



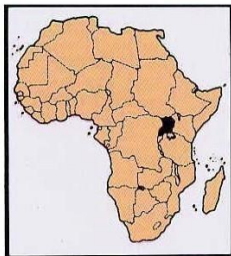
Università di Napoli Federico II
Gulu University of Uganda

GULU-NAP

COOPERATION PROJECT BETWEEN THE GULU UNIVERSITY OF UGANDA AND THE UNIVERSITY OF NAPLES FEDERICO II

SOCIO-POLITICAL-ECONOMIC CONTEXT OF NORTHERN UGANDA

The region of northern Uganda, with the capital city of Gulu, has been battered for 21 years, starting in 1987, by a fratricidal war led by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a violent paramilitary group based on an ideology that is a mix of Christian syncretism and traditional African Christianity and elements of traditional African religion. There is still no reliable tally of the damage caused by the war; there is talk of more than 100,000 dead, 30,000 children kidnapped to become child soldiers and sex slaves, an incredibly high number of people horribly mutilated.



The destructions of the LRA were concentrated particularly against isolated villages and farms, leading to the rapid abandonment of the populous northern Ugandan countryside and the complete annihilation of agricultural production. More than 1,200,000 people were forced to live for decades in degrading and overcrowded Internal Displaced People (IDP- camps).

The continuous and prolonged state of insecurity induced anyone with any professional skills to emigrate to other areas, depriving northern Uganda of an entire ruling class; along with the population schools have also been displaced, the already precarious health network has completely collapsed.

The overcrowding and promiscuity of the IDP camps has created continuous health emergencies: cholera and malaria mow down the population, malnutrition has become an endemic problem, the incidence of HIV in northern Uganda has exceeded peaks of 26-28%!

The new generations, born and raised in IDP camps, have completely lost even the most rudimentary knowledge of traditional farming techniques.

The evacuation of the camps, which began in 2009, and the return, even forced, to the villages of origin has aggravated, if possible, living conditions!

THE BIRTH OF THE PROJECT

To cope with the consequences of the war, the Ugandan government accepted the Italian Cooperation's suggestion to start a 'Battle for Peace' by investing in Education and Higher Education in Northern Uganda with the foundation of the University of Gulu in 2002.

Prof. Luigi Greco, who was there to tackle the extremely serious phenomenon of child malnutrition, became the promoter of a cooperation framework agreement to support, within the framework of a project called GULU-NAP, the development of a new Faculty of Medicine in Northern Uganda. In 2004, the GULU-NAP protocol was signed as part of an agreement between the Gulu University of Uganda and the University of Naples Federico II.

The urgency of training medical personnel on site can be summed up in the following data: in northern Uganda there is 1 doctor for every 40,000 inhabitants, the average life expectancy is 50 years, infant mortality is 10 times higher than in developed countries, causes of death are mainly common and treatable diseases.

In 2006, the collaboration between the Science Faculty and the Science Education Faculty, later Science Faculty, of Gulu began and GULU-NAP Science was born; in 2007, GULU-NAP Agriculture was born from the cooperation of the Agriculture Faculties of the two universities.

GULU-NAP MEDICINE

Setting, Values and Characteristics of the new Faculty of Medicine at Gulu University

- innovative method of student-centred training
- training of doctors dedicated to the care of patients and the community;
- emphasising disease prevention in response to community needs;
- contributing to development by focusing on human resources;
- transfer know-how and help build technical and organisational skills;
- facilitate Uganda's inclusion in the international knowledge circuit;
- experiment with a new form of cooperation aimed at self-centred, non-dependent growth;
- pay non-sporadic and non-charitable attention to development issues;
- emphasise medical fields directly applicable to the needs of the population, such as:
 - primary care
 - disease prevention
 - maternal and child health
 - tropical medicine
 - the integrated therapeutic approach
- adopt the general trend towards scientific excellence
- be complementary to other Ugandan universities, dedicating core activities to integrated teaching, to stimulate the training of doctors not only with a solid scientific basis, but also with significant clinical experience and complete dedication to patients.

Funding

GULU-NAP initially benefited from \$780,000 in funding recovered from a counterpart of a rice donation, continued with funding from institutions in Campania (University of Naples Federico II (lead), Campania Region, Province and Municipality of Naples, liberal donations from Neapolitan citizens) and then with funds from Italian Cooperation from 2008 to 2010.

