



A refugee house built by ADRA.

Photo courtesy of ADRA Uganda Archives.

ADRA Uganda

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Daniel M. Matte, D.Min. (Adventist University of Africa, Nairobi, Kenya), is currently the president of Uganda Union Mission. He previously served as the Uganda Union Mission executive secretary. He also served as president of a field, a departmental director and a frontline pastor. He is married to Sarah Mbambu Matte and they have seven children.

Historical Background

ADRA Uganda is a registered NGO of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It was registered with the government of Uganda on July 24, 1986, and effectively started working with the communities in 1987. Even though ADRA Uganda is an autonomous national NGO, it is part of the international ADRA network which was established in 1956 by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists to respond to disaster relief needs and development needs in vulnerable communities and to address the ever-recurrent humanitarian needs at international and local levels.¹ ADRA Uganda receives inspiration and motivation from this international network with its rich history of humanitarian, development, and relief work. Over the years, the activities of ADRA Uganda have been carried out in response to the felt and identified needs in the communities. The purpose for ADRA Uganda is “To serve humanity so all may live as God intended.”

Governance

ADRA Uganda operations are overseen by a governing board composed of professionals of various backgrounds who bring into the organization a rich mix of experience and talent. The members of the board also sit on technical committees to look into the various aspects of the organization to ensure that operations are on course, finances are well managed, and priorities are well managed by the various program managers. The organization management and project committees ensure the coordination of the various internal operations of the organization. Quality is further ensured through specific program donor evaluation and auditing, peer review evaluations, and annual overall administration audits. The organization observes a strict code of conduct and operational values which inform its organizational culture and behavior.²

Management

The current Administrative Committee (AdCom) includes the country director, program director, finance and administration director, HR manager and MEAL manager. AdCom handles the organization’s operations, while the Board of Directors, which meets once a quarter of each year, is almost entirely made up of Ugandan nationals.

Areas of Intervention

For the past 30 years, ADRA Uganda has implemented humanitarian, disaster relief, and development interventions in various communities in key areas such as: livelihoods and agriculture; disaster and relief; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); community health; economic and financial empowerment; hunger and nutrition interventions; education and skills; and programs targeting children, gender equality, and social justice.³

ADRA Uganda has helped construct decent homes for the vulnerable, including refugees. In the area of education, it has constructed 141 schools with 1,128 classrooms, 420 school pit latrines, 250 teacher houses, 30 school administrative blocks, etc.⁴ ADRA Uganda serves all people equally regardless of their gender, ethnicity,

political affiliation, or faith. It does its work in collaboration with donor agencies, the government of Uganda, local government leaders in the area of operation, and recipient communities.

Sustainable Livelihoods: The proportion of the poor in Uganda rose from 19.7 percent in 2013 to about 21.4 percent in 2018.⁵ The majority of the working population lives in rural areas. More than 70 percent of farming takes place with limited or no technology.⁶ There is widespread use of primitive tools, such as the hand hoe. There is a need for farmers to have access to modern science, technology, and innovation. Several other initiatives are being promoted, such as developing value chains, farmers' markets, and field schools.

For more than 32 years, ADRA has been working with several partners, including faith-based communities and community-based organizations in more than 20 districts. ADRA provides a positive impact on SDGs 1, 2, and 13. ADRA has improved the livelihood indicators and income of more than 200,000 direct beneficiaries over the last five years. It is implementing interventions such as:

climate-smart agriculture

sustainable use and management of the environment and natural resources

food and nutrition security⁷

income enhancement

vocational skills training

market linkages, advocacy

financial literacy and inclusion (VSLAs and SACCOs)

providing start-up seed funds and input that promotes value chains

innovative approaches like Farmer Field Schools (FFS) and Farmer Market Schools (FMS).

