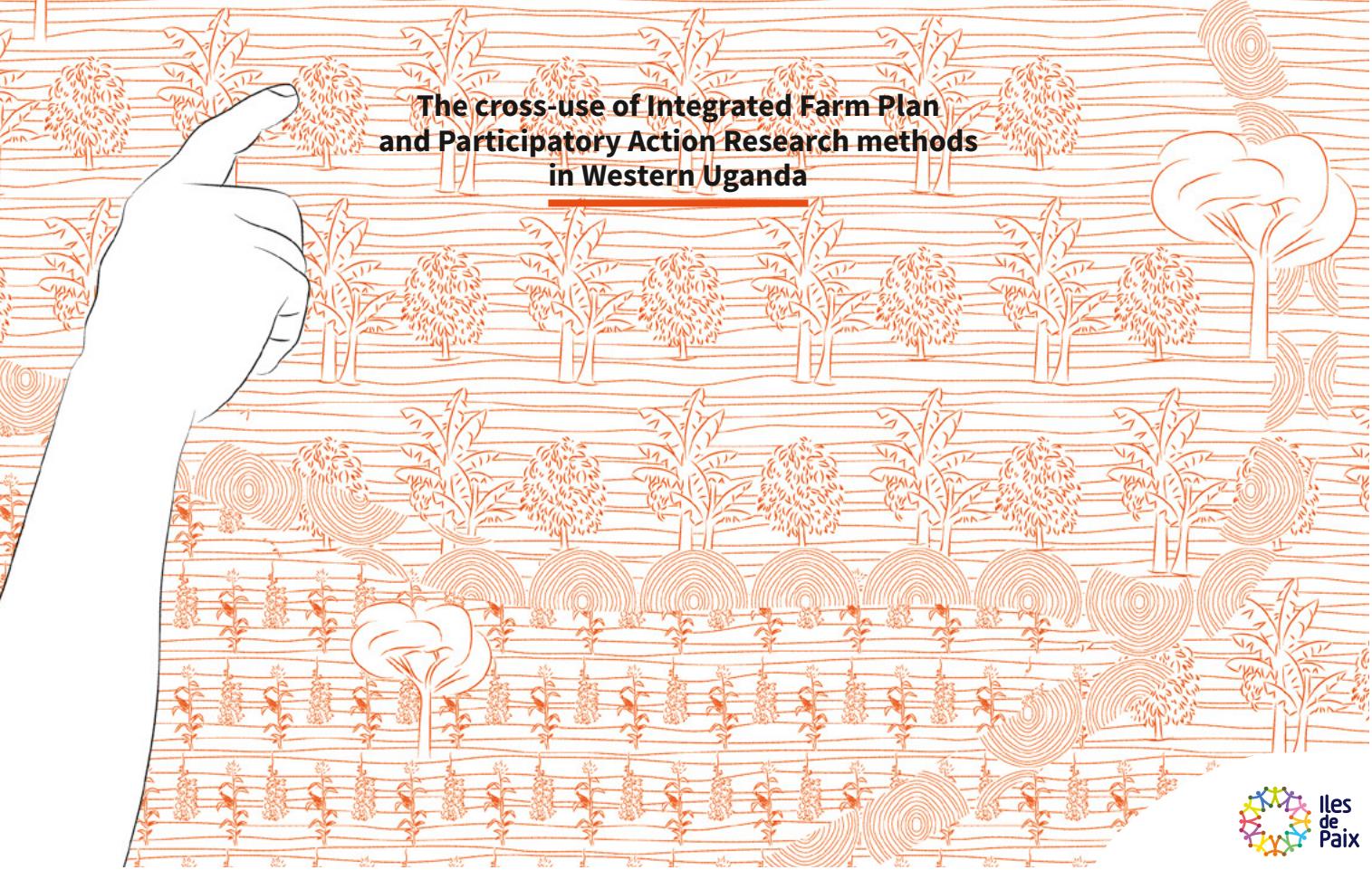


Co-creation of Agroecology knowledge

The cross-use of Integrated Farm Plan
and Participatory Action Research methods
in Western Uganda



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND CONTACTS

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1 Methodologies to guide the application of agroecological principles

Iles de Paix, an NGO specializing in rural development support, has opted to promote the agroecological approach as a means of improving the living conditions of small-scale producers and contributing to the emergence of sustainable food systems.

