



## Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://feedthefuture.gov/article/got-milk-uganda-try-building-your-own-dairy-cooperative>

# Got Milk? In Uganda, Try Building Your Own Dairy Cooperative



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Jessica Otto and Margaret Odwar, co-founders of Gulu Community Dairy Farmers Cooperative, Uganda.

As Margaret Odwar, Jessica Otto and five other women huddled together in a refugee camp in northern Uganda, they conceived of an idea. Since then, not only has their idea become a reality, but it has also exceeded their own expectations.

The idea was to form a dairy cooperative. Today, their brainchild, the Gulu Dairy Farmers Cooperative Society Limited, is such a success that it has established—with support from the U.S. African Development Foundation (USADF), a Feed the Future partner agency—the first dairy processing plant in northern Uganda.

The women, as internally displaced persons at the height of the armed insurgency by the Lord's Resistance Army, were desperate to feed their children and ease the poverty of their families. After enrolling some of the other women in the camp, they formed a cooperative. Initially, the cooperative had 56 members and one cow provided by Heifer International, a nongovernmental organization that fights around the world to end hunger and poverty. That lone cow wasn't enough to enable the cooperative to support a full-fledged dairy. Nevertheless, it was a necessary and important step in the right direction.

In the agriculture sector in Uganda, gender equality has been in short supply. Women perform 70 percent of the labor, but they control few of the sector's resources, such as cattle and land. If the members of Gulu Dairy had been men, some of the group's efforts to acquire additional cows might have been easier and more successful. Nonetheless, the women persisted, and it soon paid off.

They continued to add cows to their herd: first eight, then 20 more cows. Gulu Dairy then had a sufficient amount of milk to sell.

As the cooperative soon discovered, however, it didn't have the proper methods for storing the milk that their cows

produced. As a result, some of the milk got too spoiled to sell. This cut into the dairy's revenues.

It was Gulu Dairy's partnership with USADF that helped the women build enough capacity to complete their journey to operating as a full-fledged dairy business. USADF helped them create a pasteurization plant and value-added dairy products such as yogurt. Now, the dairy sells to local businesses and universities and is looking to get certified to distribute throughout the country. It is now ready to train the next generation of dairy farmers, ensuring long-lasting prosperity.

In 2012, Gulu Dairy won the Best Cooperative in Northern Uganda award.

In a victory for gender integration, USADF has supported the women's entry into what has been the male-dominated ownership echelon of Ugandan agriculture. The women are now able to send their children to school, acquire land and buy trucks for transport.

Rose Olea makes 350K Uganda shillings (\$104) a month in dairy sales. She has installed a biogas stove, built a house and earned her husband's admiration for earning an income and contributing to the household.

"We are illiterate, but we earn a salary thanks to this cooperative," said Beatrice Abee, another dairy farmer, adding that now, they wear happy and proud faces, not the faces of victims of war.

Gulu Dairy reflects USADF's commitment to building capacity and resilience by empowering community-level connections and African-led solutions to local challenges. To pave pathways to prosperity, USADF partners with civil society organizations like Gulu Dairy, which are helping to fight against hunger and poverty, and offers the training and the funds to foster sustainable growth.

"Even if there is no food, you can give your child milk," said Otto, highlighting the nutritional value of Gulu Dairy's work to fight hunger and poverty.