Health, Nutrition, and WASH⁸

Uganda's high morbidity and mortality rates are mainly due to communicable diseases, which comprise more than half of the burden of disease. Malaria, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, respiratory tract infections, diarrheal diseases, epidemic-prone diseases, and vaccine-preventable diseases are the leading causes of illness and death. Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) are also on the rise, as maternal and perinatal conditions contribute to the high mortality rate. The unmet need for family planning is 28 percent. Infant mortality was 43 births per 1,000 live births. Under-five mortality was 64 births per 1,000 live births, and maternal mortality was 375 births

per 100,000 live births in 2017.⁹ The causes of child mortality include malaria, diarrhea, and malnutrition. However, maternal mortality causes are usually bleeding, infection, unsafe abortion, eclampsia, and obstruction in labor.¹⁰

ADRA has more than 25 years of experience in health, nutrition, and WASH interventions contributing to SDG 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5.2, 3.7, and responding to: maternal and child health, malaria control, HIV and AIDS, capacity building for health workers, construction, equipping health centers, and advocacy for improved health services—including an ultra-modern health center for refugees and host communities in Kyaka II Refugee Settlement, Kyegegwa District; and more recently for COVID-19 patients in Acholi and Karamoja.

ADRA employs a holistic approach focused on behavior change, community and health system strengthening, and advocacy at the household, community, and service provider levels. More than 320,000 people have benefited from access to good health practices; safe, equitable, and sustainable clean water; and acceptable sanitation and hygienic practices for the last five years. Community groups are formed and trained to respond to community needs and act as links between the communities and the Ministry of Health.

Education

The Ugandan government considers free primary and secondary education as a fundamental right and a better solution for the reduction of poverty. Enrollment in primary schools has been growing by about two percent per annum for the past 11 years (7,537,971 pupils in 2007 to 9,049,531 in 2018). The government has made efforts to close the gender gap at the primary level. However, girls are still disproportionately challenged when seeking to enroll in secondary school and beyond. Although 95 percent of children can attend primary school, dropout rates are so high that in 2016, 64.5 percent¹¹ of students failed to finish primary school, and only one in three who begin primary education make it to high school.

Additionally, fewer than half of all students have adequate sitting and writing space in school. In 2017, 11.8 percent of enrolled students were orphans, and the percentage of orphans declined significantly as they progressed through the school system. The Church of Uganda established the majority of primary schools (26 percent), followed by the Catholic Church (25 percent), with the Seventh-day Adventist Church showing the least number (295), primarily due to liberal policies.¹² In 2020 schools were closed due to COVID-19.¹³

For more than 30 years, ADRA has been active in the education sector, contributing to Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), the Ministry of Education and Sports vision of Quality Education and Sports for All, and the Education Sector Strategic Plans 2, with approaches to increase access, equity, and quality. ADRA's contributions have been in primary education, higher education, business education, technical education, vocational education, and training (BTVET).

The approaches used include:

physical infrastructural development

capacity building of education management structures

advocacy

improvement of the learning environment at schools

strengthening the community involvement in education

In non-formal education, ADRA has championed Functional Adult Education (FAL) and REFLECT in four regions, contributing significantly to literacy and numeracy improvement. ADRA has been commended for working closely with the Ministry of Education and local government education departments and more often it has collaborated with other actors in the country's education sector.

Humanitarian and Emergency Management

With more than 1,400,000 refugees, Uganda is Africa's largest refugee hosting country and one of the five largest refugee hosting countries in the world.¹⁴ Uganda has a long history of welcoming refugees and asylum seekers. Currently, Uganda hosts refugees and asylum seekers from more than ten countries. This number is predicted to reach 1,800,000 by 2021.¹⁵ The most prominent refugees are South Sudanese and Congolese, mostly living in underserved settlements in rural districts and supported by the World Food Program. There are currently 63 percent of primary school-aged children and 92 percent of secondary school-aged children who do not attend school. On average, 22 percent of students are in grades lower than expected for their age. There is a high demand for psychological support and protection, particularly among unaccompanied children who are separated from their parents, people with disabilities and serious diseases, traumatized persons, and so on.

Children represent 60 percent of refugees and asylum seekers in Uganda.¹⁶ Refugee children are in grave danger due to the humanitarian crisis, including family separation; physical, sexual, and gender-based violence; psychological distress; child labor; and other forms of violence.

