



MARU ACTION DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION (MADF)

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

HOPE BEYOND BOUNDARIES ELDERLY FOUNDATION (HOBBEF)

**Promoting sustainable livelihoods through climate-smart conservation backyard farming initiative;
Farming God's Way tested approaches.**

Date of project implementation: Start: 05th August 2022. **End:** 30th January 2023. (6 months)



Project cost: 2,800,000/= (USD 800), Locally funded by Maru Action Development Foundation and Hope Beyond Boundaries Elderly Foundation.

Project location: Ibanda-Kyanya Town Council in Busongora north constituency Kasese district western Uganda

Project beneficiaries: 58 families; women, including widows, young and single mothers.

01. Project summary.

While it has been noted that the economic burden of malnutrition on the household has far-reaching local and national effects as the preventable problem of malnutrition results in reduced intellectual capacity and general human capital erosion, which translates into reduced aggregate economic productivity, Malnourished individuals require more costly care and increase demand for health services.

Food and nutrition insecurity fundamentally undermines efforts to meet the vision of the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), the master development strategy for Uganda. It is in view of comprehensively addressing these problems that promoting sustainable livelihoods through the rural-urban gardening, community health outcomes and economic welfare will not only be improved most especially at household level, fostering the required and needed varieties of food including green vegetables and fruits that enable recommendable nutrition needs amongst household individual members, but also the practice will enable household income generation from the surplus vegetable sales as well as an extension to soil and environmental conservation.

Therefore, Maru Action Development Foundation together with Hope Beyond Boundaries Elderly Foundation a community-based organization located in Kasese district serving the elderly ably championed the; "Climate-smart conservation backyard vegetable farming" with an overall aim; To roll out tested and successful Farming God's Way practices to needy communities for improved household incomes, boosting domestic food and nutrition needs, and also conserving the environment amidst post Covid-19 pandemic and climate change crisis, which is found from the above challenging situational background helping to solve this critical issue in the rural-urban communities including in our project area of Ibanda-Kyanya town council by empowering women including widowed households, young and single mothers to take lead in their communities through gardening.

At the current state, many rural-urban gardens are underutilized, discarded, and underfunded possibly due to the challenging and unfavorable weather changes but also due to the lack of gardening education and community support surrounding them.



02. Introduction.

Maru Action Development Foundation (MADF) is a non-for-profit Community Based Organization located in Central Division, Kasese Municipality, Kasese District, Rwenzori Region, Western Uganda.

We envision; Just and climate resilient communities responding to their needs, by Co-creation and implementation of inclusive community-led innovations through promotion of sustainable eco-friendly low cost-high impact initiatives for improved lives and livelihoods of women, youths and children.

Being aware of the basic needs for a vulnerable community, the need for an inclusive better future, a peaceful environment, a healthy and poverty free society, believing that working together with all the entire community without discrimination, respecting each other's rights, and advocate for skills development towards a just society especially among the less privileged categories of people, MADF interventions target to benefit the highly vulnerable categories of people i.e., Women, Youth and Children, including People with Disabilities among others.

Maru Action Development Foundation has been and will still continue to provide tools, resources, partnerships and support to its beneficiaries, empowering them to gain the voice, ability, and problem-solving capacity to realize their full potential. MADF has and will keep welcoming and serve all women, youth and children and focus its most efforts on the less privileged young women especially single mothers, people with disabilities, youth and children who live in low-income households and communities much more those disrupted by natural and man-made disasters.

Leveraging on such has and or will help our beneficiaries engage in designing and implementing inclusive tailored community-led innovations that fosters empowerment of underserved women, people with disabilities, youth and children, through promotion of sustainable socio-economic low cost and high impact approaches that does not only transform lives and improving their livelihoods, but also thrives their living in environment and mother nature.

03. Our approach while delivering on our programs.

We leverage on community needs and challenges with integration of indigenous knowledge and practices through a community-led approach while informing actions that are locally adaptive, improving lives and livelihoods.

