



COUNTRY PROFILE



trōcaire

The culture around food in Uganda has been impacted by the dual forces of colonisation and globalisation. This has led to the perception that many wild and traditional foods are less economically and culturally valuable compared to monoculture foods or processed and packaged consumer foods. In Uganda, cultural stigma and negative associations relating to traditional/non-Christian faiths, still persist. This has resulted in huge losses of ancestral knowledge around the nutritional benefits of wild and traditional foods, the practices of harvesting and preparing wild foods for consumption as well as the uses of such plants for preventative and curative medicine.

Trócaire and partners are working, not only to promote a diversity of crops in family and community farming

practices, but also to break down the stigma and misconceptions about wild and traditional foods. Work focuses on raising awareness about the nutritional, medicinal and economic benefits of harvesting, cultivating and processing wild and traditional foods. Church partners have been particularly influential in dispelling these misconceptions.

Food fairs have contributed greatly to promoting the exchange of wild and traditional foods across regions, their diverse medicinal and culinary uses, and their commercial potential. The participation of women farmers in food fairs and seed banks has also helped to re-awaken communities to the benefits of wild and traditional varieties of foods and to the knowledge that older people, particularly older women, hold.



Figure 1: Community seed exchange (Photo courtesy of Trócaire, Uganda)

COUNTRY CONTEXT



Uganda is a landlocked country in sub-Saharan Africa with a population of 39 million people.



Uganda is one of the 30 least developed countries in the world, ranking 159 out of 189 countries in the human development index (HDI).



19.7% of the population lives in poverty and an estimated 29% of children are malnourished.



82% of the population is dedicated to agricultural activities.



It has a tropical climate where levels of rainfall vary hugely between regions, certain parts of the country experiencing cyclical droughts while others can experience localized flooding and landslides during the rainy season.



The traditional staple diet includes plantain, starchy roots (cassava, sweet potatoes) and cereals (maize, millet, sorghum).

