



Context

In war-torn countries, poverty alleviation efforts have been hampered by years, or even decades, of political conflict. In Uganda, the hostilities between government forces and various rebel groups destroyed much of the country's infrastructure, and denied an entire generation of young men and women access to education and occupational training. Most tragically, the only skill that many of them had mastered was how to handle weapons. In 2002, the negotiated settlement gave ground to renewed optimism as tens of thousands of army veterans and former rebels were allowed to re-integrate into civilian life.

Strategy

With the financial support of the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS), UNIDO launched the Skills for Peace and Income (SKIPI) project. The project aimed at facilitating the social and economic re-integration of veterans, former rebels and their families in the post-conflict situation in northern Uganda.

The project was carried out in villages from the Yumbe District, where hundreds of ex-combatants, their dependants and members of the communities were trained in masonry, metalworks, carpentry, garment making, food processing and other marketable skills. Since few participants had previously received any formal schooling, the project sought to empower community facilitators to conduct adult literacy training sessions. Participants were also provided with basic knowledge of product costing, accounting, bookkeeping and other business practices and received tools upon graduation.

As a first immediate step, the new training facilities were constructed. This was, in itself, a successful training exercise as participants who learned bricklaying, masonry, carpentry, joinery, and furniture greatly contributed. Other courses included metalworks, honey processing, motor mechanics and entrepreneurship development.

Results

- 1,200 SKIPI project beneficiaries acquired skills for economic self-reliance and successful reintegration
- 90% of core trainees now practice their new skills as main source of income and utilize the tools handed out to them upon graduation
- The average income of beneficiaries nearly tripled after training
- 30% of beneficiaries were combatants and another 50% combatants' family members
- 30% of beneficiaries were women

Impact/Outlook

Trainees have become proficient in their new jobs, and are able to earn a comparatively good income. This puts them above the "relative" poverty line (as perceived in the villages of northern Uganda). Equally important is the indirect social impact on the trained individuals, who have clearly gained in stature in their communities and have become important community members. Likewise, women have assumed leadership status in their respective communities and have become a source of inspiration to others. Veteran and ex-combatant trainees have been re-integrated in their villages, but also in the wider society. In addition, they contribute to a better functioning of their communities, benefitting other villagers as well.

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At a glance:

Goal: Reintegrating ex-combatants in northern Uganda
MDG: 1. Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger
 3. Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

Thematic area:

Poverty Reduction through Productive Activities
Donor: Japan through the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS)
Partners: Ugandan Veteran Assistance Board (UVAB),
 Participatory Action for Development (PRAFORD)

Budget: USD 1,400,000

Status: completed

Duration: January 2006 – March 2010