



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://feedthefuture.gov/article/camp-kibinge-inspires-ugandan-youth-thrive>

Camp Kibinge Inspires Ugandan Youth to Thrive



David Ayers

Youth enjoy drinking local coffee throughout the camp. For many, it's their first cup of coffee.

For more than 20 years, farmer-owned Kibinge Coffee Farmers' Cooperative Society has improved the livelihoods of many community members in Kibinge, a sub-county in Uganda. More recently, however, it came to an important conclusion: Community youth did not have equal opportunity to succeed in agribusiness. What's more, the sub-county, like many other parts of Uganda, has a high share of unemployed or under-employed youth. So, the cooperative has been searching for different—and better—ways to engage with youth in need of work and empower them to succeed.

This search prompted Peace Corps Volunteer David Ayers, from Rocky Mount, North Carolina, to introduce an idea of his own: a 3-day youth empowerment camp. David works with the cooperative as a community agribusiness adviser with Feed the Future's support. "This format seemed like the perfect opportunity to bring together our youth, empower them and promote teamwork within the community," he explained. It would also become a venue for youth to network with professionals, hear about work opportunities, learn agricultural practices, and gain skills in earning and saving income.

Although the idea was his, Camp Kibinge required an investment of talent and resources from many others. The camp's logistical and program planning, as well as its implementation, were done in close cooperation with Kibinge Coffee staff and community leaders. Kibinge Coffee staff also provided their expertise at the camp, leading most of the sessions and demonstrations held there. This meant the camp's program of activities was fully facilitated by Ugandans in the local language, Luganda. Funding for this collaborative project came mostly from a Peace Corps grant through Feed the Future and required a minimum community contribution of 25 percent. Kibinge Coffee contributed funding, along with resources such as office supplies.

For his part, Ayers developed the six-person team that led the camp sessions and groups and provided guidance to the young participants. He worked as the logistical coordinator of the camp and empowered local youth and leaders to facilitate the trainings and sessions during the camp.

The week-long camp attracted 60 out-of-school youth ages 16-30. Participants interacted with professionals not only from

Kibinge Coffee but also from an array of public and private organizations, including Uganda Coffee Development Authority, a local art organization, a group for bark-cloth makers, local government, the demonstration farm where the camp was hosted and, of course, Peace Corps. They were also exposed to a number of new farming techniques, which they were invited to practice in a supportive setting with guidance from instructors. Sessions covered topics such as agricultural practices, the coffee value chain, finances, art, environmental issues, group mobilization and leadership skills. By the end of the camp, six youth groups were established with the goal of launching income-generating activities with support and mentorship from the cooperative.

Within just two months, all six groups opened savings accounts with the Kibinge Coffee Savings and Credit Co-operative, and 14 participants now hold individual accounts. Four of these groups have been issued interest-free loans totaling over 13 million Ugandan shillings to begin mobilizing coffee for the cooperative during the upcoming season. Four of the participants have started home gardens to improve nutrition and increase incomes, while others have established coffee nurseries, opened shops and begun raising poultry and pigs. As part of the camp's continuing education program, the youth are currently participating in financial literacy training with a focus on personal money management. Most recently, three camp participants were hired by the cooperative as part-time staff.

The general manager of Kibinge Coffee, David Lukwata, said that Camp Kibinge "made our youth more focused on various entrepreneurship skills imparted to them during this educative event for a better Kibinge...they are now focused and ready to take on gainful activities."