Like many practitioners of agroecology, *Iles de Paix* considers the field to be not only a science and an array of techniques, but also a social movement. Working with small scale producers in transitioning to agroecology requires a holistic approach that goes beyond “top-down” learning about agro-economic techniques.

As mentioned in the 10 elements of agroecology¹ and the HLPE 13 agroecological principles², there is now a broad consensus on the importance of re-thinking the production of knowledge and its sharing, and of including the agroecological transition processes in participatory approaches.



At first glance, these principles may seem simple, but putting them into practice can be challenging. How can these intentions be turned into concrete development actions?

1 FAO, 2018, The 10 elements of agroecology. Guiding the transition to sustainable food and agricultural systems

2 HLPE, 2019, Agroecological and other innovative approaches for sustainable agriculture and food systems that enhance food security and nutrition. Report from the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security, Rome



"Agroecological approaches favour the use of natural processes, limit the use of purchased inputs, promote closed cycles with minimal negative externalities and stress the importance of local knowledge and participatory processes that develop knowledge and practice through experience, as well as more conventional scientific methods, and address social inequalities."

"Agroecological approaches recognize that agrifood systems are coupled social-ecological systems from food production to consumption and involve science, practice and a social movement, as well as their holistic integration, to address food security and nutrition".

(HLPE Report 2019)

There is probably no sense in looking for a magic solution. Nonetheless, as a player in the development field, recourse to some methodologies may prove invaluable to guide this passage from principles to reality of the ground.

In Western Uganda, Iles de Paix has chosen to frame its intervention on two complementary methodology approaches that are:

- ✗ the “Integrated Farm Plan” (IFP);
- ✗ the “Participatory Action Research” (PAR).

In addition to the advantages of the two approaches (and there are many others), after three years of practice, it is their interlinkage which seemed to have made it the right choice, especially in reinforcing the social dynamics in which a movement of agroecological transition spearheaded by farming communities can take root. At the heart of this dossier, we want to share the lessons learned from this concrete experience.



IFP AND PAR, REASONS FOR THEIR ARTICULATION

- Methodologic consistency ✗
- Complementarity ✗
- Mutual enrichment



SUCCESS FACTORS AND SOME IMPORTANT POINTS

- Human Ressources Management: from a role of advisor to a role of facilitator ✗
- Project planning and management: need for more time and flexibility ✗
- Choice of activities: “musts” and pitfalls to avoid



OUTSTANDING QUESTIONS

- Gender equality and youth inclusion in IFP? ✗
- Limits of scaling-up by “indigenous farmer trainers”? ✗
- “à la carte” transition vs “directed” transition?

2 "Mpanga Super Farmers" programme (Western Uganda) in a nutshell

The Mpanga Super Farmers programme is a 5 year (2017-2021) project with an overall goal of enhancing the economic, environmental and social performance of farmers involved in sustainable family farming in the Mpanga River catchment (Rwenzori region).



WHAT THE FARMERS SAID

"In this village, we have never had a local government agent come to by to give us farming advice."

Kamugimba Tereza,
Kabambiro farmer

The qualitative results revealed several realities, namely:

- ✗ That participative decision making, especially when involving women and children is traditionally almost absent due to socio-cultural male domination;
- ✗ Men are also in charge of businesses that generate more money, such as coffee and bananas;
- ✗ Family involvement decreases when it comes to soil preparation to marketing.

