



Potato Farmers Fight Poverty in Uganda

“I worked as a government extension assistant for seventeen years. After the government started implementing the World Bank’s Structural Adjustment Programs in 1990, a number of under-educated public servants were removed from active public service with a retirement package of about \$270. The skies seemed to have fallen on my head.”

Stephen Tindimubona describes this predicament which is common for many Ugandans. By the time Stephen reached his home village in the southwestern district of Kabale, his meager retirement package was all spent. Out of necessity, he started farming and slowly adjusting to a new life.

Kabale district is known for potatoes, and that is what Stephen decided to grow in order to feed his family of twelve and generate income to send his children to school. However, a common problem in the community is obtaining good quality potato seed twice a year.

Stephen and a number of fellow retirees in the village shared similar frustrations. They decided to form an association that would venture into seed potato production as a business. Stephen learned about USAID’s ACDI/VOCA volunteer program from a women’s organization in the nearby village who received support in mushroom growing and marketing. With USAID help, Stephen and the farmers created an entity registered as the Uganda National Seed Potato Producers’ Association (UNSPPA).



Photo: ACDI/VOCA Robert Gensi

Retired civil servants attend a business skills management training class supported by USAID.

USAID’s program enhances food security and market-access opportunities by working with farmer-based cooperatives and smallholder associations at the grass-roots level. Agricultural production has improved from building local capacity and developing appropriate technology by using local resources.

Based on the volunteer’s advice, UNSPPA formed the Farmer’s Center to streamline the association’s operations and conduct its business. To grow its business and benefit its members, the Center trains and consults farmers, engages in potato trade, and provides competitive transport and shipping services. In this way, the member farmers earn greater net incomes.

“After the business skills training from USAID, I experienced a dramatic change in my life from poverty to wealth, from a society’s reject to a village belle.”

- Stephen Tindimubona, Executive Director for the Uganda National Seed Potato Producers Association

UNSPPA is the leading grower and seller of potato seed in the region. The first communal seed harvest fetched each member \$12.50. Currently, each member is able to share an equivalent of \$48.50 in the first season and \$33.70 in the second season. They are also currently commanding approximately 50% market share of potatoes. Arising from use of improved potato seed, production per acre of potato among the UNSPPA has increased from the original fifteen bags/acre to the current 70-100 bags/acre.

The increased production has stabilized prices and improved availability of potatoes, thus improving the community’s nutrition. Stephen now owns a house in the village and is respected as head of an organization that is conducting progressive business.

Success Story

