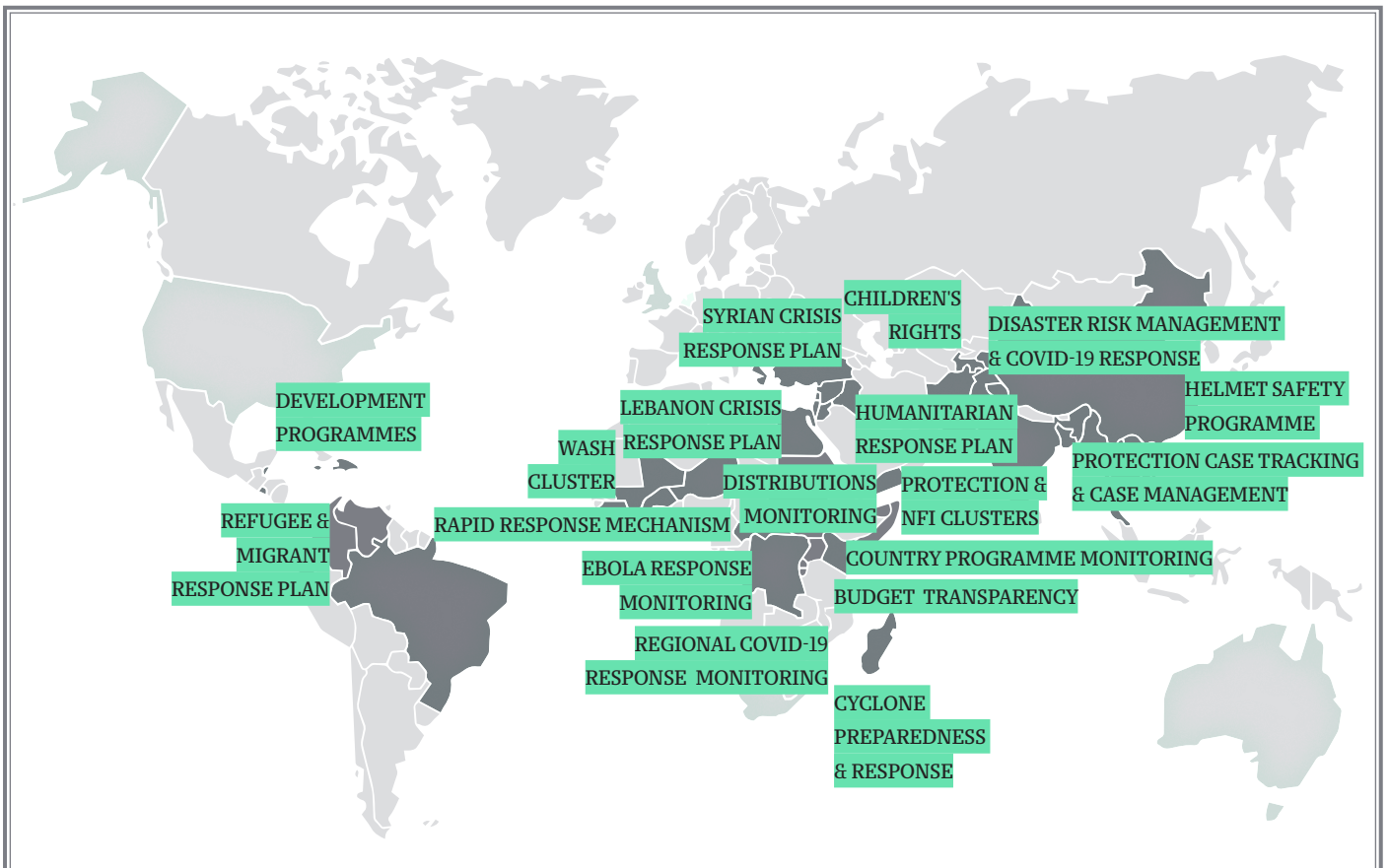




Case Study

From strategic to project level data, the AVSI Foundation in Uganda elevates evidence-based M&E with a user-friendly, cost-effective, centralized MIS platform



Executive Summary

The AVSI Foundation¹ is a non-profit organization founded in 1972 implementing development and humanitarian aid projects in 33 countries. The AVSI Foundation started its operations in northern Uganda in 1984².

Today, the M&E team in the AVSI Foundation in Uganda is responsible for tracking key indicators for multiple projects, from project outputs all the way up to the strategic goals of the country programmes and is using ActivityInfo to centralize reporting and measure progress towards them.