This helps sustain our projects and programs with served populations and communities, as beneficiaries play a big role and always keeping at the centre point of whatever we do.



When communities need and challenges are discussed in a very welcoming and conducive environment where local people feel given the whole space, they give out their minds, opinions, ideas, suggestions and insights to what affects them while guiding on priorities. This then forms actions which are people and or community-led and full, inclusive participation and programs sustainability are guaranteed.

04. Background.

Globally, nearly 2 billion people are moderate to severely food insecure (FAO et al., 2019), of which 135 million people are severely food insecure (FSIN, 2020). Those who are food insecure are mostly concentrated in Africa, Asia, and Latin America (FAO et al., 2019). Since 2015, the absolute number of hungry people has increased, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia (FAO et al., 2017; WHO, 2018). It is thus becoming increasingly challenging for many of the countries in the Global South to eliminate hunger by 2030. Moreover, the World Food Program (WFP) has cautioned that in the absence of swift and effective action, an additional 265 million people may become severely food insecure due to COVID-19-induced economic turmoil (WFP, 2020).

Population growth and urbanization are also rapid in Uganda. In 2019, out of a total population of 44.3 million, 24.4 percent were residing in urban areas (World Bank, 2020a). By 2030, Uganda's population is projected to be 58–61 million depending on the fertility rate assumptions (United Nations, 2019), of which more than 31 percent will reside in urban areas (World Bank, 2021). These economic and demographic changes will have significant impacts on the agricultural sector (Alexandratos, 2005), generating the challenge of producing and supplying more and better food at affordable prices (FAO, 2018).

Unfortunately, the war in Ukraine has contributed to soaring food and fuel prices, and UNICEF is warning that the price of ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF), which is used to treat malnourished children, may increase by up to 16 percent. This is something we need to anticipate and prepare for. If we don't, many children could miss out on life-saving support. For hundreds in Kasese and other neighboring districts, these sachets of therapeutic paste are the difference between life and death. Therefore, a need to put immediate actions was needed to address this current situation and Maru Action Development Foundation in partnership with Hope Beyond Boundaries Elderly Foundation ably responded to the challenge.

05. The situational needs and challenges to which our project needed to overcome.

Nearly 80 percent of Kasese District residents in Western Uganda has been used of subsistence farming on the slopes of Rwenzori Mountains where soil erosion and poverty contribute to declining agricultural yields, food insecurity, and high rates of



stunting and wasting in children. Due to hardly trending situations in the global warming characterizes by dry spells and long droughts, river floods that washes away crop fields and gardens, improper infrastructure and urban development, people are rapidly losing access to necessary resources like fresh produce, leading to the creation of food scarcity and high mal-nutrition cases.

Kasese communities including in the projected areas of Ibanda-Kyanya town council in western Uganda have continuously faced significant multiple problems of food scarcity and malnutrition and for the past 5 years there have been deep pockets of hunger due to natural and man-made shocks, particularly delayed seasoned rains characterized by prolonged droughts and civil strife. Over 40 percent of children in this area of Kasese district 5-59 months old are stunted and 13 percent are living at a very high risk of death due to mal-nutrition. Whereas over 40 percent of deaths among Ugandan children can be attributed in part to malnutrition, over 38 percent of children below 5 years of age in Uganda are stunted, being significantly shorter than they should be given their age, while 22.5 percent are under-weight for their age.

When it is estimated that average calorie consumption in Uganda is only between 75 and 90 percent of recommended requirements, levels of protein and fats intake are 33 and 20 percent below minimum recommended levels, respectively and as a result, stunting and underweight, as well as malnutrition related diseases like kwashiorkor; marasmus, anemia, and cretinism have been quite common, particularly in infants and children and the projected community of Ibanda-Kyanya town council, and have as well been reported in the Kasese hospitals and health facilities. The problem of nutritional insecurity is further compounded by cultural beliefs and food taboos, which tend to discourage women and children from consuming certain foods, such as poultry products, pork and liver.

