

# SEED STORIES

## MAKING A CASE FOR FARMER MANAGED SEED SYSTEMS (FMSS)



NOVEMBER 2022



Eastern and Southern Africa  
Small Scale Farmers' Forum  
**ESAFF - UGANDA**



This publication has been developed and printed under the Sowing Diversity=Harvesting Security (SD=HS) Program with financial support from Oxfam in Uganda.

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**Compilations:** This publication was compiled by; Namatovu Rashidah, Kalinaki Naume and Adem Andrew.

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**Correct citation:** ESAFF Uganda (2022). SEED STORIES: Making a case for Farmer Managed Seed Systems (FMSS).

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

i

## ABOUT THE PUBLICATION

ii

## ABBREVIATIONS

iii

## ABOUT OUR SEED WORK

1

## HIGHLIGHTS

2

## THE STORIES

3

## CONCLUSIONS

27

## NEXT STEPS

28

## ABOUT ESAFF UGANDA

29

# ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The successful development of this publication has been a result of collective efforts from various small-scale farmers who provided case stories for documentation. Sincere appreciation goes to small-scale farmers in Apac, Amuria, Gulu and Adjumani districts for sharing their experiences and knowledge on the impact of the Farmer Field School (FFS) approach and Community Seed Banks in the rural farming communities.

ESAFF Uganda would like to acknowledge Oxfam in Uganda for funding the development and publication of this book through the Sowing Diversity = Harvesting Security (SD=HS) program.

ESAFF Uganda also appreciates the staff and the different stake holders i.e whose views are cited in this publication; Partner Organizations like OXFAM in Uganda, La Via Campesina (LVC), African Collaborative for Healthy Food systems, National Crops Resources Research Institute (NaCCRI), National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO) and National Semi Arid Resources Research Institute (NaSARRI) that made this work possible.

# ABOUT THE PUBLICATION

This publication unpacks and explores seed stories of small-scale farmers on farmer managed seed systems and their contribution to food, nutrition and seed sovereignty, including the diverse benefits they provide to their communities as part of their socio-cultural, economic, spiritual and ecological livelihoods. The publication highlights, exposes and explores how small-scale farmers in the different parts of the country i.e Amuria, Adjumani, Gulu and Apac have emerged from the outrageous seed challenges to identify commendable community led approaches as solutions.

It builds on experiences and lessons learnt from small-scale farmers that have participated in various community led approaches such as the Farmer Field School (FFS) approach, the Community Managed Seed Security Model (CMSS) and Community Seed Banks (CSB) facilitated by ESAFF Uganda.



# ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<b>CSB</b>	Community Seed Banks
<b>CMSS</b>	Community Managed Seed Security Model
<b>ESAFF</b>	Eastern and Southern Africa Small Scale Farmers Forum
<b>FFS</b>	Farmer Field School
<b>LVC</b>	La Via Campesina
<b>PVS</b>	Participatory Variety Selection
<b>PVE</b>	Participatory Variety Enhancement
<b>PGR</b>	Plant Genetic Resources
<b>NaCCRI</b>	National Crops Resources Research Institute
<b>NUS</b>	Neglected and Underutilized Species
<b>FMSS</b>	Farmer Managed Seed System
<b>NaSARRI</b>	National Semi Arid Resources Research Institute



# ABOUT OUR SEED WORK IN UGANDA AND BEYOND

Quality seed is a key input for agriculture with an immediate effect on agricultural production and productivity. ESAFF Uganda promotes Farmer Managed Seed Systems (FMSS) because it addresses issues related to seed security and sovereignty of small-scale farmers. This reduces monopolies in the seed sector and increases farmers' seed choices. Small-scale farmers have since been advocating against laws/policies that prevent them from saving or exchanging seed hence undermining the farmers' rights or seed sovereignty.