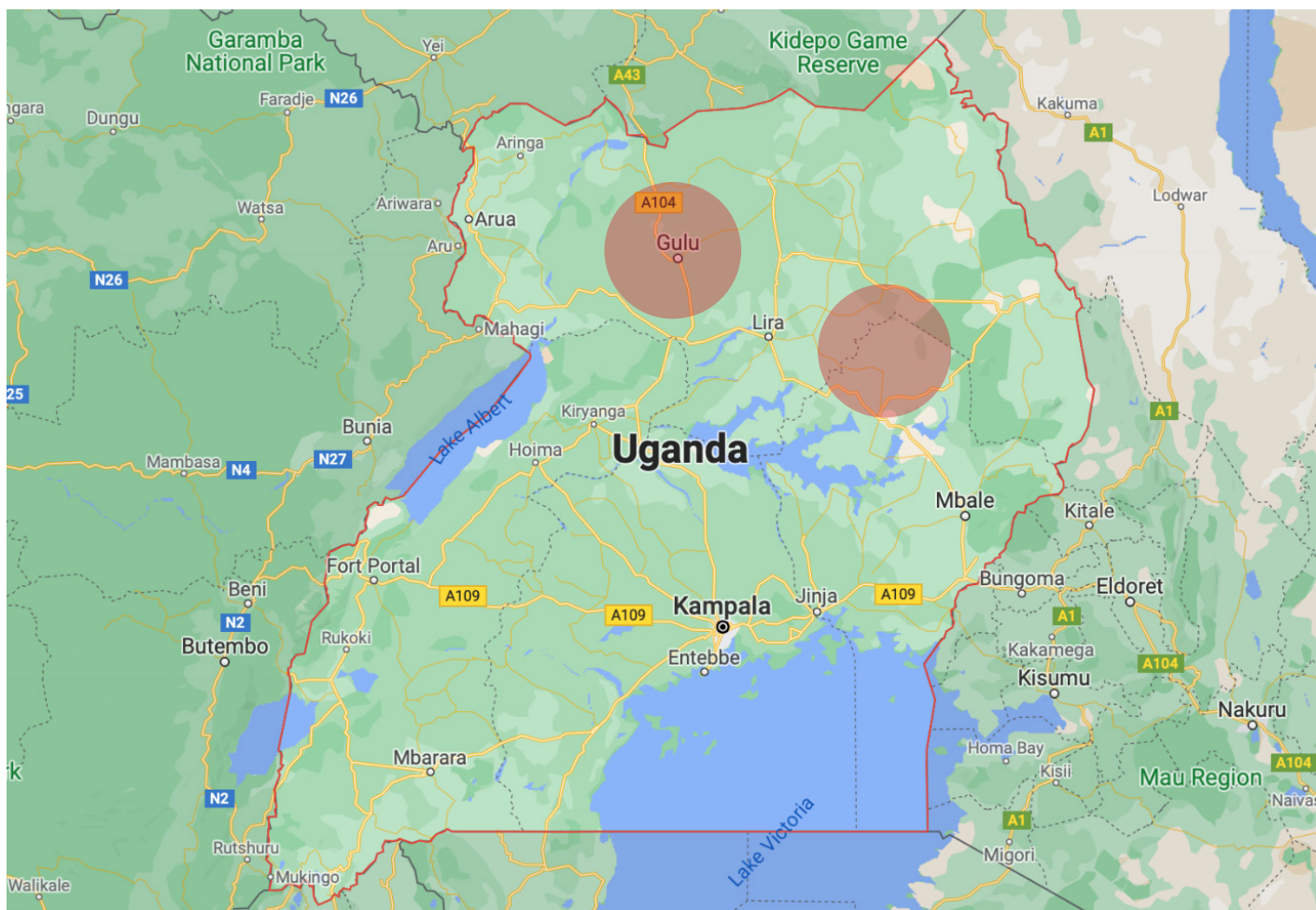


Figure 2: Map of Uganda and Trócaire Areas of Intervention. (Source googlemaps.com)



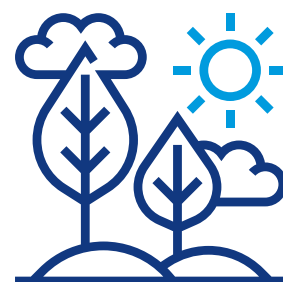
TRÓCAIRE PROJECTS IN UGANDA:

Trócaire works primarily in the north and north-eastern sub regions of Uganda, Teso and Acholi sub regions, the areas of Uganda that were worst affected by the insurgency of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA - 1987-2006) and where poverty rates continue to be above the national average. The programme aims to ensure that women and men in these regions are able to use and manage their natural resources sustainably, are able to earn a sustainable livelihood and can produce sufficient healthy food for themselves and their families.

How do Trócaire and its Partners recover and protect wild and traditional foods?

Working with local organizations Church of Uganda Teso Diocese Planning and Development Office (TEDDO), Soroti Catholic Diocese Integrated Development Organization (SOCADIDO), Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative (ARLPI) and Sustainable Agriculture for Rural Development Network (SARDNET), Trócaire has supported families and communities with the following initiatives aimed at recovering wild and traditional foods:

1. Identifying and profiling wild plants and species
2. Seed banking
3. Exchange and education
4. Advocacy



1. IDENTIFYING AND PROFILING WILD PLANTS AND SPECIES

Trócaire partner TEDDO has been working with 39 communities in Kalaki District (Sub Counties of Bululu and Otuboi) to map and profile their locally available wild and traditional food sources. This includes documenting their nutritional and medicinal values and uses. Forty-four traditional foods and trees have been identified so far.

Communities have been particularly attentive to the recovery and commercialization of the Shea nut tree (*Vitellaria paradoxa*), Bambara nut (*Vigna subterranea*) and Ocuc black beans.



Figure 3: Shea Tree Fruit (Photo from food mapping publication in Uganda)