In Uganda, the AVSI Foundation has more than 22 projects in multiple sectors: economic recovery and livelihoods, agriculture, environment and energy, health, food security and nutrition, disability, education including early childhood care and development, protection including child protection and psychosocial support programs and water and sanitation.

Thanks to evidence-based monitoring and evaluation, the performance of every project can be improved and programmes become more transparent and accountable.

Also, the organization can improve the internal operations, promote learning and data-driven decision making, and allocate resources more effectively.

The AVSI Foundation in Uganda selected ActivityInfo as a solution to the lack of a centralized Management Information System (MIS) for the country programmes monitoring. The decision was taken following a live training given by the ActivityInfo team, in Nairobi.

The organization wished to simplify data entry, data storage and analysis for their programmes. The M&E team needed a centralized system to support the reporting activities to various key stakeholders, such as donors and the AVSI Foundation Headquarters.

The M&E team created a database on their own in ActivityInfo and trained their team in April 2020. The platform was welcomed because database design is easy and flexible. This allows the M&E team to apply changes to forms and databases any time. In addition, the organization values that data entry and analysis of large volumes of data can be done quickly and easily. Other important factors are the import and export

features, the simple built-in reporting tools, the audit logs and the mobile data collection app.

Today, the organization is using the platform to aggregate and monitor the data of over 22 projects at the strategic level. The M&E team also supports the use of the platform at the project level. This can be a cost-effective alternative to the multiple different systems used by the different projects. It can reduce for example the cost and the time spent in designing and maintaining multiple separate systems to support information management at the project level.

For the future, the AVSI Foundation in Uganda sees various opportunities related to the generation and dissemination of knowledge.

We would like to thank Mr. **John Paul Nyeko**, M&E advisor in the AVSI Foundation for his valuable insights for this Case Study as well as Miss **Dianah Nakasujja**, Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, Miss **Joan Ashabirwe**, M&E Officer, Mr. **Francis Obita**, MEAL advisor and Miss **Olive Ngamita**, Communications Manager in the AVSI Foundation for their valuable contribution.

1 <https://www.avsi.org/en/page/who-we-are/80/>

2 <https://www.avsi.org/en/country/uganda/25/>

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The AVSI Foundation in Uganda

The AVSI Foundation is a non-profit organization founded in 1972 implementing development and humanitarian aid projects in 33 countries. The AVSI Foundation started its operations in northern **Uganda** in 1984. The focus of the operations have been education, economic empowerment and livelihoods, health, disability, HIV and AIDS, nutrition, child protection, energy, sanitation and hygiene, and emergencies. Today, the AVSI Foundation has multiple projects in different sectors in Uganda: Economic recovery and livelihoods, agriculture, environment and energy, health, food security and nutrition, disability, education including early childhood care and development, protection including child protection and psychosocial support programs and water and sanitation.

Mission: The AVSI Foundation implements cooperation projects in various sectors with a preferential focus on education, meaning that the person is accompanied towards self-discovery and recognition that the other person is a good for me. Each project is conceived of as an instrument to promote this awareness in all persons involved, carries in itself a need for communicating and sharing, and creates an impact capable of generating positive change.

Vision: The AVSI Foundation works for a world where every person, aware of his/her value and dignity, is the main protagonist of his/her own integral development and that of his/her community, even in crisis and emergency contexts.



**'Graduating to Resilience':
Livelihood Activities
Kamwenge District, South West
Uganda**

Aggregating project level data quickly and easily

Organizations such as the AVSI Foundation, which run country programmes with multiple projects, need to manage and access quality information at various levels. This varies from routine data collected at the project level to high level aggregated data at the strategic level. For this reason, the M&E team needs to be able to aggregate project-level indicators regularly in an easy and efficient way.