Using various models like Community Managed Seed Security model (CMSS) that promotes the protection of seed security and sovereignty of small-scale farmers. The major objective of the Community Managed Seed Security model is to improve agricultural productivity and seed sovereignty of small-scale farmers through increased access to affordable good quality seeds of their choice from a trusted source and within a timely manner.

ESAFF Uganda also uses the Farmer Field School (FFS) approach to improve access to Plant Genetic Resources (PGR) and utilization of local food plants to improve food and nutrition security among small-scale farmers. ESAFF Uganda has so far established 54 FFS in Amuria district Apac and Adjumani district. The FFS approach empowers small-scale farmers through field based experiential learning, enabling them to make their own observations and analyze these observations then use the results as a basis for conclusions and decision-making.

To improve small scale farmers access to good quality seed in their communities, ESAFF Uganda has supported the establishment and strengthening of 4 Community Seed Banks (CSBs) with structures in the districts of Omoro, Amuria, Apac and Adjumani. These CSBs have over 100 indigenous seed varieties. Some farmers have also turned their homes into CSBs, the seed banks have become a safe place to access quality seeds hence reducing the financial burden that comes with buying seed from the market and sometimes with uncertainty.

ESAFF Uganda works with the government of Uganda through the National Agriculture Research Organization (NARO) to develop practical technical procedures for the registration of farmers' varieties. ESAFF Uganda has been part of many policy processes and campaigned for the promotion and protection of Farmer Managed Seed System (FMSS) in the country.



## HIGHLIGHTS

*".... I was afraid of complexes and resistance from the members I called to join the FFS, especially the men..."* **Alok Mary Florence**

*".... Out of the six types we planted—local and enhanced—our indigenous variety, which we called "Emusugut," performed significantly better..."* **Anne Grace Enyou**

*".... I felt compelled to take part in this initiative to revive local food plants, not because I thought they were particularly significant..."* **Otia Leone**

*".... If small-scale farmers can do this, then they can lead in the fight against exploitation by seed traders through improving the quality of seed..."* **Dr. Jimmy Lamo**

*".... Local varieties have some important strengths and have been used for generations to overcome environmental adversities..."* **Ojok Kisembo**

# THE STORIES

## WOMEN DIRECT COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING

Alok Mary Florence a small-scale farmer aged, 48, hails from the Amaronaros-apilac FFS in Angoro village Akeriau Sub County, Amuria district. Mary participated in Otubet FFS's FFS activities as an active participant during the first season of 2019. As a result of her experience with Otubet FFS, she became more interested in teaching other community members about participatory plant breeding, which inspired her to form Amaronaros-apilac FFS, which is involved in the selection of plant varieties for maize. Building the capacities of other local small-scale farmers has been Mary's biggest source of motivation, particularly the women who have shown an interest in stepping outside of their comfort zones to take part in FFS activities.

Many of the women in her neighborhood have converged at her home to learn more about seeds and how they may participate in such activities to get around the difficulties they encounter in getting access to the proper seeds for their farming.



*Alok Mary Florence guiding some of the members of Amaronaros-apilac during their weekly monitoring activities*



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*"The topic of **"seed"** was so intense because farmers in this region were tired of false promises of the provision of high-quality seed, and I was afraid of complexes and resistance from the members I called to join the FFS, especially the men. However, when I explained the process of how we will be conducting our own experiments, I was impressed with the group's response. When the majority began inquiring about the timing of garden preparation, I knew I had chosen the appropriate audience. It helped me understand my role and possibilities as a woman while also boosting my confidence. I have a lot to learn from these farmers and my biggest motivator is seeing more women reach out to me so they can establish their own FFS. The availability of seeds in our community has a bright future since the more we participate, the better equipped we are to find solutions."*

Alok Mary Florence

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## RESTORING THE DESERTED

Angorom FFS was established in March 2020 with the primary goal of finding the best variety of maize that could help them achieve their goals of high yielding, early maturity, and good taste. Anne Grace Enyou the chairperson of Angorom FFS in Amuria district recognizes the enormous benefits the school has provided to them, including learning the variety of seeds in their community and collaborating to address seed-related problems. According to Anna, if they can keep selecting crops through selection criteria that are acceptable, farmers will begin cultivating crops with a purpose, address food insecurities, and take part in significant market gains that will enhance their standard of living in the community.