Socio-economic data at the start of the programme³

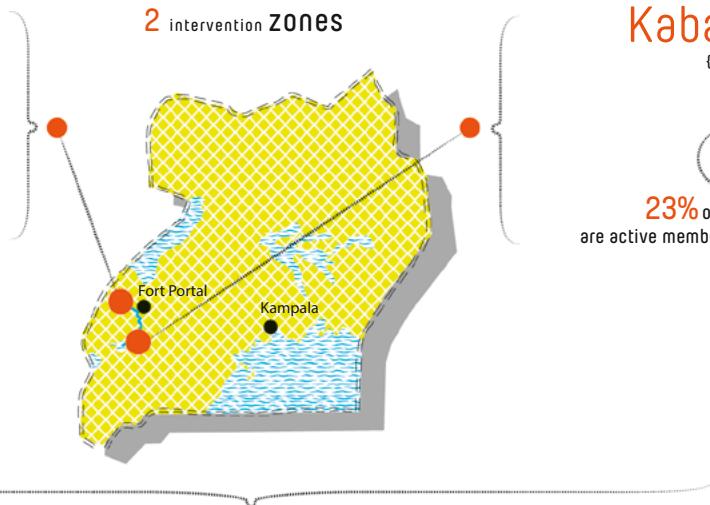
Karangura

{SATNET}



70% of households
are active members of a farming group

2 intervention zones



Kabambiro

{JESE}



23% of households
are active members of a farming group



Fewer than **15%** of households
avail themselves of the State's decentralized
technical support



1.1 hectares,
average size of a plot for farming

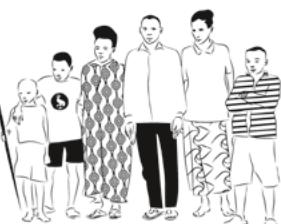


Only **3%** of households
have a written plan of their farm

60 €/month,
average income estimated

600 small scale farming
families accompanied

90% have never discussed
their farming development plan
outside of their families



6 persons,
average size of household



95% of farmers
sell their produce individually

80% of families were dependent
exclusively on farming income

41 years,
average age of the head of household

54% sell their produce
without knowing the going market prices
And among those who try to find out, **70%**
of them accept the price set by middlemen

48.9% primary **31.2 % self-educated**
Level of education of heads of households



³ Data from household surveys conducted in January 2018 when establishing the baseline

3

Integrated Farm Plan (IFP) methodology

What is it



The Integrated Farm Plan approach presented here is a shortened version of the longer manual produced by Wageningen Environmental Research⁴. It is the result of appropriation and adaptation work conducted by Iles de Paix and its Ugandan partners to remain true to the realities of the intervention context, as in Western Uganda, and to apply the lessons learned on the use of other similar methodologies. Examples are “*Mapas Parlantes*” used in the Andean context and the “*Conseil à l’Exploitation Familiale*” tested in West Africa.

The Integrated Farm Plan (IFP) is a methodological approach which, before addressing technical solutions, seeks to prepare the social context needed for transitioning to sustainable family farming and to have farmers who are motivated and take care for their land. To accomplish this, three basic principles are applied throughout the process:

- empowerment or the feeling of being able to change things, of being an actor of change;
- integration, which means the addition of new agricultural practices/activities and maximizing their interactions, making the farm more systematic, diversified and resilient, in keeping with the principles of agroecology (for example, planting shrubs for feeding livestock, and that prevent erosion, and provide manure for gardens through a system of husbandry). This obviously implies willingness for learning and innovation;
- collaboration, because as the saying goes “alone we can go fast, but together we can go farther”.

⁴ Kessler C.A., van Reemst L., Nsabimana F., 2018, PIP Manual; A step-by-step explanation of the PIP approach. PAPAB & WENR, Wageningen, the Netherlands

How it works



WHAT THE FARMERS SAID

"The decision to sell 'matooke' bananas is made by my husband because he is the one who knows how many to sell to cover the school fees, for example. Outside of the banana plantation, I am the one who decides as I am the one who works the fields."

