and purposeful layering of activities and services. The reason for this is that the ultra-poor face multiple deprivations. No single agency has the expertise or the means to comprehensively address every social problem that will arise in this genre of programming. Inter-agency coordination and referral will be a key to success.
5. Incorporate Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA) into the activity. The Awardee of this activity will be expected to coordinate and collaborate with a variety of institutions and initiatives, share learning and learn from partners, and be prepared to adapt activities as required. Partners and stakeholders include:
 - USAID/Uganda – including alignment with its Country Development Cooperation Strategy 2.0, its CLA agenda, and its Feed the Future activities in Kamwenge District
 - The GOU's Settlement Transformation Agenda
 - The Kamwenge District Local Government
 - UNHCR and WFP – including deliberate partnership and alignment with the ReHoPE strategic framework
 - FFP and the Department of State/Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM), who will be learning partners in this pilot
 - The research institution(s) selected to work with the Awardee

Applicants are encouraged to describe their vision of partnership, collaboration, and learning across this group of stakeholders, as well as ensure that their proposed budgets reflect/enable a significant level of coordination/collaboration in both Kamwenge and Kampala.

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