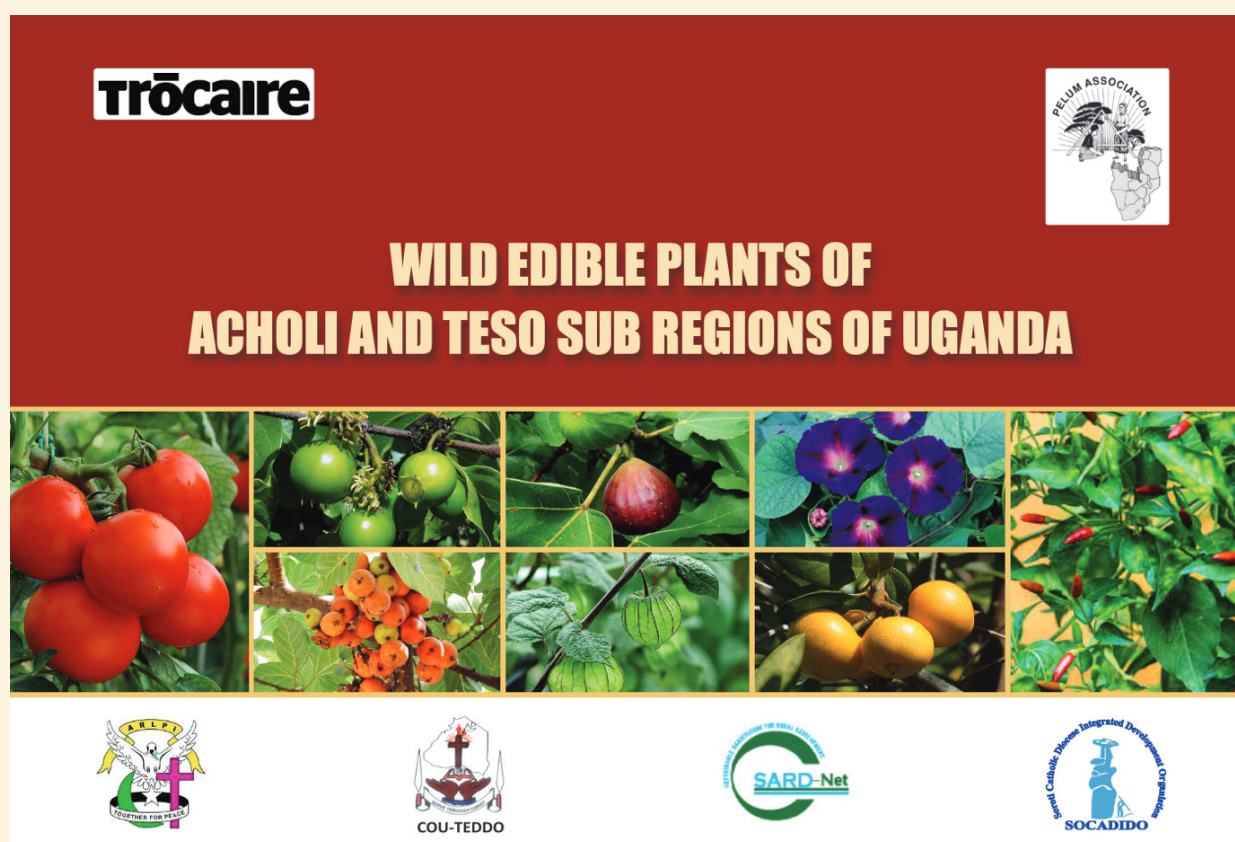


Figure 4: Front Cover of Wild food mapping publication in Uganda



WILD FOOD FOCUS

The Shea tree (*Vitellaria paradoxa*) is a deciduous, small to medium-sized common tree, growing in the wild, whose fruit and seeds serve multiple purposes. Principally the seed is pressed for oil and shea butter production. Shea butter is a valuable input to the cosmetics industry. Its bark extract can also be used to treat diarrhoea, oil extract residue can be used as bait in animal traps, the branches are used for timbers and making drums and the stem sap can be used to stop bleeding.

The tree is in urgent need of protection from felling for firewood or making charcoal. Trócaire partners SOCADIDO, TEDDO, SARDNET, ARLPI, are working with the government to protect this tree and take advantage of its potential for supporting improved health and income generation through harvesting and commercialising its valuable nuts for sale at local markets.



2. SEED BANKS

Trócaire and partners are members of the Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM) network, which is has been working to protect agrobiodiversity and food sovereignty through the promotion of seed banks and awareness-raising materials about the importance of wild and traditional foods. PELUM has helped establish four community seed banks in participating communities, creating depositories for 106 species. Through their participation in community seed banks, many farmers have also gone ahead to establish mini seed banks in their homes. Groups in Omoro working with Trócaire's partner, ARLPI, have been ensuring that the selection of crops and varieties saved in the banks are suitable to women's farming practices.