*"Being a part of this FFS was amazing because it made me realize that even local species can outperform modified seeds. Out of the six maize varieties we planted—local and enhanced—our indigenous variety called "Emusugut," performed significantly better. Due to the government-supplied seeds, the community overlooked this variety, therefore we were shocked that it outperformed all other types, even those that we were chasing after."*

*Anne Grace Enyou, Chairperson Angorom FFS, Amuria district*



**Anne Grace Enyou inspecting their FFS Maize field**

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## CHAMPIONING BETTER GROUNDNUTS

One of the most significant crops in the Teso region is groundnuts. In fact, grains and tubers make up a far larger share of people's meals in this area. Groundnuts are traditionally farmed in the Amuria district as both a food crop and a cash crop. Improved seed varieties have been available to farmers in this region for the past five years, but they haven't been able to address all of their major problems, which are primarily related to the impact of climate change, which makes crops more susceptible to pests and diseases and causes farmers to lose a lot of production.

In 2020, ESAFF Uganda provided farmers with trainings on utilizing the FFS methodology, which included Participatory Varietal Selection (PVS) trainings concentrating on crop management and land preparation, followed by testing of various varieties—both native and improved—based on their established goals. All of these were raised on the same demonstration plot where farmers took part in weekly monitoring to evaluate the development and pinpoint better-performing kinds. Most locally grown types, including Engwara, Egoromoit, and Obino, performed better than the upgraded varieties.



***Etoku Wilbert showing some of the groundnuts harvested under their farmer field school***

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Etoku Wilbert, a member of MAFA FFS noted;

*"Obino is not anew variety in our area but when we got introduced to these varieties, we completely lost track of it much as it was doing well with a good taste, high oil content but with this process I have greatly learnt especially on how to produce high quality groundnut variety for seed and consumption"*

**Etoku Wilbert**

Etoku and his group members conducted an evaluation in December 2021, during which they determined that Obino was the variety from their FFS that performed the best. In spite of the fact that it still lacked some characteristics that would meet their needs, the FFS came up with the idea to learn more through Participatory Variety Enhancement (PVE) in their following season in order for this variety to meet their required expectations in terms of high yield and be able to gradually compete with other varieties on the market.



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## TOGETHER WE CAN CHANGE THE NARRATIVE

Epidu Paul, the LC III Chairperson, Akeriau Subcounty in Amuria district noted that many of our small-scale farmers have faced challenges in accessing the right seed as majority of the seed is only sold in the market yet very few can afford to buy it. The influx of many fake seeds on the market coupled with the effects of climate change prolongs scarcity periods in homes. He recognize the fact that the Farmer Field School approach has promoted ecological literacy and farmer empowerment but as well created dynamic and active groups to develop agricultural livelihoods.

*"The learning processes in Farmer Field Schools has created spaces for men to realize the benefit of working with women equally, the communication and willingness to learn from the women's knowledge about the seeds, biodiversity and crop production has greatly improved among some of the groups I have interacted with".*



**Hon. Epidu Paul addressing community members at Orungo Community Seed Bank in Amuria district**

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## LINKING LOCAL ACTION WITH EXTENSION SERVICES

Nyazunyi Mark is an Agriculture extension worker in Pakele Sub- County Adjumani district has greatly supported the farmer field activities in the district. Mr. Nyazunyi was part of the ToT training held in 2019 and his commitment to support farmers in solving their seed challenges using the FFS approach has continued since then. He has been involved in the trainings, sourcing planting materials and planting of the fields, which greatly encouraged the farmers to have commitment towards the process.