Kemigisa Margaret,
Karangura farmer

CREATE A PLAN AND DARE TO DREAM

At the core of the methodology is the plan itself consisting of a drawing of the farm in its current state and of what it could be. It is drawn up by all family members, according to each one's needs and aspirations and becomes a kind of family "business plan".

The goal is not to produce a work of art, but to begin a family discussion and exploration of their future, and the central role of land and its resources. Planning means having a vision, a stage needed to go from subsistence farming to one that is agro-ecological by conviction, economically viable, socially performant and respectful of the environment. The drawing of their future situation becomes a common vision for all family members to help them get motivated and begin the work. To start with, the family will convert the drawings into a concrete action plan that will take them step by step to the desired situation. Preparing the sequence of actions is not always easy. Field staff can certainly play a role in this as facilitators, but never by replacing the leading role of the family. From the start, the key message that should be conveyed by field staff is to insist on the dynamic aspect of the planning process. Drawings as well as the action plan should be updated regularly by the family. To encourage this updating, it helps to set times aside for sharing knowledge and lessons learned.



1 "Tippy-Tap" hand-washing facilities 2 Dryer 3 Improved kitchen 4 Fruit trees 5 Compost pit 6 Organic kitchen garden 7 Improved latrine (with recovery of urine and feces for biofertilizers) 8 Collection reservoir for run-off water 9 Chicken Unit 10 Goat shed 11 Crop rotation area 12 Beehives 13 Integrated matooke bananas and coffee trees cultivation 14 Contour bounds with fodder grass /shrubs for erosion control and fodder production 15 Crops integration maize and beans 15.a Napier grass [pull] 15.b Desmodium [push] to protect maize from certain attacks 16 Indigenous agroforestry trees 17 Solar panel

FROM A FAMILY PLAN TO A LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

An especially interesting aspect of the IFP methodology is the multiplying effect which can result from the underlying “scaling up”.

Process of the the IFP approach



A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE 4 PHASES OF THE IFP APPROACH

This phase involves presenting the outputs and outcomes of the project to the whole community and the selection of a group of “Farmer Innovators” (FI) by the community, based on criteria which will have been presented and discussed beforehand. Awareness raising activities carried out during this phase should be designed to stimulate interest from the whole community for the IFP approach and the project overall. But this should be done without creating false expectations and by insisting on the basics of the IFP approach that are becoming aware of one’s capacity for change (“You are actors of change”; “Yes you can!”), intrinsic motivation and active participation by community members. This genuine participation should be easier to achieve in the next phases if the selection of farmer innovators is representative of the entire community. The more diversity there is among the Farmer Innovators (FIs), the easier will be to trigger adoption of IFP by fellow farmers.

The duration of Phase 1 will vary according to the situation, especially when levels of confidence and pre-existing group dynamics differ.

PHASE 1



MOBILISATION
AND AWARENESS
CREATION AT THE
COMMUNITY LEVEL

PHASE 2



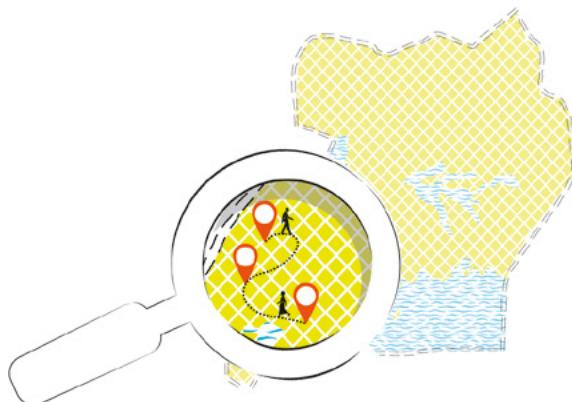
**IFP CREATION
WITH THE FIs (2A)
AND
THE MOVE TO
ACTION AND ITS
GUIDANCE (2B)**

The goal of this phase is to have the group of FIs chosen by the community to create their “Integrated Farm Plans” (IFP) and to implement some of the planned activities during a first growing season.