Figure 5:
Variety of
legume seeds
from a seed
bank (Photo
courtesy of
Trócaire,
Uganda)



Figure 6 : Display of species conserved by Kadie Community Seed Bank (Photo courtesy of Trócaire, Uganda)

3. EXCHANGE AND EDUCATION

Four partners (SOCADIDO, TEDDO, ARLPI, SARDNET) have organised wild/traditional food fairs with support from Trócaire and PELUM in the Districts of Katakwi, Kalaki, Omoro and Lamwo. These have provided farmers with an opportunity to exhibit different varieties of traditional foods and seed, exchange seeds across regions, sell their products, learn about the uses and value of different wild and traditional foods as well as agroecological practices. Partners also took part in community food fairs in their target communities of Palam, Otuboi and Bululu in Teso sub region, Koro, Bobi, Paloga, Lokung in Acholi sub-region.

4. ADVOCACY ACTIONS

PELUM has engaged in advocacy with the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) seeking collaboration towards the development of the National Agroecology Strategy for scaling up agroecology in Uganda. In collaboration with Trócaire, PELUM has developed [animated](#) videos on agroecology to pass the message on agroecology to the wider Ugandan and global community.

Regarding the threat from the imposition of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs), partners have carried out advocacy with government institutions to pass the Plant Genetic Resource For Food and Agriculture Policy which would ensure protection for all genetic resources including plants animals, fish, insects and microbials.



IMPACTS



Farmers have regained a **greater understanding** of wild foods and how to add value to traditional fruit and vegetables such as mango, shea-nut, tamarind and the ecomai tree (desert date) through dehydration. This allows them to preserve fruit for family consumption as well as selling it.



858 women and 533 men are already adopting **agroecological practices including the recovery of wild and traditional foods** while 3,122 women and 1,761 men are transitioning.



Dietary Diversity: 100% of female headed households (FHHs) and 74.9% of male headed households (MHHs) participating in the programme were **consuming at least one wild food every month**. Anecdotal evidence suggests that there is a move away from seeing these foods as 'food for poor people' or foods which help close the 'hunger gap' in times of crisis. Some households are now starting to cultivate these foods within their families' gardens and farms.



According to participants from the programme, more households have been **consuming and using wild and traditional foods** and usage seems to be higher among women as they are generally the ones that prepare the food. Women have been the primary exhibitors at food fairs supported by the programme.



The Community Managed Seed Security Model is helping communities improve access to diverse, adapted and good quality seed as a resilience strategy meaning farmers have better access to good and quality seed. Farmers continue to multiply the seed so that the wider community can also easily access quality seed and improve the income of the farmers selling the seed.



The **local information on wild and traditional foods**, compiled in booklets at the community level, is being used to inform broader processes of promoting sustainable use and management of natural landscapes which are the habitats for the wild food plants. The geographical focus of this work means the information can be used to support local and regional policy change aimed at the promotion and conservation of wild food sources. The information has also proved valuable at national level in terms of advocacy on the National Policy for Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture.



The regional and national **food fairs** and an agroecology symposium provided platforms for exchange across different sectors leading to more inclusive and practical recommendations being made for policy change at national, sub-national and local levels.



600 different farmers and organisations have participated in and exhibited foods and seeds at the food fairs that are being promoted across the country since the national indigenous food fair was founded by PELUM in 2012.



Though COVID 19 negatively impacted the possibility of holding many seed fairs and markets, the Ministry for Health began actively **encouraging people to eat local and traditional foods** which helped raise awareness about the importance of traditional plants, foods and fruits for their medicinal and nutritional properties. A case in point is the COVIDEX medicine made from the tree *Warburgia ugandensis* that was developed by local scientists and became a herbal remedy treating COVID-19 symptoms. As a result, since this plant is in some community lands, farmers are taking advantage of preserving this tree and also planting more of it.

PARTNER WEBSITES:

COU-TEDDO: <https://couteddo.org>

Pelum: www.pelumuganda.org

SARD-NET: <https://sard-netuganda.or.ug>

SOCADIDO: <https://socadido.org>

ARLPI: <http://www.arlpi.org/Home>

FURTHER RESOURCES:

"When the wild shrinks, so do our foods" – Trócaire Uganda

12-minute Video by Trócaire Uganda

Wild Edible Plants of Teso and Acholi Sub-regions

Fixing the Food System Farmer First