In the AVSI Foundation in Uganda, each of the 22 projects has been working with its own M&E and Management Information System (MIS). These systems vary from Excel spreadsheets to Access databases and other customized systems. New project systems were developed ad-hoc depending on capacity or financing. ActivityInfo was selected

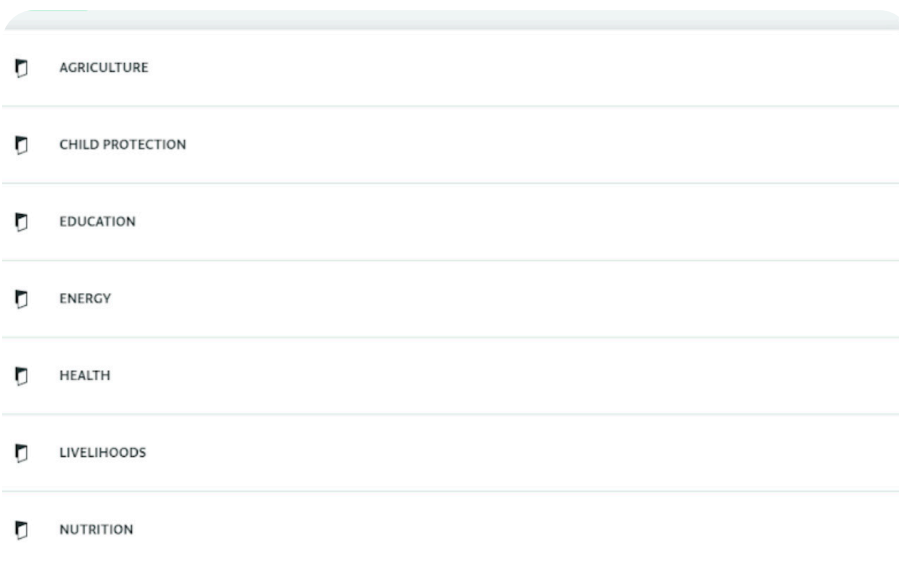
to help the organization aggregate the information collected in these systems and manage, analyze and handle data at the strategic level. Additionally, the organization is now supporting new projects to use the platform for project-level data management too as this can be a cost-effective solution.

As a first step, ActivityInfo allows the AVSI Foundation M&E team in Uganda to bring together the information gathered in the various MIS and M&E systems that each project has developed (outside ActivityInfo). This way the team can aggregate data storage, data analysis and reporting for all the country projects, as whole.

All projects are expected to enter their aggregated information or

upload primary data to the central database in ActivityInfo, at a quarterly frequency. This helps the organization collect Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for each sector. It also allows the organization to track the project implementation progress and to have a clear overview of the contribution of each project to each sector.

“We created folders in ActivityInfo for the different sectors and each specific project is attached to one or more sectors. So projects can aggregate this information and report to the AVSI Uganda sector indicators to which they contribute. That information can be used for data quality check and to inform other analysis and decisions related to the contribution that each of these projects is making”, explains Mr. Nyeko.



This process helps meet reporting requirements towards key stakeholders, such as donors and the Headquarters in Milan.

The aggregated data is used to inform the UNHCR database too, which is also hosted in ActivityInfo, regarding all Refugee Response Projects (RRP) activities of the AVSI Foundation in Uganda.

The data is used to support reporting for the USAID PRS system and the

AVSI Foundation in Milan reporting portal, as well. In addition to accountability, the aggregation of data supports monitoring and learning.

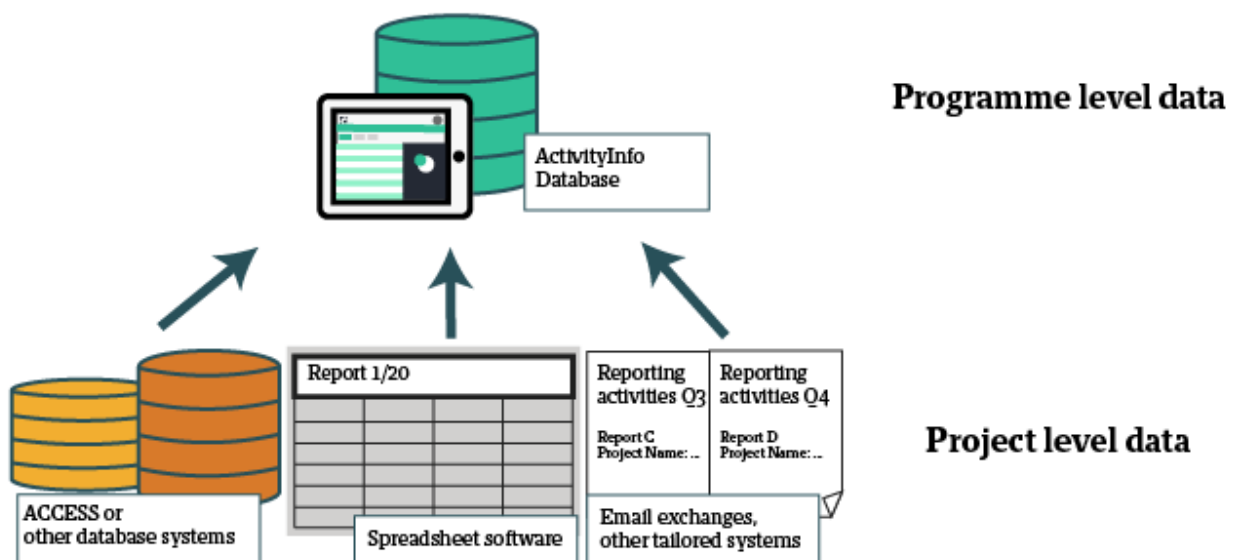
The process provides quick insights related to the direction of the projects and allows the organization to monitor its performance, as a whole, in each sector.