*"Empowerment of farmers to learn, understand and make their own decisions is one of the avenues to solve some of the challenges farmers face today in agricultural production however this is at cross purpose with conventional agriculture extension systems which are based on top-down delivery of technology packages. With my experience with this approach, I have realized it provides room for sustainability of farmer's biodiversity thus it must be revitalized in other communities however with increased capacity development of more extension staff."*

**Mr Mark Nyazunyi**



**Mr Mark Nyanyunzi attending one of the National FFS evaluation on participatory plant breeding.**

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## BUILDING YOUTH POTENTIAL IN APPRECIATING LOCAL FOOD PLANTS

Meet Obura papias aged 21 years a small-scale farmer in Apac district. Obura is a facilitator of Orib cing FFS located in Adok village, Chegere sub county, Apac district. Interesting youth farmers in appreciating the neglected underutilized species in communities was so difficult because majority of them have no interest in farming but this was so different for Obura. Having learnt about the objectives of the program during the ToT training by ESAFF Uganda in 2019, he took it upon himself to identify young people in his community to form a Farmer Field School and he did not cease his efforts as he went ahead to prepare them for trainings. His group that consists of 27 members' majority of whom are youth is very active in understanding the different local food plants around their areas and with the help of their team leader, they have engaged the elderly people to identify some of the local food plants.



**Obura Papias**

Obura is also a member of the Youth NUS Network in Apac district that promotes initiatives to promote and conserve local food plants alongside their traditional knowledge. Among the initiatives set up by the network are to collect and preserve some of the identified NUS, involving local leaders for knowledge on some of the species, engaging local leaders to help in creating awareness to other areas in the district but as well as set up demonstration gardens for some of the species. With this, Obura feel they he is contributing to the preservation of lost crops but as well change attitude of other youth farmers in the community.

*"Facilitating farmers and other young people who were as adamant as me about nutrition and local food plants was difficult. I must admit that getting them to work together to create a Farmer Field School was quite difficult at first, but when they agreed, it was a significant step for me. After the training began, I was astounded by their zeal and desire to learn. The group initially consisted of only 10, but by the second training, 17 additional individuals, including some seniors, had joined us. Everyone took part and liked working on the many modules, such as the resource flow map, seasonal calendar, and timeline analysis. The results of these exercises shed further insight on certain local food plants, some of which we were unfamiliar with. For my part, I experienced a significant increase in self-assurance and became aware of the role I should play to help more young people succeed like I did."*

**Papias Obura**



## LOCAL FOOD PLANTS GOOD HEALTH

Abwot Janet, a small-scale farmer from Apac Municipal and chairperson of Alwala Mixed FFS, has played a significant role in educating people in her community about the Neglected and Underutilized Species (NUS). Using her own experience, where Abwot was bedridden for months with very little money at the time, she was able to visit Lira Hospital for a general body checkup thanks to some support from family and friends. While at the hospital Janet was shocked when the results were negative, and the physicians subsequently asked her about her lifestyle especially on the foodstuffs she normally ate at home. She described the daily beans and cassava she and her family consumed. It was realized that the poor feeding and intense work Janet takes on as a breadwinner lead to the deterioration of her health. She was advised to consume more nutritious food.

*"At first I didn't understand what he meant by nutritious foods not until I went for our weekly saving meetings and I heard the ESAFF district chairperson talk about the local food plants and their benefits. Given my medical background, I expressed interest in the program and asked to join his FFS, which he agreed to. With the knowledge I had gained, I began consuming the majority of the NUS offered in my community, and as of 2022, I have not visited the hospital. I have been able to save a lot of money which I have used to advance personally. I urge everyone to begin consuming local food plants because they helped me regain my health."*



**Abwot Janet addressing members of Alwala FFS in Agengi, Apac district**

## Does Saving Seed Matter?

Rural farming communities suffer numerous obstacles, including a lack of access to quality seed, markets, inadequate storage facilities, and the effects of climate change, all of which pose a threat to the food chain. Through the SD=HS Program, ESAFF Uganda collaborates with small-scale farmers to protect and save the lost species that are climate resilient, nutrient-rich, therapeutic, and best meet the requirements of their local communities.

