

Uganda Profile

GEOGRAPHY

Area: 93,070 sq. miles; about the size of Oregon.

Cities: Capital--Kampala (2002 pop. 1.2 million). Other cities--Jinja, Gulu, Mbale, Mbarara.

Terrain: 18% inland water and swamp; 12% national parks, forest, and game reserves; 70% forest, woodland, grassland.

Climate: In the northeast, semi-arid--rainfall less than 50 cm. (20 in.); in southwest, rainfall 130 cm. (50 in.) or more. Two dry seasons: Dec.-Feb. and June-July.

PEOPLE

Nationality: Noun and adjective--Ugandan(s).

Population (2007): 30.9 million.

Annual growth rate (2004 est.): 4.0%.

Ethnic groups: African 99%, European, Asian, Arab 1%.

Religions (2007): Christian 85%, Muslim 12%, other 2%.

Languages: English (official); Luganda and Swahili widely used; other Bantu and Nilotic languages.

Education: Attendance (2000; primary school enrollment, public and private)--89%. Literacy (2003)--70%.

Health: Infant mortality rate--86/1,000. Life expectancy--45.3 yrs.

GOVERNMENT

Type: Republic.

Constitution: Ratified July 12, 1995; promulgated October 8, 1995.

Independence: October 9, 1962.

Branches: Executive--president, vice president, prime minister, cabinet. Legislative--parliament. Judicial--Magistrate's Court, High Court, Court of Appeals, Supreme Court.

National holiday: Independence Day, October 9.

ECONOMY

GDP (2006/2007): \$10.8 billion; \$320.00 annual per capita (2006)

Inflation rate (2006/2007): 7.6%.

Natural resources: Copper, cobalt, limestone, phosphate, oil.

Agriculture: Cash crops--coffee, tea, cotton, tobacco, sugar cane, cut flowers, vanilla. Food crops--bananas, corn, cassava, potatoes, millet, pulses. Livestock and fisheries--beef, goat meat, milk, Nile perch, tilapia.

Industry: Processing of agricultural products (cotton ginning, coffee curing), cement production, light consumer goods, textiles.

Trade: Exports (2006/2007)--\$1.5 billion: coffee, fish and fish products, tea, electricity, horticultural products, vanilla, cut flowers, remittances from abroad. Major markets--EU, Kenya, South Africa, U.K., U.S. Imports (2006/2007)--\$2.5 billion: capital equipment, vehicles, petroleum, medical supplies, chemical, cereals. Major suppliers--OPEC countries, Kenya, EU, India, South Africa, China, U.S.

PEOPLE AND HISTORY

Africans of three main ethnic groups--Bantu, Nilotic, and Nilo-Hamitic--constitute most of the population. The Bantu are the most numerous and include the Baganda, which, with 18% of the population, constitute the largest single ethnic group. Individual ethnic groups in the southwest include the Banyankole and Bahima, 10%; the Bakiga, 8%; the Banyarwanda, 6%; the Bunyoro, 3%; and the Batoro, 3%. Residents of the north, largely Nilotic, include the Langi, 6%, and the Acholi, 4%. In the northwest are the Lugbara, 4%, and the Karamojong, 2%, occupy the considerably drier, largely pastoral territory in the northeast. The Basoga, 8% and the Bagisu, 5% are among ethnic groups in the East. Europeans, Asians, and Arabs make up about 1% of the population with other groups accounting for the remainder.

Uganda's population is predominately rural, and its population density highest in the southern regions. Until 1972, Asians constituted the largest non-indigenous ethnic group in Uganda. In that year, the Idi Amin regime expelled 50,000 Asians, who had been engaged in trade, industry, and various professions. In the years since Amin's overthrow in 1979, Asians have slowly returned and now number around 30,000. Other non-indigenous people in Uganda include Arabs, Western missionaries, non-governmental organization (NGO) workers, diplomats, and business people.

When Arab traders moved inland from their enclaves along the Indian Ocean coast of East Africa and reached the interior of Uganda in the 1830s, they found several African kingdoms with well-developed political institutions dating back several centuries. These traders were followed in the 1860s by British explorers searching for the source of the Nile River. Protestant missionaries entered the country in 1877, followed by Catholic missionaries in 1879.

In 1888, control of the emerging British "sphere of interest" in East Africa was assigned by royal charter to the Imperial British East Africa Company, an arrangement strengthened in 1890 by an Anglo-German agreement confirming British dominance over Kenya and Uganda. In 1894, the Kingdom of Buganda was placed under a formal British protectorate.

Britain granted internal self-government to Uganda in 1961, with the first elections held on March 1, 1961. Milton Obote, leader of the majority coalition in the National Assembly, became prime minister and led Uganda to formal independence on October 9, 1962. On January 25, 1971, Obote's government was ousted in a military coup led by armed forces commander Idi Amin Dada. Amin declared himself president, dissolved the parliament, and amended the constitution to give himself absolute power.

Idi Amin's 8-year rule produced economic decline, social disintegration, and massive human rights violations. More than 100,000 Ugandans were brutally murdered during Amin's reign of terror; some authorities place the figure over 300,000.

In October 1978, Tanzanian armed forces repulsed an incursion of Amin's troops into Tanzanian territory. The Tanzanian force, backed by Ugandan exiles, waged a war of liberation against Amin's troops and Libyan soldiers sent to help him. On April 11, 1979, Kampala was captured, and Amin fled with his remaining forces.