In the future, the AVSI Foundation in Uganda plans to extend the use of the data collected in ActivityInfo to

support review meetings, reflections, as well as the dissemination of results via dashboards and decision making.

Structures of Management Information Systems (MIS)

Information Systems - Structures



A common MIS for project and strategic level data is a cost effective solution

The AVSI Foundation in Uganda values that ActivityInfo offers flexible database design. It becomes easy to reflect any programme change to the forms in ActivityInfo.

The user-friendly data entry interface and the quick upload and export of large volumes of data are important too.

Thanks to these, people working at the project level can save time when adding and managing their information.

Then, with the simple, built-in reporting tools, the M&E team draws conclusions with pivot tables and charts quickly as the data is entered to the platform. Finally, the audit logs

help the M&E team detect changes made to the system.

Viewing the benefits of using ActivityInfo as a Management Information System at the strategic level, the organization is now encouraging new projects to adopt ActivityInfo for their own activities; to track information at the project level.

An example of a project that has already adopted ActivityInfo is the 'Game Connect' project, funded by the Olympic Refugee Foundation (ORF) where the AVSI Foundation is the lead implementing agency.

The 'Game Connect' project is using ActivityInfo as their project level MIS and also uses the ActivityInfo mobile

application for offline data collection. Being already familiar with the Kobo Collect app, the team using the app finds it more relatable and easy to use.

"Now, we are encouraging the different projects, especially the new ones to start off immediately -even when they are designing their MIS at project level- with ActivityInfo.

This way, we will avoid the duplication of what we already have available at the AVSI Foundation country level MIS. So they will be able to upload their information and just link it to the sector indicators that we have created at the country level", notes Mr. Nyeko.



**Game Connect-Field Activities:
Youth Game Therapy Activities**

Thinking about next steps, bringing all project level Management Information Systems to ActivityInfo can bring a lot of value to the organization. Mr. Nyeko explains:

“It will become easier to link up the system and therefore, we will be able to report in a more consistent way because having many different systems can be a challenge.

We will be able to relate the different components and provide

support for different activities in a more holistic way.

Cost-wise, there would be a huge reduction because the AVSI Foundation is paying for ActivityInfo annually and the beauty of it is that we can accommodate as many projects as possible in it.

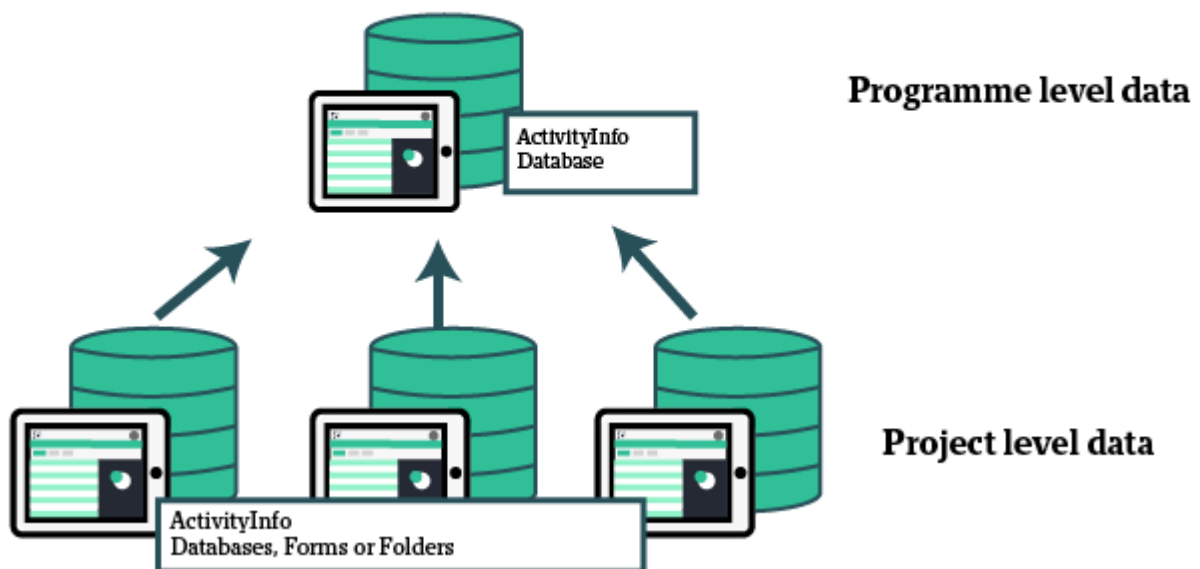
This way different projects don't need to spend resources again to design a system or use a different