*"The commitment and the energy farmers invest in ensuring seed sovereignty is enormous. They are always willing to share and learn from each other. It is fulfilling to see small-scale farmers strive to save their indigenous seed."*

In the few years of implementing the SD=HS Program, farmers have been able to bring back into communities a number of species that were extinct or underutilized. Through their various FFS activities, these have gained the backing of local authorities, nutritionists, and extension workers who are incredibly grateful for the actions these farmers have made. Farmers recognize the role of Community Seed Banks (CSB) and are key players in ensuring that these CSBs are fully stocked with seed throughout the year.

*"Without seed, there is no food; so yes, seed saving matters as it creates hope for food and nutrition security in the country."*

Naume Kalinaki- Programs Assistant Seed and FAAB  
**ESAFF Uganda.**





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## WOMEN LEADING IN PARTICIPATORY PLANT BREEDING (PPB)

Little did 45-year-old Akello Hellen know that growing up in a rural area in Orungo sub county, Amuria district would inspire her to become a well-respected FFS facilitator leading participatory plant breeding, helping to change the perception that small-scale farmers, particularly women, cannot understand crop science.

Hellen mentions that she particularly encourages women to take courage to participate and take lead in identifying varieties that can meet their desired needs, especially amidst the changes in climate. Hellen is currently leading the drive towards solving seed challenges using participatory plant breeding. Over 80% of agricultural workers are women, but their limited awareness of variety selection has long been a problem because their primary focus has always been on finding seeds to plant for the next seasons so that their families can be food secure. She said.

The road hasn't always been easy for Akello; she and the other participants in her farmer field school had to dispel traditional stereotypes about women's ability to pursue careers in crop science while juggling responsibilities at home. The members, however, continued to learn and participate in the agricultural field with confidence despite this. Eberenge, a native variety that has persisted throughout the community but lacked desirable qualities to fulfill their needs, is one of the crops worked with Hellen's leadership. Together with the other members, we have tirelessly labored to bring back the lost characteristics of Eberenge, like its short maturity period, which ranged from 125 to 98 days. For the participants of the farmer field schools, who were happy to witness improvement after their two seasons of implementation, the progress was exhilarating.

My greatest interest is to see local farmers, especially women, take the initiative in cultivating different crops to increase food security and enhance their standard of living, the Hellen stated.

*"After receiving the training from ESAFF Uganda, I was eager to put my talents to use and diligently engaged in additional crops, such as groundnuts and soybeans."*

**Akello Hellen**

Other women in the community have been inspired by Akello's drive to pursue leadership positions both within their FFS and the community, in addition to crop growing. According to Chandiru Jane, women have become more proactive in choosing crops that will satisfy their needs as a household.



**Akello Hellen on the left during one of the field day of Aclakide FFS**

*"Thanks to Hellen, I now know how to properly prepare for my field by choosing better types that are appropriate for each season. We have organized ourselves into little groups of ladies within our FFS, and we collaborate to bring back the characteristics of our regional variety. We are confident that by doing this, we can resolve the seed and food security issues in our homes."*

**Chandiru**

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## THE NEW AGRICULTURAL MOVEMENT OF ORPHANED SPECIES

The NUS network is a movement that unites female and youth small-scale farmers to collectively assume responsibility for maintaining lost species. These are collected and regenerated by farmers, particularly women who play significant roles in this process. The Women NUS Network was established in 2020 to bridge some of the gaps and misconceptions about the Neglected and Underutilized Species and share knowledge on the management of these species in the community.