With an annual firewood consumption of more than one million tons, the availability of clean and sufficient energy sources for electricity, lighting, and cooking remains a major challenge in refugee settlements in Uganda. Eighteen percent of refugee households have low food consumption scores, while 38 percent of refugee households depend on agriculture for their livelihoods.¹⁷ ADRA has responded to emergencies and recoveries for more than 32 years, targeting the disaster-affected communities in western, eastern, and northern Uganda.

Interventions include food/cash transfers, protection, water, sanitation, hygiene, livelihoods, education, nutrition, and environmental protection for persons of concern, including women, children, girls, boys, and men.

The government and humanitarian partners recognize ADRA for making significant contributions to the Refugee and Host Population Empowerment (ReHoPe) Strategic Framework. ADRA is also involved in supporting Pillars 2 and 3 of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and achieving the objectives and outcomes of the National Policy for Disaster Preparedness and Management under the office of the prime minister.

ADRA's National Emergency Management Plan (NEMP) is in place to enable the organization to respond to any national crises within a 48-hour timeframe. ADRA is compliant with Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) on Quality and Accountability, SPHERE Standards, and Do No Harm. In the past five years, more than one million people have been supported with lifesaving interventions through integrated approaches that include early warning and community-led disaster risk reduction (DRR).

Partnerships

ADRA Uganda has partnered with several development agencies, government ministries and departments, and educational and research institutions to deliver development programs to communities throughout the country. Collaboration has become one of the best ways to execute efficiently, share lessons learned, and combine expertise to maximize project success. It has developed excellent relationships with international and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), and central and local governments. Frequently, ADRA partners with organizations to achieve our shared objectives. This includes religious/faith-based institutions in Uganda.

For better relations, ADRA has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with various government ministries, including the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Water, local district government, and other branches of government and the private sector.

Role and Position in the Country

Over the years as more donations have come in to support ADRA Uganda's humanitarian and development projects, the organization's capacity has also grown.¹⁸ Today ADRA Uganda employs a team of technically competent and experienced staff who design, manage, and implement its programs following community needs, donors, the government of Uganda, and ADRA network policies and requirements.

Future of ADRA Uganda

As long as the need for humanitarian work and social development exists in Uganda, the services of ADRA Uganda will remain relevant and needed. What ADRA Uganda must build in its operations is capacity to adjust to the ever changing social, political, and economic dynamics, both at national and international levels. The need to strengthen internal self-support is an area that needs to be carefully studied, explored, and systematically

pursued now that the government is opening up to allow NGOs to engage in income generation. Second, the need to intentionally preserve and deepen the cooperation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and ADRA Uganda is critical in ensuring continued growth and success in service delivery for the present and future of ADRA and for the Church itself.

List of Directors

Steven Kabuye (1986-1988); Leon Trupp (1989-1991); Barry Chapman (1992-1994); John Palmer (January 1995-April 1995); Milton McHenry (May 1995-July 1995); Doris Jorgensen (1995-2000); Goran Hansen (2000-2001); Niels Rasmussen (2002-2009); Edward Damulira (2009-2010); Thore Karlsson (2011-2015); Charles Ed II Aguilar (2016-present).

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NOTES

1. <https://adra.org/about-adra>, accessed April 22, 2021.
2. Charles Ed II Aguilar, personal knowledge of the author as the ADRA Uganda director.
3. Daniel Matte, personal knowledge as chairperson of ADRA Uganda governing board.
4. ADRA Uganda Country Annual Reports, ADRA Uganda archives, Kampala, Uganda.
5. Uganda Bureau of Statistics, <https://www.ubos.org/statistical-abstract-2019/>.
6. Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, "Performance Report: Financial Year 2015 to 2016," <https://www.agriculture.go.ug/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/MAAIF-Performance-Report-2015-2016.pdf>.
7. In line with Uganda's nutrition policy and Malabo Declaration of the African Union (No. 33)
8. WASH is an acronym that stands for "water, sanitation and hygiene."
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