data platform as they will be able to utilize the system that is already in place. The system is more cost effective.”

The AVSI Foundation in Uganda also plans to extend the use of the mobile data collection app for offline data collection to support project level primary data collection including evaluation data (baseline, mid-term, operational research and endline) for different projects.

Bringing all Management Information Systems (MIS) to ActivityInfo

Information Systems - Structures



The ActivityInfo team supports information management at all stages

The M&E team of the AVSI Foundation in Uganda got familiar with ActivityInfo in 2019 as they were using it to report to a donor's database. Following a three day live training by the ActivityInfo team in Nairobi, Kenya, the organization decided to adopt the platform for their own information management needs and started using it in April 2020.

With the knowledge gained from that training, the M&E team was ready to set up and design databases and forms in ActivityInfo on their own. They were also equipped to train the rest of the team. Whenever a technical challenge appeared, the M&E team would reach out to the support team of ActivityInfo and quickly overcome it.

"The conception of us adopting ActivityInfo as an 'AVSI Uganda MIS' at the strategic level was a result of the interaction we had at the initial training in Nairobi, in November 2019. Before that, we were only using ActivityInfo while reporting to UNHCR.

When we saw that the system was user-friendly and easy to use, and that so many different projects were reporting in it, it kind of related to our vision for setting up a MIS system for the AVSI Foundation in Uganda that would accommodate all project activities.

After the training, we embarked on developing the AVSI Foundation MIS using the software. It was really

easy because following the training we realized that the system was so simple. And the design, the features were so easy to use.

The general user management functionality within the system was really friendly so we didn't have any technical difficulty to set it up.

Whenever we had a technical question, we would check in with Alex and he would respond quickly and take us through the procedure", describes Mr. Nyeko.

Every time a new feature is released, the team can attend an ActivityInfo webinar or a presentation and always remain up-to-date with the latest developments.



The three-day ActivityInfo training in Nairobi, Kenya

Quick data entry training in just two hours

The M&E team of the AVSI Foundation in Uganda consists of 18 people working across different projects. Part of the team is designing and updating forms, reports and databases in ActivityInfo.

Other colleagues work with data entry to demonstrate the contribution of projects to the country programme.

A team of programme managers uses the platform to follow up and monitor all activities.

The team members who use the platform for data entry were trained by the AVSI Foundation team and within two hours they had mastered data entry as well as importing and exporting data from the platform.



Graduating to Resilience Livelihood Activities in Kamwenge District, South West Uganda - Training of the Program Team



Graduating to Resilience Livelihood Activities in Kamwenge District, South West Uganda - Training of the Program Team

Mr. Nyeko notes:

“The beauty with ActivityInfo is that it is really simplified, to the point that you don’t need any technical capacity to be able to understand it.

So even a training of two hours or maybe even less is enough for people to learn how to enter data. So it is easy for us. We do training for different categories of users.

We started by training the people who would be designing the tools;

we trained about 5 of us. And then we moved to data entry training.

We had a call, an online training, of two hours, and after that we immediately saw data coming in.”