*Adongo Philimena*

*Together, the NUS Network and the Community Seed Bank in the various areas have gathered over 100 NUS from the Teso, Lango, and Acholi sub regions. One of the NUS network's leaders, Adongo Philimena, adds that the network is a game-changing movement for small-scale farmers in these areas, particularly women and young people who struggle the most with food insecurity and malnutrition in the home. The network came at the right time when the world was in a state of panic due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, many women were looking for alternatives of how they could sustain and keep their families healthy with little or no medical expenses from the hospitals. The answer was right before them ... "the lost species we take for granted" majority of which act as medicine, full of nutrients but we paid less attention thus I called upon some of my friends to join and to form this network and I must say we have done a tremendous job. Together we have created awareness on Neglected and Underutilized Species (NUS), collected over 100 of them and kept them in our seed bank (Apac Community Seed Bank) where people can access and multiply them for their own consumption. My biggest dream is to see that government puts up a policy that enhances the preservation and protection of these neglected species but as well ensure that young people get to know them and appreciate their great importance"*

**Adongo Philimena**



**Members of the NUS network during their intergenerational cross dialogues in Ilee, Apac district.**



## EQUAL PARTICIPATION FOR FOOD SECURITY

Food insecurity always exists in areas of inequality. The hardest work on and around the homestead is done by rural women, yet their labor is rarely acknowledged as being related to agriculture. Otia Leone, a small-scale farmer from Apac, Adok cell, Chegere Sub county however, demonstrates that both men and women must share family duty. In his village in Adok, Leone recounts that when he was growing up, it was the women's job to make sure the family had wholesome food and medication (local plants). To pick some crops, women had to travel a long way into the wilderness, endangering their lives in the process. Traditionally, men served as simply the family head, but today, Leone is setting a positive example for other men in his neighborhood. In order to promote a sense of gender justice and food security for his family, Leone leads the charge in collecting neglected species from the garden and the wild to his household.



**Otia Leone explaining some of the bottlenecks of local food plants**



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*"I felt compelled to take part in this initiative to revive local food plants, not because I thought they were particularly significant, but rather because I wanted to be a catalyst for change in my community, which is so gender-skewed that men and women cannot coexist. I was thrilled and excited to learn what my wife was doing in her farmer field school. Because of the social standards that exist—for example, the idea that some species should only be harvested by women or grown by women—many of us had completely forgotten about these species. I accompanied my wife to her farmer field school, and the two of us have greatly contributed to achieving our goals of restoring these species. I hope other men can take a cue from us and do the same."*

**Otia Leone**



**Members of MAFA FFS collectively observing the development of some of the groundnut varieties in the FFS.**

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## CROP BREEDERS IMPRESSED BY LOCAL ACTION TOWARDS PLANT BREEDING

A group of eight men and fourteen women who were small-scale farmers came together to start a Farmer Field School in Boroli Central, Adjumani District. The FFS focused on identifying a rice variety that satisfies their predetermined goals, which included high yields, short maturity, drought tolerance, and pest and disease resistance. The FFS has been gathering weekly since August 2020 to advance its goals and exchange information.

ESAFF Uganda planned a monitoring visit to the FFS in November 2020 to evaluate the progress reached toward their predetermined goals. The National Crops Resources Research Institute (NaCCRI) rice breeder Dr. Jimmy Lamo, a member of the monitoring team, was impressed by the group's goals and the tireless efforts they were making to attain them.

Dr. Lamo was astonished by the group of small-scale farmers producing rice deep in the villages of Adjumani district, some of whom had never attended school and had no formal education—a task that most people would consider to be the domain of scientists. The FFS was visited by the Pakele Sub-County Agriculture Officer in the same month, who expressed his appreciation for the work the school had done

*"I have seen small-scale farmers multiplying seeds, but I have not seen them leading in discovering quality seed through breeding. I am impressed. If small-scale farmers can do this, then they can lead in the fight against exploitation by seed traders through improving the quality of seed."*

**Dr Lamo Jimmy**

As a result, Dr Jimmy Lamo supported ESAFF Uganda in developing the AESA form for rice which eased them in monitoring and assessing the rice parameters by the FFS.



