

Please scroll down to read more about our goat rearing programme in Budaka District, Eastern Uganda.

Budaka District is a rural area which has a fast-growing population, currently around 220,000, of whom almost 40% are under the age of nine, and 65% under the age of 20. Around half live in deep poverty (according to the UN measure of less than \$1.90 per day).

Although originally a fertile area, there are now serious signs of soil degradation in the district. Crop yields are falling, and with a rapidly expanding population, food insecurity is widespread. Other challenges for villagers in this area include lack safe water and of sanitation facilities. Poor housing is also a problem, with 99% of people 'not in decent homes' according to the most recent census, and around one in five in a temporary dwelling. Our three new programmes link together to tackle these issues.

Goat rearing programme

Surviving largely through subsistence farming, the poorest parents struggle to feed their families. The main crops planted are maize, beans and millet, but yields are low. Diets lack protein and variety, resulting in serious malnutrition, particularly among the under 5s, with almost one in four suffering stunted growth. Our goat-rearing projects, aimed at the poorest women in the villages, tackle these issues.

Why goats? They are relatively easy to rear, adapting well to the local habitat and vegetation and can thrive in variable temperatures and during food and water shortages. They breed all year round in tropical zones such as Uganda, have a short pregnancy of only five months, often producing twins.

The local diet is high in carbohydrates, low in fats, protein and many essential nutrients which goats' milk can provide. But local goat breeds produce very little milk, so are not used as dairy animals. Cross breeding with a high quality dairy goat breed can change this, and improve families' diets.

As well as providing local goats to the poorest families, our project helps local communities with crossbreeding to produce goats which are faster growing and produce more milk and meat than the local goats but which are still easy to raise in the local environment. Beneficiaries are able to earn income from small-scale goat-rearing, while at the same time improving their children's diets. A small herd of goats is also a useful source of financial security, as a kid can be easily and quickly sold for cash should the need arise. One final benefit is that the goats provide useful manure for the vegetable gardens which each household tends, again improving families' diets.

The programme trains the poorest women in village communities in the care and successful breeding of goats. Each group has 30 beneficiaries who each receive a nanny goat of the local breed. The programme also provides two Toggenberg buck goats for cross breeding, a buck shed and a trained local buck keeper whose job it is to care for the bucks and carefully manage the breeding programme, as well as to support the beneficiaries in their care of their goats.

Each beneficiary must return her first born female cross bred kid to the buck keeper. This kid will then be gifted to a new beneficiary, enabling the benefit to be spread more widely. Two Toggenburg bucks are provided for each project in order, and these are also rotated between villages as required, to prevent inbreeding.