2A. THE CREATION OF AN IFP BY THE FIs

PARTICIPATION. It is important during the first training sessions to have both FIs and their partners participate. This is crucial to have the family “buy-in” that is required for the IFP. Also key is the creation of good cohesion and a collaborative spirit among the FIs. Analysing the current situation with the all FIs group, by addressing the main problems encountered, as well as the resources available, is the first step to creating good group dynamics.

INTEGRATION. It is also important to spend some time with the FIs (and with their partners preferably) on the key concept of integration on and the way it can be applied to the various categories of their future family plan. It is best not to stay at theoretical level, but to illustrate this principle through practical learning visits to other farmers who already use integrated agriculture, one which is diversified and looking for positive interactions between activities.



After undergoing training and having discussion sessions, each FI then takes the time needed to create an IFP by engaging the entire family. Once completed, each FI presents the first draft of the IFP to his/her peers. This presentation enables the FIs to share good ideas as well as problems encountered in family discussions. Once completed, each FI will be able to revise and complete the IFP.

2B. THE MOVE TO ACTIONS AND ITS GUIDANCE

Then comes the time for actions. This is an important step as learning by doing is at the heart of the IFP approach. It is the first actions and first successes that confirm the FI’s interest in the method and their eagerness to share it with their peers.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE. During this phase, it is important that the project team, ideally by involving with technical officers of local authorities can provide the appropriate technical assistance. When choosing the first activities, it is best to choose those which will give sufficiently concrete results. In Uganda’s case, the first activity taken on by the FIs were often the management of anti-erosion trenches. From the onset of the first rains, the FIs appreciated its usefulness. It also stimulated the interest of their peers further increasing their motivation.



When moving into actions, the project team should insist on the importance of regularly updating its IFP to include new insights. It is essential that the plan not remain fixed, but be very dynamic and constantly revised.

During this phase, the goal is to expand the IFP practice widely in the community. It starts with training FIs to become trainers, to be IFP ambassadors, and to assist other families (usually between 8 and 15) in their community to adopt the approach. A second generation of farmers can thus be trained in the IFP approach and in turn can pass on the approach to a third generation, and so on, depending in the size of the targeted community.

SCALING-UP. To promote scaling-up, “IFP Competitions” are held to mark the passage of the IFP approach from one generation to another. These celebrations are a time to recognize the farmer innovators who are already using the IFP approach and to model this to the rest of the community. It is therefore essential that these events assemble as much of the community as possible. The involvement of local officials is also a determinant in making the IFP approach adopted by families percolate into the management of the territory and natural resources.

PHASE 3



IFP
SCALING-UP
IN EACH
COMMUNITY

There is nothing to prevent, at least theoretically, the scaling-up of the IFP approach from an initially targeted community to adjacent communities. However, this will depend on the socio-economic context of the intervention zone, the duration of the project and the availability of team members. In this case, we were not yet able to reach this stage after 3 years of implementation. So the lessons learned do not apply to this phase.

PHASE 4



IFP
SCALING-UP
TO ADJACENT
COMMUNITIES

4 Participatory Action Research [PAR]



Participatory action research (PAR) is a type of research used to resolve the challenges of lived experiences in a local context which involves participants affected directly by the problems.

In PAR, both local actors and researchers who are involved in the research take part in designing the research process. We start from the idea that everyone has knowledge and we recognize the equality of knowledge. Correctly carried out, this collaborative process allows actors to bring out their tacit knowledge and skills and to enhance them by confronting them with the perspective of researchers. This way, they become authors of their own knowledge which in turn will greatly enhance the uptake of the recommendations resulting from the research.

PAR can be used in many areas of research. When used to transition to agroecology, PAR is an excellent way to come up with innovative solutions, as a result of merging traditional farming know-how with modern science. Hence, it fits perfectly with the principle of co-creation and sharing of knowledge as defined by the FAO: "*Agricultural innovations respond better to local challenges when they are co-created through participatory processes*"⁵.