After Amin's removal, several transitional phases led to elections which returned Obote to power. Under Obote, the security forces had one of the world's worst human rights records. In their efforts to stamp out an insurgency led by Yoweri Museveni's National Resistance Army (NRA), they laid waste to a substantial section of the country, especially in the Luwero area north of Kampala.

Obote ruled until July 27, 1985, when an army brigade, composed mostly of ethnic Acholi troops and commanded by Lt. Gen. Basilio Olara-Okello, took Kampala and proclaimed a military government. Obote fled to exile in Zambia. The NRA continued fighting, seized Kampala in late January 1986, and assumed control of the country, forcing Okello to flee north into Sudan. Museveni's forces organized a government with Museveni as president.

Museveni was reelected to a second five-year term in March 2001. A July 2005 national referendum resulted in the adoption of a multiparty system of government and the subsequent inclusion of opposition parties in elections and government. In February 2006, the country held its first multiparty general elections since President Museveni came to power in 1986. Ruling NRM candidate President Museveni was declared the winner, giving him a third term in office following the passage of a controversial amendment in June 2005 to eliminate presidential term limits.

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Since assuming power, Museveni and his government have largely put an end to the human rights abuses of earlier governments, initiated substantial economic liberalization and general press freedom, and instituted economic reforms in accord with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and donor governments.

The vicious and cult-like Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), which seeks to overthrow the Ugandan Government, has murdered and kidnapped civilians in the north and east since 1986. Although the LRA does not threaten the stability of the government, LRA violence at one time displaced up to 1.7 million people, creating a humanitarian catastrophe, particularly when they were forced into camps for their own protection. The Uganda Army launched "Operation Iron Fist" against LRA rebels in northern Uganda in 2002 and conducted operations against LRA sanctuaries in southern Sudan with the permission of the Sudanese Government. The Sudanese Government had previously supported the LRA. The peace process is ongoing. Many northern Ugandans are leaving the camps and returning to their villages.

ECONOMY

Uganda's economy has great potential. Endowed with significant natural resources, including ample fertile land, regular rainfall, and mineral deposits, it appeared poised for rapid economic growth and development at independence. However, chronic political instability and erratic economic management produced a record of persistent economic decline that left Uganda among the world's poorest and least-developed countries.

Since assuming power in early 1986, Museveni's government has taken important steps toward economic rehabilitation.

The country's infrastructure--notably its transportation and communications systems that were destroyed by war and neglect--is being rebuilt. Recognizing the need for increased external support, Uganda negotiated a policy framework paper with the IMF and the World Bank in 1987. It subsequently began implementing economic policies designed to restore price stability and sustainable balance of payments, improve capacity utilization, rehabilitate infrastructure, restore producer incentives through proper price policies, and improve resource mobilization and allocation in the public sector. Uganda's macroeconomic policies are sound and contributed to a 7% growth rate in fiscal year 2006-2007, compared to 5.1% in FY 2005-2006. Inflation, which ran at 240% in 1987 and 42% in June 1992, was 5.1% in 2003, but bounced up to 7.7% in 2007, well above the government's annual target average of 5%, as food prices rose.

Agricultural products supply nearly all of Uganda's foreign exchange earnings, with coffee (of which Uganda is Africa's second leading producer) accounting for about 19% and fish 15.5% of the country's exports in 2002. Exports of non-traditional products, including apparel, hides, skins, vanilla, vegetables, fruits, cut flowers, and fish are growing, while traditional exports such as cotton, tea, and tobacco continue to be mainstays.

Most industry is related to agriculture. The industrial sector is being rehabilitated to resume production of building and construction materials, such as cement, reinforcing rods, corrugated roofing sheets, and paint. Domestically produced consumer goods include plastics, soap, cork, beer, and soft drinks.

Uganda has about 28,000 miles of roads, of which 6,213 miles are main roads and 21,747 miles are feeder roads. Only 1,864 miles are paved, and most roads radiate from Kampala. The country has about 800 miles of rail lines, but most of it is not currently in use. Uganda's important road and rail links to Mombasa serve its transport needs and also those of its neighbors-Rwanda, Burundi, and parts of Congo and Sudan. An international airport is at Entebbe on the shore of Lake Victoria, some 20 miles south of Kampala.

U.S. - UGANDAN RELATIONS

Although U.S.-Ugandan relations were strained during the rule of Idi Amin in the 1970s, relations improved after Amin's fall. In mid-1979, the United States reopened its embassy in Kampala.

Bilateral relations between the United States and Uganda have been good since Museveni assumed power, and the United States has welcomed his efforts to end human rights abuses and to pursue economic reform. Uganda is a strong supporter of the global war against terrorism.

U.S. development assistance in Uganda has the overall goal of reducing mass poverty. Most U.S. program assistance is focused in the areas of health, education and agriculture. Both the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Centers for Disease Control have major programs to fight the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

U.S. - Ugandan relations also benefit from significant contributions to health care, nutrition, education, and park systems from U.S. missionaries, non-governmental organizations, private universities, HIV/AIDS researchers, and wildlife organizations. Expatriate Ugandans living in the U.S. also promote stronger links between the two countries.

(Facts and figures compiled from the U.S. State Department website)