

Project Synopsis

CHAKRUOK Centre for His Story in Art and Development, Kenya

By Ms. Anyango Okwach, Founder & Director

CHAKRUOK is a community-based project located in rural district of Bondo, Kenya. It was set up in 2003. It is a demonstration, training and resource centre for individuals, communities, NGOs and CBOs who are interested and/or engaged in sustainable rural development, food sufficient and the use of African indigenous knowledge system (IKS). Through demonstration and research we harness the indigenous agricultural knowledge of community members to re-introduce sesame, millet and sorghum farming as a way of promoting food sufficiency and security. We also engage in oil production using the locally grown and supplied sesame and sunflower.

We target educating the people by revisiting communities' past to reconstruct the present and build the future for sustainable development. The Centre's activities are based in God's Story in Art and Development, thus the term CHAKRUOK (Genesis).

The approach

The approach is community based and participatory involving actual production of indigenous agricultural products. Specifically, the project involves the following:

- Use of project and family land as demonstration centers.
- Revisiting IKS in theory and practice.
- Growing of sesame, millet, sorghum and traditional vegetables.
- Weaving and cold oil pressing.
- Focus Group Discussions and consensus building.
- Collecting and building a resource centre.
- Lectures and reading.
- Farm visits.

Our Achievement

For three years now, CHAKRUOK has been experimenting with as 'a paradigm' for community development – recollecting IKS and using it to empower the community members. We have managed to mobilize and organize committed community members to harness and use IKS in agricultural production. Through demonstration and discussions, CHAKRUOK has made individuals and communities realize that they are 'stepping on gold' and thus they can revisit their community indigenous knowledge for agricultural

productivity thus solve the problem of food insufficiency. Many people within the community have already reverted to growing crops such as sesame, millet, sorghum, sweet potatoes and yams that they had abandoned because of 'stigma' that they had been taken over by modernization, thus primitive. More and more households are now having food to eat and store. Traditional granaries for food storage that use to be common up to the 1970s are back again as a sign that harvest is beginning to come back in plenty.

The Products from the Centre:-

- Oil and Butter products: - Sesame oil and butter; Groundnuts oil and butter
- Sunflower oil.

- Hand Woven Products: - Kikoi shawls, Kikoi gents and ladies wear,
- Kikoi Table clothes, Table mats, rugs,
- Door mats and carpets.

Lessons Learned:

- Community based practical research is key for successful ICH education and empowerment.

- Once households are educated in ICH and food production, they appreciate and practice what learned.

- Educating own community and outsiders on ICH needs resources, commitment and patience.

- Use of practical examples is an effective way of educating communities to be self reliant.

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