

FROM SAVING TO AGRI-BUSINESS: THE JOURNEY OF AWADA SIMON

Awada Simon is a 40-year-old smallholder farmer of Awinyi village-Odina parish-Kamuda sub-county Soroti district in Eastern Uganda. He is a member of the Awinyi Smallholder Farmers Group which is participating in the “Community Empowerment Project” being implemented by Teso Initiative for Peace (TIP) with support from Suyana Foundation.

Before joining Awinyi Smallholder Farmers Group, Awada encountered many challenges in his quest to run a progressive family. As a smallholder farmer, his crops were not yielding well because he was using indigenous seed varieties on the same piece of land. He was not saving any money because he was waiting for any opportunity to get a lot of money once. He used to think that keeping money in bits in a box would make it accumulate; however, every time he tried to do this, instant needs would make him spend it. He never bothered to raise kitchen gardens. He was only relying on crops harvested from the main gardens which also depended on the rain patterns. His poultry could die due to diseases because he did not vaccinate them. He was literally frustrated and had no knowledge on how to come out of the problems. demeanor

Awada grudgingly joined Awinyi Smallholder Farmers Group because he thought joining a group would again take away the little, he had. Teso Initiative for Peace (TIP) trained the group in agronomy and climate smart agricultural practices, kitchen gardening, improved poultry management and saving. He picked on the saving aspects and started saving and borrowing from his group. He initially borrowed Ugx300,000 to start a produce business at Aneni Wangi Trading Centre where he was buying simsim, maize, green gram, millet and sorghum. In the course of one year, his business had picked up and at the time of the interview was estimated at Ugx1,500,000. He testified being able to pay the school fees of his children; one of whom is a boy in senior 4 at Katerema Secondary School Tororo and a girl in senior three at Tororo Mixed Secondary School. At the end of the first saving cycle (September 2024), his savings stood at Ugx1,000,000.

Awada Simon and his wife are also rearing 108 chickens and established a kitchen garden from which they access vegetables with ease. This is helping them to save money.

Awada and his wife plan to save at least Ugx1,500,000 in the second-year cycle; in the second rain season (August-November 2024) he diversified the crops he was growing to include millet from which he harvested 4 bags and sold earning Ugx547,000, he also grew sorghum and harvested 2 bags (200kgs), kept one for food and sold the other earning Ugx90,000. He also grew cow peas and harvested 50kgs which is keeping for food security. He as well plans to grow simsim, maize, groundnuts, eggplants for the first rains 2025. The family as well plans to borrow to expand their produce business.

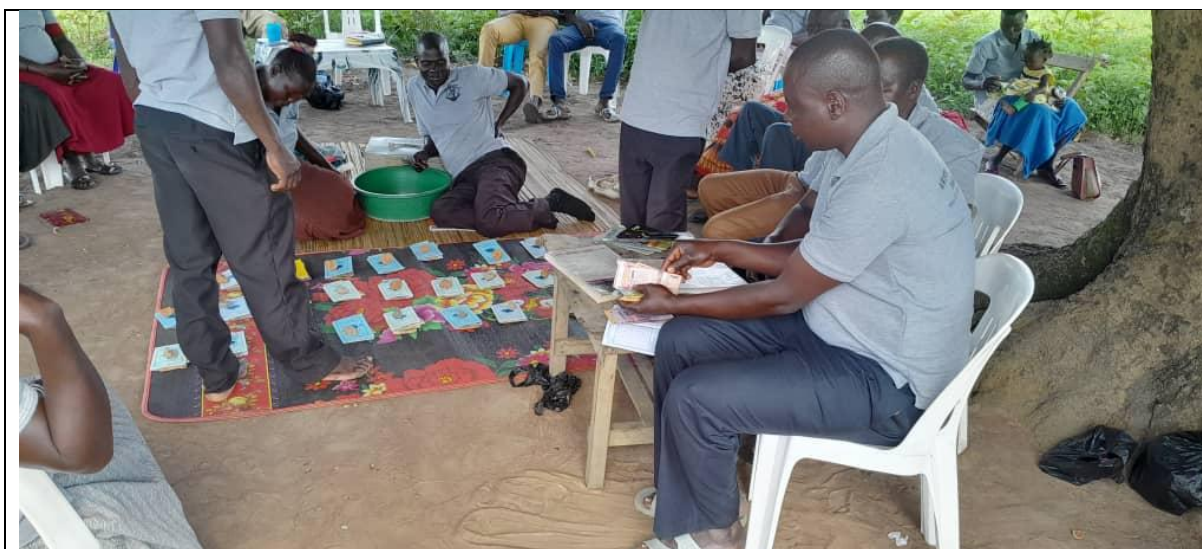


Awada Simon (centre) buys sorghum at his store



"I never imagined that I would be able to pay the school fees of my children. It is the project which has made this come true".