Teaching facilities and results of the Faculty of Medicine in Gulu

- Initial recovery and expansion of a ruined wing of the Gulu Regional Hospital. Three lecture halls, a multimedia room, library, a large biochemistry-physiology laboratory, a septic room, studies and offices were built.
- The educational facilities were subsequently housed in a large building, inaugurated on 23 January 2010 by the Italian Ambassador to Uganda. The structure, named 'Italian Block', has three floors with 9 classrooms, various laboratories and a library.
- Over time, an autonomous Faculty of Medicine, all Ugandan, has been developed, with about 30 lecturers. The clinical and diagnostic departments of the two hospitals dedicated to the training of students were rehabilitated and developed.
- The operation of the teaching and scientific facilities dedicated to the Faculty of Medicine in 2010 was at full capacity.
- The presence of an established Faculty of Medicine in Uganda has attracted a number of prestigious international partners (USA, Canada, UK, Denmark, Germany, Sweden).
- In 2010, the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Gulu had:
 - 374 Students (85% with Ugandan Government Scholarships)
 - 30 Lecturers (Professors, Lecturers, Assistants) with:
- a decent scientific-didactic structure for the training of Doctors;
- two Clinical Hospitals (Teaching Hospital): the Regional Hospital of Gulu and the Italian Missionary Hospital of St. Mary's Hospital Lacor.
- 85 percent of students passed national level examinations with results judged to be excellent; the quality of education obtained by the students was judged, by international committees, 'of international level'.
- On 23 January 2010, the top 40 Doctors graduated with excellent results; 40 out of 52 students (80%).
- Students designed and produced the '*Gulu Medical Journal*' currently in its 5th edition and organized the first International Mental Health Congress in Uganda.

Role of the Italian Cooperation

Since 2003, the Italian Cooperation has provided crucial financial support to establish the Faculty. The Italian Cooperation subsequently developed an integrated plan to support the Faculty of Medicine for the years 2007-2009, also through the strengthening of the two teaching hospitals in Gulu and Lacor and the local health districts in Amuru and Gulu.

For the Faculty of Medicine, the plan provided for the expansion of the library, the strengthening of the Internet network, the equipment of teaching and research laboratories, a plan to finance student research activities for the thesis, and a plan to support practical activities carried out by students in the Gulu area. Finally, resources have been made available to train another 9 young assistants to the Master's degree in order to train as University Readers.



2003: the initial situation



2004: the renovated premises, classrooms



2006: one of the workshops



2007 'Italian visiting professors'



**2010, the new premises of the Faculty of Medicine:
the 'Italian Block'**



2010, the first medical graduates

Involvement of Italian Specialists in the Faculty of Medicine in Gulu

Fifteen paediatrics residents from Italian universities did an internship of at least 4 months at the Department of Paediatrics of the Faculty of Medicine in Gulu, working full time in the Children's Ward of St. Mary's Hospital.

The experience of all the Italian doctors had a very high training value, both in terms of technical professionalism and ethical experience. The young Italians were exposed, in only 4 months, to a quantity of professional interventions that they often cannot achieve in 5 years of specialisation in Italy. Their presence also had a significant impact on Ugandan students in paediatrics training.

Prospects for the future

The Faculty of Medicine in Gulu is progressing at a rapid and, in many respects, unexpected pace and already constitutes a significant presence in Uganda after only one training cycle.

The students are the most valuable resource with their enthusiasm, but the cohort of lecturers is also strengthening considerably. The near future still depends a great deal on Italian collaboration both in terms of teaching methodology and on a broader cultural and organisational level. In fact, it is now time to develop research structures and departments that can conduct significant scientific activity while attracting resources.

A provision for continuity of post-graduate training is therefore necessary, since all graduates who wish to obtain a specialisation will have to leave Northern Uganda to travel to the capital Kampala. This will cause a dramatic drain of qualified human resources, for which the entire project was set up.

Within the framework of GULU-NAP MEDICINE, plans are being made to develop a post-graduate training phase by activating three-year Masters (Specialisations) in the priority areas of medicine. It is therefore necessary to develop a strategic plan that allows both the aggregation of highly qualified human resources and the procurement of financial resources that are indispensable to curb the diaspora of young doctors, through the offer of scholarships to carry out qualified research.

Documentation

A more extensive and detailed description of the activities carried out by the GULU-NAP MEDICINE Project is available on the webpage: < <http://www.gulunap.unina.it> >.

GULU-NAP SCIENCE

Setting, Values and Characteristics

- innovative method of student-centred training
- intervention on future teachers, Bachelor in Science Education students, through:
 - o reformulation of the curricula,
 - o organisation of workshops and use of low/no cost labs,
 - o training young lectures,
 - o utilisation and reworking of materials from Science Education Research.
- Intervention on in-service teachers in secondary schools. More than 50% are absolutely not qualified (with only a high school diploma), this severely limits the access of North Ugandan students to higher education (only 3% of government scholarship recipients are North Ugandan students compared to 12% of the population): the activity is conducted through NUTS (Northern Uganda Teachers of Science) Workshops, an experiential and total immersion training programme aimed at
 - o reconstruction of disciplinary knowledge,
 - o familiarisation with group work,
 - o production of reproducible, low-cost experiments based on local materials.
- Production of notes to be used as textbooks.

GULU-NAP AGRARIAN

Setting, Values and Characteristics

This collaboration provides an ideal background for the implementation of development projects focused on improving food production in environmentally sustainable ways.

The main objectives are:

- improvement and harmonisation of curricula at Bachelor level in relation to the development and modernisation of the agricultural sector in the region;
- development of agro-cultural research capacity at the University of Gulu, with special focus on the sustainable use of natural resources and the reduction of environmental impact and degradation.

Staff training already started three years ago with the participation of Gulu University in UNINA's Master's and PhD programmes.