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## SMALL-SCALE FARMERS DEFENDING THEIR FARMER MANAGED SEED SYSTEM (FMSS)

Ekeunos farmer field school in Amuria district is one of the few FFS that is led by a woman. At first, the FFS members were afraid to implement the FFS approach because they considered it to be too scientific and intended for those trained in plant breeding. Some also thought because the facilitator was a woman, not many people would listen to her. Despite all this, the facilitator remained focused and determined. Ekeunos FFS comprising of 7 male and 23 female are in their second season of FFS doing Participatory Variety Selection (PVS) in soybean. During a follow-up visit to the FFS, we found active members in the field located in Alilioi village, Orungo sub-county.

When asked about their previous perception about what was entailed in the farmer field school approach, most of them laughed because they couldn't believe that their village would be hosting scientists and leaders from different areas to learn and support their seed work.

*"I can't believe that I am in charge of a plot studying the soybean variety of Maksoy 5N in our FFS, it's a great honor that my findings here could save our community from the seed challenges that we are having currently."*

*"I used to hear of farmer-managed seed systems, but I didn't understand how best I could contribute to managing our seed system because I couldn't believe that a small-scale farmer could contribute to developing and protecting our seed system until we started FFS."*

*"Even a woman can teach about seed and lead to success."*

**Anango Hellen**

During the FFS evaluation, Ekeunos FFS had achieved their objective and continuing with PVS of soybean in the next season to confirm the results from their first season.

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## SAVE SEED FOR GENERATIONS

Atim Janat a small-scale farmer from Akeriau sub county, Amuria district is a testimony of gratitude towards protecting diversity in her area. Atim started her journey from attending one of the trainings organized by ESAFF Uganda on protecting women seed rights where she progressed to participating in seed fairs and exchange programs on seed issues.

*"I wasn't so much knowledgeable on seed as I concentrated on buying from the market or sometimes grow the remains from the previous season and sometimes got from my neighbors. However, this wasn't sustainable as the seeds from the market were very expensive and sometimes, they couldn't germinate as expected leading to a lot of losses and food insecurities"*



**Atim Janat showing some of the different varieites of seed from orungo community seed bank**



In 2019 during one of her exchange visits to Nyando Community Seed Bank in Kenya, Atim realized that she could also replicate the knowledge to revitalize seed diversity in community where people had lost hope and only planted what they had and not what they needed. Together with members of her farmer group they embarked on a task of identifying lost species in their community. However, soon after identifying and collecting some of the species it struck her that she needed more than just collecting but needed a store where she could store all these species so that the local communities could appreciate them. With her commitment, she was later supported by ESAFF Uganda and led the construction of Orungo community seed bank.

Today Atim serves as the seed bank Manager of Orungo CSB which has managed to collect over 150 different species of crops i.e. maize, beans, soybeans, Emalakany, Emalugugu, Groundnuts, Esuju, Alaju, sim sim, sorghum, jumbo giants etc. Being a member of Otubet FFS, this gives Atim an opportunity to learn and share experiences on seed with her community members.



**Members of Ilee FFS celebrating their local food plants during their Farmer Field School day**

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## A HOPE FOR SEED SECURITY

Ongako community seed bank was established in 2018 in Tetugu village, Ongako Sub County in Omoro district. The seed bank was a result of ESAFF Uganda interventions on promoting farmers seed rights under the Right to Food (R2F) supported by OXFAM. The program mainly focused on ensuring that farmers have increased access to a diversity of quality seed and other planting materials aimed at enhancing productivity and resilience in farming communities. One of the major challenges of farmers in this community was the increasing rate of extinction of genetic resources, which diminished their capacities to cope with the effects of the climate change. These included the prolonged drought that led to yield instability; therefore, this program was built on aspects of farmers to develop sustainable methods and management practices that can increase diversity and ensure their seed security through community seed banks. Three groups i.e. Kwan ber, Ngec aye lonyo and Akena konye in this community comprising of over 60 members engaged in the various initiatives/strategies for the development of the seed bank. Over 100 community members in Tetugu village and others from far beyond have access to the seed bank where they access seed through barter trade of different seeds, selling of seed occurs and loan basis. The management committee comprises of 9 farmers half of which are women who play significant roles in ensuring the operation and management of the seed bank. With the seed bank, small scale farmers major challenges like the high incomes to buy and transport, untimely planting due to lack of seed, poor quality seed have tremendously reduced as they can source out the seeds within their area of reach with a common understanding of the source.