Awada Simon (forefront) receives his pay from a produce buyer at the Soroti City Market



Consent

☐ Yes

☐ No

AWADA Simon

The above story was compiled by Mr. Etengu Raymond, the Agriculture Field Officer of Teso Initiative for Peace (TIP), an indigenous NGO in Uganda following an interview with Awada Simon on the 3rd September 2024 and 10th January 2025.

SWEET POTATOE SELLING CHANGES AMODING SARAH'S NARRATIVE

Amoding Sarah is one of the progressive farmers found in Awoja village-Awoja parish-Aukot subcounty-Soroti District in Eastern Uganda. Amoding Sarah had earlier been in a savings group but the leaders by then failed to steer the group and it collapsed. Amoding's hopes for improvement stagnated. She used to grow local varieties of groundnuts, oranges and cassava without following the recommended agronomic practices. As such her crop harvests were poor and could not adequately sustain her family's welfare. She used to keep 10 chickens. Kitchen gardening was not in her vocabulary.

When the Community Empowerment Project was introduced, Awoja Smallholder Farmers Group where Amoding is a member was identified to benefit. The group was trained in Community Led Total Sanitation, climate smart practices and village saving and lending. It was a turning point in her life. She was motivated by the VSLA approaches and she began to save in her group. She borrowed Ugx200,000 to start a fresh sweet potato selling business alongside the Soroti-Mbale Highway. Sweet potatoes are a staple crop for most communities in Uganda and are readily bought. Smallholder farmers often line up along the highways to sell to passengers. While the price of sweet potatoes keeps fluctuating due to the interference of middlemen, Amoding was at least able to sell some and contribute to the payment of school fees of her children.

To supplement her incomes, Amoding is also rearing 20 chickens, has a kitchen garden of eggplants and an orchard from which she picks vegetables and fruits to eat and sell. With her earnings, she exhorted her husband to construct a drying rack, a pit latrine, bathing shelter, rubbish pit and cloth drying lines. Amoding attributes this change of things to her attending the Community Led Total Sanitation sensitization meetings by the Community Empowerment Project.

Although Amoding's enterprises are being affected by pests and diseases, prolonged draught and low crop prices, she intends to hire more land to expand vegetable growing with the planting of onions, tomatoes, simsim and maize. She is happy that her husband allows her to sell potatoes to raise money for the family. This was not the case sometime back due to patriarchal limitations. She talked to her husband about VSLA and how it can help smallholder farmers to borrow and invest. His agreement and encouragement gave her the strength to think out of the box.



Amoding Sarah (second from left) hands Potatoes to a buyer



Amoding Sarah (immediate left) gladly receives her pay



Amoding Sarah at her orchard

"I am now able to fend for my family as a result of saving in my group" submitted Amoding Sarah.

Consent

☒ Yes ☐ No	AMODING SARAH
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The above story was compiled by Mr. Etengu Raymond, the Agriculture Field Officer of Teso Initiative for Peace (TIP), an indigenous NGO in Uganda; following an interview with Amoding Sarah on the 2nd September 2024.

VEGETABLES WALK ANGWEDO IMMACULATE TO HER DREAM HOUSE

Angwedo Immaculate is 33-year-old smallholder farmer from Omukura village-Gwetom parish-Lalle sub-county-Soroti District. Angwedo has a family of 5 members who derive a living from subsistence agriculture with the growing of food crops for food and income. She used to save Ugx5,000 per week, plant local seed varieties of tomatoes, eggplants, maize, cowpeas, green gram, simsim and kept a dismal number of chicken i.e. 3 birds. All these efforts left her unable to adequately provide for the food and income needs of her family. The challenges of sleeping in grass thatched, mud and wattle rondavels, often left her with anguish especially during rainy seasons. She stayed on with the dream of constructing a permanent iron roofed house.