In a rural setting and in a context of agroecology transition, farmers' concerns, aspirations and initiatives are all starting points for research themes. For example, there could be themes on production techniques, seeds selection, disease management, as well as research on tools/equipment that help reduce labor, improve product conservation and facilitate food processing. The span of the possible research is immense. What is essential is for the producers to be able to express their needs and to properly prepare them to play their full role as "farmer-researchers".

⁵ FAO, 2018, The 10 elements of agroecology– Guiding the transition to sustainable food and agricultural systems



How it works



THE PAR CYCLE

The PAR is not a rigid and linear process, but should be seen as one that is dynamic and collaborative needing to be developed over the medium and long term. The process consists of several phases, making up a cycle, starting with identifying a problem that is a priority for the farmers and leading to the identification of a solution fitting their reality. The cycle will be iterative if necessary. Every case will have a key phase of practical experimenting which should be conducted hand in hand by farmers “raised” to the rank of researchers and “scientists”.

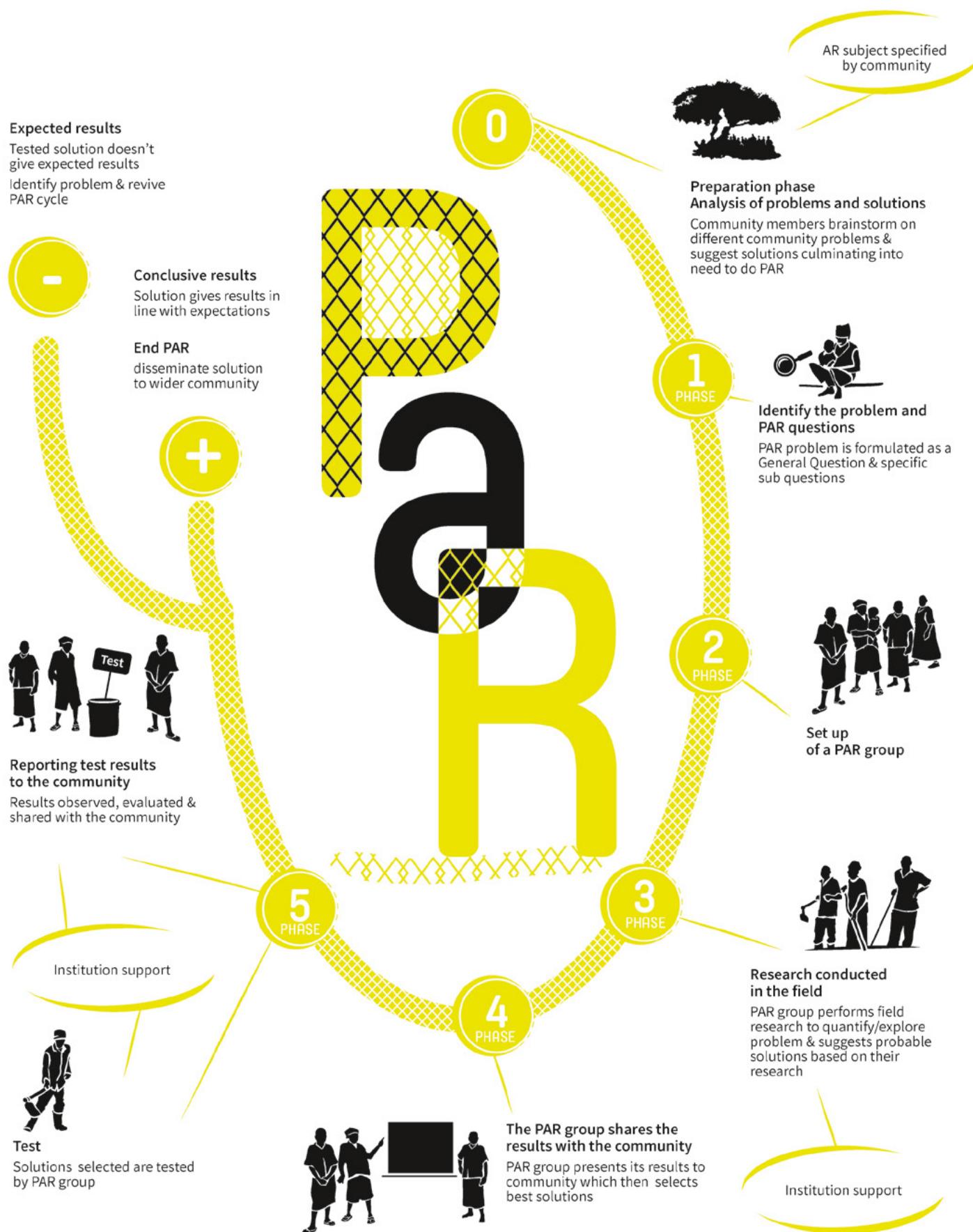
But in the cycle, there is a reason for each phase and it must be given the time it needs. PAR does not only result in innovative solutions, but also contributes to sustainable and liberating social change.