This sorry state of food scarcity and nutrition spelled the need for strategic and community-led low-cost and high impact interventions that would enable communities at various levels most especially in Ibanda-Kyanya town council in Kasese district meet their obligations towards sustainable food for the many hungry and undernourished. It has been noted that nutrition insecurity is an important component of the development challenge that Kasese district and Uganda as a country is facing, posing for a need to reduce the health burden at the individual and household level arising from food and nutrition insecurity.

Therefore, our holistic gardening approach that brought together knowledge and skills including indigenous knowledge and practices of Maru Action Development Foundation, Hope Beyond Boundaries Elderly Foundation and the Ibanda-Kyanya communities to accelerate a holistic and regenerative vegetable gardening tackling household level food insecurity, malnutrition and enhancing income generation as well as a boost to environmental conservation.



On-site monitoring of a nearly getting ready for harvesting garden of cabbages, well mulched and cared for by our project beneficiaries in Ibanda-Kyanya.

06. During and afterwards implementation of the Climate-smart conservation farming; backyard vegetable gardening.

Our successfully implemented project has brought back a number of what had been discarded gardens to life by providing direct support through practical education with knowledge on which variety of vegetables including fruits can be planted for different weather seasons, fostering changes for women including widows, young and single mothers to create and sustain rural-urban gardens. While everyone deserves access to healthy and fresh food, this initiative has made this possible through the work of our young and skilled environmental change makers and partners.

With 85 percent of households in Ibanda-Kyanya town council in Kasese district making a living as subsistence farmers on degraded land, hunger and mal-nutrition had been found chronic issues. while it has been noticed that women are the main farmers of food and need support to improve crop diversity and productivity, a high number of them still lacked access to enough land that they would garden collectively. Better nutrition is essential for improving the health status of both children and adults. School going children can perform well feeding on good diets at both homes and at schools.

Having established sustainable gardens using a low-cost and effective way has exponentially increased household-level vegetable and fruit consumption and have more so empowered women including widows, young and single mothers to generate and spend their own incomes on their family needs – food, nutritional supplementation, medicine and school fees.



From the house veranda-backyard plastic recycling garden, giving a household freshly vegetables to feed on. No more going to spend money buying from the market. Instead, money is put to other household needs including savings.

The project has significantly improved the dietary diversity, nutrition, health and welfare of directly 58 and indirectly more than 250 rural families of Ibanda-Kyanya town council in Kasese District. It has provided a partnership model of effective support for home and community gardens for replication and scaling-up throughout the entire district and Uganda. Women including widows, young and single mothers have managed their gardens well, and as a result these have directly empowered them to feed their families, earn income, and reduce domestic tension and, eventually, command community respect.

In our monitoring and evaluation project studies, local findings showed that households have continued to experience diverse garden benefits such as access to land, water, and money, as well as the quality and consistency of the technical and material support needed for example from community extension workers deployed by the Kasese district local government. The frequency of vegetable consumption per day has shown the most consistently positive results across project benefited households, while a 24-hour nutrition survey displayed an increased consumption of leafy green vegetables high in iron and vitamin A among these families with gardens, leading to 'stronger children and improved overall family health.

Furthermore, 75 percent of families have shown generation of income from their gardens, though varying widely in capacity to sell all time-round. It has been found out that more than ninety percent of garden households save about 10 to 20 percent of their income, primarily through Village Savings Groups thus improving their social-economic development. Therefore, regarding this local gardening innovation with stakeholders and partners, there is evidence to affirm that a home garden intervention for nutritional benefit can be an effective entry point to achieving broad household welfare. This conclusion is supported by numerous previous studies on garden initiatives for improved nutrition around the world.



Our staff inspecting a beneficiary's healthy looking vegetable garden having a mix of African eggplants, eggplants, and green pepper.