As a member of Omukura Smallholder Farmers Group, the Community Empowerment Project trained Angwedo and other group members in aspects of agriculture, local poultry management, vegetable growing and VSLA among others. She began saving seriously at Ugx10,000 per week and could borrow money to support the education of her children. According to her, the training in vegetable growing was an eye opener. She initially started with a kitchen garden of eggplants which she expanded to a bigger piece of land. She sold her eggplants and earned Ugx500,000. She did not stop there but used the knowledge she got from the project, to start up a tomato garden from which she earned Ugx1,000,000. Angwedo Immaculate who used to be confined to her village due to cultural limitations is now able to connect to other women vendors from Soroti City; the vendors usually pick tomatoes from her garden.

Angwedo also planted maize and beans and harvested 2 bags and 0.2 bags respectively. She sold 1 bag of maize which earned her Ugx150,000; she kept the other for food. At the time of compiling this story, Angwedo had planted half an acre of beans, an acre of maize and more eggplants were in the nursery bed for the second rain season. She harvested 3 bags (300kgs) and is yet to sell; the tomatoes she grew earned her Ugx250,000; she harvested 100kgs which she is keeping for household consumption. For the cow peas she harvested 70kgs for consumption.

She used the above earnings to start up her house construction project which at the time of writing this story was at roofing level. Angwedo Immaculate is not looking back anymore. She plans to expand her poultry rearing, vegetable and maize growing projects to complete her dream house.



Angwedo Immaculate stands next to her dream house



Immaculate Angwedo at her bean garden for the second rain season (August-October)

“Vegetable growing is making my dream for a permanent house come true”, Angwedo is confident.

Consent

☒ Yes ☐ No ANGWEDO IMMACULET angwedo.
and photos from subjects

The above story was compiled by Mr. Etengu Raymond, the Agriculture Field Officer of Teso Initiative for Peace (TIP), an indigenous NGO in Uganda following an interview with Angwedo Immaculate on the 15th September, 2024 and 17th January 2025.

JOURNYING WITH AGRICULTURE: THE LIFE OF ALEUR JOHN

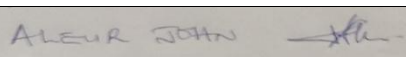
Mr. Aleur John is a 55-year-old Farmer living in Orapada Village-Omugenya Parish-Gweri sub-county-Soroti District. He derives his livelihood from growing oranges, maize, green gram, beans, potatoes and vegetables. Before the Community Empowerment Project, he his crops were not yielding that so much. He attributed this to his inability to follow the recommended agricultural practices. Also putting vegetable gardens for eggplants, tomatoes and Amaranthus SPP was not in his usual practices.

The poor agronomic practices like sowing seeds instead of line planting, poor pest and disease control, improper postharvest handling practices affected the yield of both perennial and annual crops. He was equally involved in saving, but it was not stable because incomes were low. Most members would absentee themselves from saving sessions because it was embarrassing to be at the saving venue and do not save anything.

Teso Initiative for Peace through Community empowerment Project supported by Suyana Foundation provided agroecological, kitchen gardening, Postharvest Handling and Poultry training. The project also provided agro-inputs which enabled Aleur John to establish the gardens of annual crops and manage the orchard already established by managing pests and diseases. The setting of VSLA models and encouragement of value addition was a turning point in his life.

The knowledge on Agro-ecological training enabled Aleur John to increase yield of his maize because he harvested 3 bags of 100 kgs and 0.3 bags of beans. Aleur submitted that his eggplant also did well and he was harvesting it for home consumption. He had sold eggplants and earned Ugx55,000. At the time of compiling this story Aleur John had a half an acre of maize, Sac mold of eggplants, tomatoes and fruiting oranges.

During the second rain season, Aleur planted an acre of cowpeas and harvested 450kgs which he sold 100kgs and earned Ugx180,000. From the mungbeans he sold, he harvested 150kgs and sold it to earn Ugx300,000 which he used for paying the school fees of his daughters. At the time of the second interviews, he had planted 1.5acres of citrus which he hopes to harvest and sell as well. He attributes this to the knowledge and skills he got from the training of safe use and handling of agro-chemicals which caused him to buy and apply fruit and flower enhancers.

"Now we do not bother to buy posho because we have maize: Aleur John said.	
Consent	
☒ Yes ☐ No	
The above story was compiled by Mr. Etengu Raymond, the Agriculture Field Officer of Teso Initiative for Peace (TIP), an indigenous NGO in Uganda following an interview with Aleur John on the 4 th October, 2024 and 3 rd February, 2025.	

Aleur John is also the chairperson of his smallholder farmer group. He carried out an evaluation of his group and developed actions for redress.