*"Local varieties have some important strengths and have been used for generations to overcome environmental adversities. Therefore, conservation and promotion of locally available seeds and crops is a good adaptation strategy"*

**Ojok Kisembo, Ongako CSB Manager**

Ongako Community Seed Bank has been able to forefront the promotion of farmers seed rights in the Northern region through ensuring eligible access, saving and exchange of seed, preservation of traditional knowledge, inclusion of both women and men in decision making within households and communities. Some of the experiences and lessons learnt from this seed bank have guided local leaders in the community in encouraging other farmers to do the same in order to ensure seed sovereignty.



**Mrs Lokwiya Vicky showing some of the different varieties preserved in Onagko seed bank.**

*"Majority of our Local varieties are pest and disease resistant thus do not require use of chemicals or pesticides, unlike the improved seeds," pointed Vicky lokwiya a small-scale farmer from Gulu district. She acknowledged that the yield may be low, but "these crops need little water which is an added advantage in our area increasingly becoming prone to drought and erratic precipitation." I used to buy seeds very expensively, yet I didn't always have money given the other social responsibilities that I have as a widow. Now I sometimes sell seeds, what a good feeling, I am independent!"*

**Akello Vicky Lokwiya- woman farmer, Gulu district**

# CONCLUSION

Seed is an essential element in crop production representing a valuable resource that is paramount in sustaining the supply of food as well as enhancing rural development and poverty reduction. It is also evident that involving small-scale farmers in community led approaches has proven to be a great aspect in enhancing Farmer-managed seed systems thus underpinning small-scale agroecological production and food sovereignty. These approaches like the farmer field schools, community seed banks not only contribute to sustainable livelihoods of rural and marginalized farming communities, but also are regarded as novel and innovative strategy to conserve locally threatened and globally important crop genetic resources in a country. ESAFF Uganda therefore calls upon government programs and policies pay great attention to them to creating an enabling environment for farmer managed seed systems in the country.



# OUR NEXT STEPS

1. Strengthen farmers capacities in understanding the seed certification system to increase awareness of local varieties among farmers and promote seed trade among the farmers in Uganda.
2. Conduct regular market research to determine demand for local seed from public research institutions.
4. Promote participatory research that is singled out as one important aspect that enables direct interaction of researchers with farmers through on-farm, farmer-managed evaluation of experimental varieties.
5. Upscale the approach of community seed banks and create a data bank linked to the National gene bank.

## About ESAFF Uganda

ESAFF Uganda is a small-scale farmer initiated and farmer-led movement formed to facilitate processes through which smallholder farmer's development concerns can be solicited, articulated and ultimately addressed through local, national, regional and international policies and programmes.



### Our Vision

Empowered self-reliant small-scale farmers.



### Our Mission

To nurture the participation of small-scale farmers in sustainable development processes, for self-reliance through advocacy, capacity building and institutional development.



### Goal

A strong small-scale farmer-led advocacy movement actively contributing to improved livelihoods, food sovereignty and favorable agricultural policies.





Eastern and Southern Africa  
Small Scale Farmers' Forum  
**ESAFF - UGANDA**

## CONTACT US



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YouTube Channel: ESAFF Uganda TV  
Linkedin: ESAFF Uganda



### Podcast:

<https://anchor.fm/esaffuganda>  
Farmers' Voice



### Website:

[www.esaffuganda.org](http://www.esaffuganda.org)