07. Project objectives that the implementation of the project has achieved.

- Has inspired and also empowered women including widows, young and single mothers from 58 vulnerable households to achieve sustainability in their communities through an interactive and holistic gardening-based experience.
- Supported 3 local women groups and their communities with the opportunity to learn about environmental issues while gaining gardening skills, creating change in the world around them.
- Increased access to healthy foods of directly 58 and 250 households indirectly within their communities while raising awareness about the importance of locally cultivated food produce.
- Provided free educational programming educating women including widows, young and single mothers, and future leaders on the environmental issues of our planet.
- Promoted community-led advocacy and locally adaptive actions in the fight for environmental protection, while accelerating climate justice farming practices that have continuously conserved the soil and environment.

08. Theory of change

Our successes have been defined by the ability to provide a way for women including widows, young and single mothers in communities to be able to achieve rural-urban sustainability and community-Led development in their communities. We have always set quantitative goals to evaluate our success in this mission. For instance, at the beginning of this project, our aim was to expand our local network to at least 15 sub counties of Kasese district.



We always want to make a strong impact in the communities of these sub counties by setting them up to reach a goal of at least having 100 model household grown vegetable and fruit gardens through our local community-based volunteers and established groups and the partners as well as under their lower local government (sub counties, town councils and divisions) close supervision and monitoring.

We have also documented our farmer's successes by tracking how many varieties of food our household farmers are able to grow, how many indirect beneficiaries are benefiting out of the program through knowledge extension and transfer, how the initiative's programming has helped communities grow (using start/ending surveys), and how sustainable our garden systems are.



A trainer while illustrating to the beneficiaries (project participants), is showing the different parts of a cabbage seedling and how it should be planted

09. Achieved Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) integration into our initiative.

- **SDG2.** We managed to deploy a community-centred approach for adoption to climate-smart conservation farming through the gardening initiative as a copying mechanism towards zero hunger.
- **SDG3.** We managed to provide knowledge and skills-based support to communities with easy access to healthy foods through our holistic gardening work, integrating their indigenous knowledge.
- **SDG11.** Our mission of enhancing rural-urban sustainability in both rural and developing urban centres around Kasese district through gardening achieved with a spark for initiative replication.
- **SDG13.** Communities taking action to combat climate change through conservational and regenerative gardening, advocating, and educating for



themselves and one another on the environmental issues facing their communities and the world today while informing their locally-led actions.

10. On a bigger perspective and the initiative scalability.

In our projection for the next 2-4 years, this project idea is expected to expand upwards to all the 44 sub counties, divisions and town councils of Kasese district and the neighboring districts and reach more than 1,000 households across through our educational programming and gardening skill-work. In order to sustain this growth, we hope to create a strong and highly skilled consortium of the partners and skilled stakeholders' system where we will keep to provide educational program extensions to whoever in need of building their gardens with the most at risk and vulnerable households as priority.

We also want to create district constituency coordinators from amongst the staff and volunteers and partners who will directly support and coordinate our initiative's programs to communities when needed and back to office. Furthermore, we plan to build our own initiative-sponsored community gardens across the constituencies with a target to the urban towns and institution learning purposes and for project local income generation from sales that will be maintained by our skilled staff and volunteers.

We hope to place at least one community garden in every constituency near the urban markets and or towns, and will be situated at the lower local government institutions through formal requests and upon approval and acceptance of the institutions in charge. Each garden will supply massive amounts of food to the local community markets and act as learning centres for institutions and or individuals in partnership with local stakeholders and partners. Incomes generated from these garden harvests will support Maru Action Development Foundation administration costs, garden care takers and also facilitate community out reaches to the most at risk and vulnerable families including widowed, orphaned and child-headed.



A group of women accompanied by their men (project beneficiaries) together with our trainer Ms. Christine making seed beds for different varieties of vegetables and fruits, that later will be transplanted to their permanent gardens at individual household level.

