



COMMUNITY FOOD SHEROES LAUNCH

*A report on the Community Food
Sheroes Launch in Tochi Village, Nwoya
District Northern Uganda, 13th June 2023*

Participants

Women with disabilities	3
Women 19- 35 year	64
Women above 45 years	27
Women over 60 years	5
Men	3
TOTAL	102

Tochi Village is located in Nwoya District a neighbor district to Gulu District. The district is still reeling from unresolved impacts of displacement by armed conflicts and as a result, presents high numbers of school dropout among girls, high teenage pregnancies, unemployment among youth coupled with high incidents of violence against women and girls. The villages and communities are generally at peripheries and out of reach of development partners' confines. As such it gave Audacious Creators a great platform for establishing her work.

The meeting took place under beautiful and chilly shades provided by two mango trees. Occasionally, sweet yellow mangoes fell down from the trees as the meeting proceeded.

The Audacious Team was welcomed by beautiful traditional songs in Acholi, with great dances and ululations. This created a warm and friendly welcome.

The conversation started with introductions to establish and recognise all present. The group was a dynamic representation of the young, middle aged and older women above their fifties. This provided a good ground for tapping into histories and reflections for lessons for carrying into the present and the future.

IMPACT:

With this activity, 102 community members were organized into a collective/ movement of food and seeds stewards with the appreciation that our food and food systems are bedrocks for the wellness of not only women but entire communities.

Establishment of cross-generational platform for transferring knowledge from different generations for the purpose of re-digging ancient paths of knowing, living and feeding.

THE SESSIONS:

Looking back to the food stories of the past

In order to draw in all participants and to tap into their rich histories, experiences and practice, this session encouraged women to reflect on their childhoods and draw out their food experiences. The looking back aimed at re-affirming the richness of wealth our fore-runners had in the way they ate and grew their food. And to glean from those that went before us.

Amazing stories emerged from this exercise

Women told of the winnowing of millet, the mingling of the millet, the rich varieties of leafy vegetables they used to it, the hunting and gender roles played by men and women.

"Most Acholi generally lived in mud hats and so were our kitchens. For all of us there was a technique applied when cooking millet. You knew the millet was ready if a piece of it was thrown to the wall and it stuck there."

"I remember that every planting season, we would all attend to each other's gardens in turns. The women gathered together to plough one garden at a time and only moved to the next after completion of one person's garden. There was a great sense of community among us"

"Our parents always planted fruit trees. To date every homestead you find is graced by either mango trees or orange trees. This ensured that we had good supply of fruits during the fruiting season."



During the presentation, they sang songs about food cultivation and harvesting. One group brought in the grinding stone, demonstrated how it is used to ensure fine millet floor.

This session challenged women to think about the changes to how food is grown and who has the power. They decried the loss of community organizing, the advent of manufactured pesticides and herbicides and changes to daily food consumption patterns. That now, reliance on a few cash crops pauses an extinction risk to the various and diverse foods and seeds of the past.



The facilitators drew their attention to the power they still wield. Looking at all the seeds and food samples they came with and presented. They were reminded that as primary care givers and the labor providers, they play a critical role in feeding their families and ensuring the sustainability of their homes. They hinted on the issue of climate change, citing increasing food deficiencies as a result of unpredictable rain cycles.

The session ended on a high note. On a promise that this community is now An Audacious Africa Circle for influence. The women recommended more sessions to build their capacities for advocacy, to help them tackle teenage pregnancies

and an establishment of model garden where they will constantly have a supply of indigenous seeds.

The session was beautifully disrupted by some mild rain showers that lasted 5 minutes. Typical of many local communities, as soon as the session ended, a local market took shape in support of each other's crafts.

We were served typical local Acholi dishes prepared by the Chairperson's house hold. This comprised pasted chicken, fresh pound cassava, seamed potatoes, malakwang, millet bread and a rare herb. These were served by calabash spoons (the kind that look like hard dried brown pumpkin covers).



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