ActivityInfo Table View: Example of Data Entry View for CBT Bi-Annual Tool in ActivityInfo

DATABASES > AVSI UGANDA > SECTORS > LIVELIHOODS > G2R CBT BI-ANNUAL TOOL -20

Form settings

Add record Import Export Select columns Map

Date of Data ... ↑	Project ID	Sector ID	Donor ID	Partner ID Full ...	District Name	Refugee Settle...	Data Collection...	Group ID	Group Name	Household ID	Primary partici...
2038-05-07	G2R	LIV	USAID		Kamwenge	Rwamwanja	2038-05-07	G2R-170	Tupendane	N-023635-R-1	Rusi Nzita
2038-05-06	G2R	LIV	USAID		Kamwenge	Rwamwanja	2038-05-06	G2R-170	Tupendane	N-023306-R-1	Domina uwimana
2038-05-05	G2R	LIV	USAID		Kamwenge	Rwamwanja	2038-05-05	G2R-170	Tupendane	N-023154-R-1	Nyirabashitsi zirip
2038-05-04	G2R	LIV	USAID		Kamwenge	Rwamwanja	2038-05-04	G2R-048	Ubumwe	N-014263-R-1	Zawadi Rehema
2038-05-03	G2R	LIV	USAID		Kamwenge	Rwamwanja	2038-05-03	G2R-048	Ubumwe	N-014232-R-1	Zawadi nsengiyu...
2038-05-02	G2R	LIV	USAID		Kamwenge	Rwamwanja	2038-05-02	G2R-145	Tusaidiyane	N-023266-R-3	Saverina muhawe
2038-05-01	G2R	LIV	USAID		Kamwenge	Rwamwanja	2038-05-01	G2R-256	BWITZI BAKYARA T...	W-047902-H-3	KYOMUKAMA INO
2038-04-30	G2R	LIV	USAID		Kamwenge	Rwamwanja	2038-04-30	G2R-170	Mapendo	N-023137-R-1	Muhavenimana k
2038-04-29	G2R	LIV	USAID		Kamwenge	Rwamwanja	2038-04-29	G2R-046	Maendeleo	N-014036-R-2	Judith Bangamwa
2038-04-28	G2R	LIV	USAID		Kamwenge	Rwamwanja	2038-04-28	G2R-046	Maendeleo	N-014032-R-2	Julienne Boseniba
2038-04-27	G2R	LIV	USAID		Kamwenge	Rwamwanja	2038-04-27	G2R-167	Tuungane	N-025012-R-3	Uwamahoro Ange
2038-04-26	G2R	LIV	USAID		Kamwenge	Rwamwanja	2038-04-26	G2R-146	Mapendo	N-023216-R-1	Masika Bukara
2038-04-25	G2R	LIV	USAID		Kamwenge	Rwamwanja	2038-04-25	G2R-146	Mapendo	N-023614-R-1	Marie Claire Ntiba

Conclusion

Having a management information system in place to support the monitoring and evaluation activities –and consequently the success of a programme– is becoming an intrinsic part of the strategy of organizations working in international development.

The AVSI Foundation in Uganda decided to use ActivityInfo to aggregate data from multiple projects implemented in the country in order to monitor their progress at the strategic level. At the same time, the M&E team realized that the platform can be used to collect, store, and analyze project level data as well. Today, the M&E team provides support to new projects to build their information management systems in the platform too, as a cost effective alternative.

“The challenge of AVSI Foundation in Uganda was the lack of a centralized MIS where all projects would have their data stored and reported in one place. ActivityInfo has been instrumental in providing a platform where now over 22 projects can upload and store their information and their reports”, notes Miss Nakasujja, Senior M&E Officer in the AVSI Foundation in Uganda.

Being a user-friendly platform which requires no technical knowledge to get started, ActivityInfo allowed the M&E team to design databases on their own and to train their team on data entry in less than two hours. For the future, the M&E team sees a lot of potential for generating and disseminating knowledge around their programmes based on the information managed in the platform.



**Graduating to Resilience
Livelihood Activities in
Kamwenge District, South West
Uganda - Livelihood/Business
Activities**

What is ActivityInfo?



ActivityInfo is a service provided by BeDataDriven B.V., a private company based in The Hague in the Netherlands.

It is a software application for data collection and reporting which is accessible over the internet.

Due to its design, it is particularly well-suited for reporting on activities which are geographically dispersed and which are performed by multiple partner organizations.

ActivityInfo builds on the company's 11 years of research and practical experience developing information management systems for humanitarian and development projects.

Originally developed for UNICEF's emergency program in eastern DRC, ActivityInfo has evolved into a mature project and is now used daily by hundreds of organizations working in humanitarian relief, reconstruction, and development assistance worldwide.

You can sign up and try ActivityInfo at:

<https://www.activityinfo.org/signUp>

If you want to invite more than 10 users and get personal support, you can subscribe to one of our plans by sending us an email at:

info@activityinfo.org