11. Implementation strategies

Our project implementation strategy ably prioritized nutrition response in these communities of Ibanda-Kyanya town council in Kasese district through existing strategies including Maternal, Infant and Young Child Nutrition (MIYCN), while mobilizing and engaging at risk households and vulnerable communities to promote desired nutrition and feeding behaviors that improve the quality and frequency of children's diets.

Strengthening integrated health and food systems in delivering the kinds of nutrition interventions that prevents wasting and all forms of malnutrition sustainably and at scale was fostered. Effective and continued sensitization of both district lower local structures including village health teams (VHTs) in Ibanda-Kyanya in Kasese was conducted. This enhanced our working relations and work effectiveness with relevant local partners to ensure that integrated health and nutrition services will continue to be delivered at facility and community levels, and especially through integrated outreaches in hard-to-reach areas as the project replicates.



A group of women and their counterparts (men) showing off their full excitement upon successfully making seedbeds where they had planted seeds of different varieties including tomatoes, cabbage, green pepper, beetroot, eggplants, dodo, spinach, African eggplants and onions.

12. Project Sustainability

While many of the community gardening solutions especially in regards to accessibility, creation of community gardens that are solely meant to supply healthy foods to at-risk and vulnerable communities have been beneficial. Though these are highly beneficial, they are simply short-term solutions. Eventually, when the garden loses its value, the garden will no longer be able to supply healthy foods to these communities.

Here at Maru Action Development Foundation, we have aimed to achieving rural-urban gardening sustainability in a way that communities can support themselves in the long run in a healthy and environmentally friendly manner; including regenerative gardening and carbon farming integration. We have managed with the help of the indigenous knowledge and skills of farmers, teach gardening skills to communities so that they can build their own gardens and become entirely self-sufficient in vegetable and fruits growing.

More importantly, we have managed to provide them the coaching and knowledge through our community-based volunteers and formed groups to revitalize their communities for years to come. This project idea was truly unique in that unlike other gardening programs, we have continued to teach communities and youth the



importance of gardening, gardening skills, and give direct gardening experience regardless of location or financial standing.



Representatives from project benefiting households being taught through a hoe illustration by their fellow who is showing how to perfectly make a plant hole sizing and emphasizing the distance from one to the other by making sure all is smart and also to avoid space losses for the available land.

13. Project expenditures.

Below are how the funds collected was used to which our project goal and objectives were achieved.

SN	ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION	LOCATION OF ACTIVITY CONDUCTED.	FR EQ	QUAN TITY	UNIT PRICE	AMOUNT IN USD
01	The project inception/buy-in meeting with local leaders and stakeholders to popularize the idea with the community was successfully carried out.	The project inception meeting was conducted from the projected community of Ibanda-Kyanya town council.	01	01	100	100
02	Mobilization of project participants and groups formation and was guided by the community local and religious leaders.	This was done in the projected communities of Ibanda-Kyanya town council.	01	02	50	100
03	Sourcing of climate-smart conservation backyard vegetable and fruit gardening	Together with beneficiary groups, we ably sourced two trainers from within	01	02	50	100



	trainers within the project community.	the community of Ibanda-Kyanya town council				
04	Procurement of seeds for the backyard gardening that included eggplants, spinach, cabbage, tomatoes, beetroots, African eggplants, dodo etc	The procurement was done from local seeds and seedling suppliers in Rukoki, Kasese Municipality.	01	05	50	250
05	Procurement of tools and materials for the backyard gardening including 5 watering cans, 10 jerricans, 10 hoes, 5 pangas, 10 rakes, 10 bundles of ropes and organic manure	Tools and materials were procured through our organizational procurement form from shops around Kasese town.	01	01	150	150
06	Project monitoring fuel and coordination airtime	This was conducted jointly by organization staff and project partners.	01	01	100	100
	Total					800

14. More project photos.









Prepared by;

Alexanda Kule.

Project Coordinator.

Maru Action Development Foundation

(MADF)

Approved by;

Fred Marule.

Executive Director.

Maru Action Development Foundation

(MADF)