WHAT THE FARMERS SAID

“Normally I don’t go to the market to sell my produce. When it’s time to pick the green peas, middlemen go around the villages looking for green peas because there is a market for them. They come right to my house with their bags to get them filled, then they tell me the price.”

Biira Barbara,
Karangura farmer

Participatory Action Research cycle



An analysis is conducted in participation with the community to find out their demands and expectations. The community, with the help of facilitator, is assisted in bringing forth the problems it is facing and eventual solutions it thinks may solve them.

The facilitator helps them identify, among these priority problems, those that seem to be solvable through PAR.

Upon completion, the community decides on using one or more PARs.

PREPARATION PHASE



ANALYSIS OF PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

It is important to be concise about the problem that PAR hopes to address. The problem is thus analysed in greater detail (How did the problem arise? How long ago? Has it worsened over time? Who does it affect? ...). The phase is completed by defining the problem with a general question and specific questions by which PAR will attempt to arrive at concrete answers.

Topics that are too large requiring many specific questions should be avoided. Even if the phase is led by a facilitator, it is key that farmers be there and play an active role.

PHASE 1



IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM AND PAR QUESTIONS

An action-research group is formed. The group chosen should consist of people who are directly affected by the problem, who are ready to play an active role and are officially approved by the community when the group is chosen at the PAR workshop.

PHASE 2



SET UP OF A PAR GROUP

PHASE 3

RESEARCH CONDUCTED IN THE FIELD BY THE PAR GROUP TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEM

With the help of a facilitator, the PAR group conducts its research and its analyses of the problem with action. The group tries to answer the questions identified by proposing solutions based on their research (for example: travel to other parts of the country to see what is happening, talking with the older generation, looking at ideas on websites like Access Agriculture, ...).

During this phase, the PAR group seeks to address its own knowledge base through outside sources. The PAR group can thus work with technical institutions and research centres that guide farmers, but without taking their place as principal researchers.

This phase can be divided into several parts, for example:

- Deciding on the tools to use for the research;
- Agreeing on an action plan with assigned tasks;
- Compiling of the data to report to the community;
- Cross-cutting of comparisons of various potential solutions based on several parameters.

PHASE 4

THE PAR GROUP SHARES THE RESULTS WITH THE COMMUNITY

The PAR group shares the research findings with the community. It goes over its analysis of the problem and possible solutions expected to solve it. This is done with supporting evidence collected throughout the research (i.e. photos, videos, data collection report, report of study trips, testimonies, ...).

The various possible solutions are then discussed by the community and, with the help of the facilitator, one, or more, of the best solutions is/are decided. The method of testing the solution(s) is then approved.

At this stage, it would be helpful to have a technical institution or a research center helping the group to design an experiment protocol.

PHASE 5

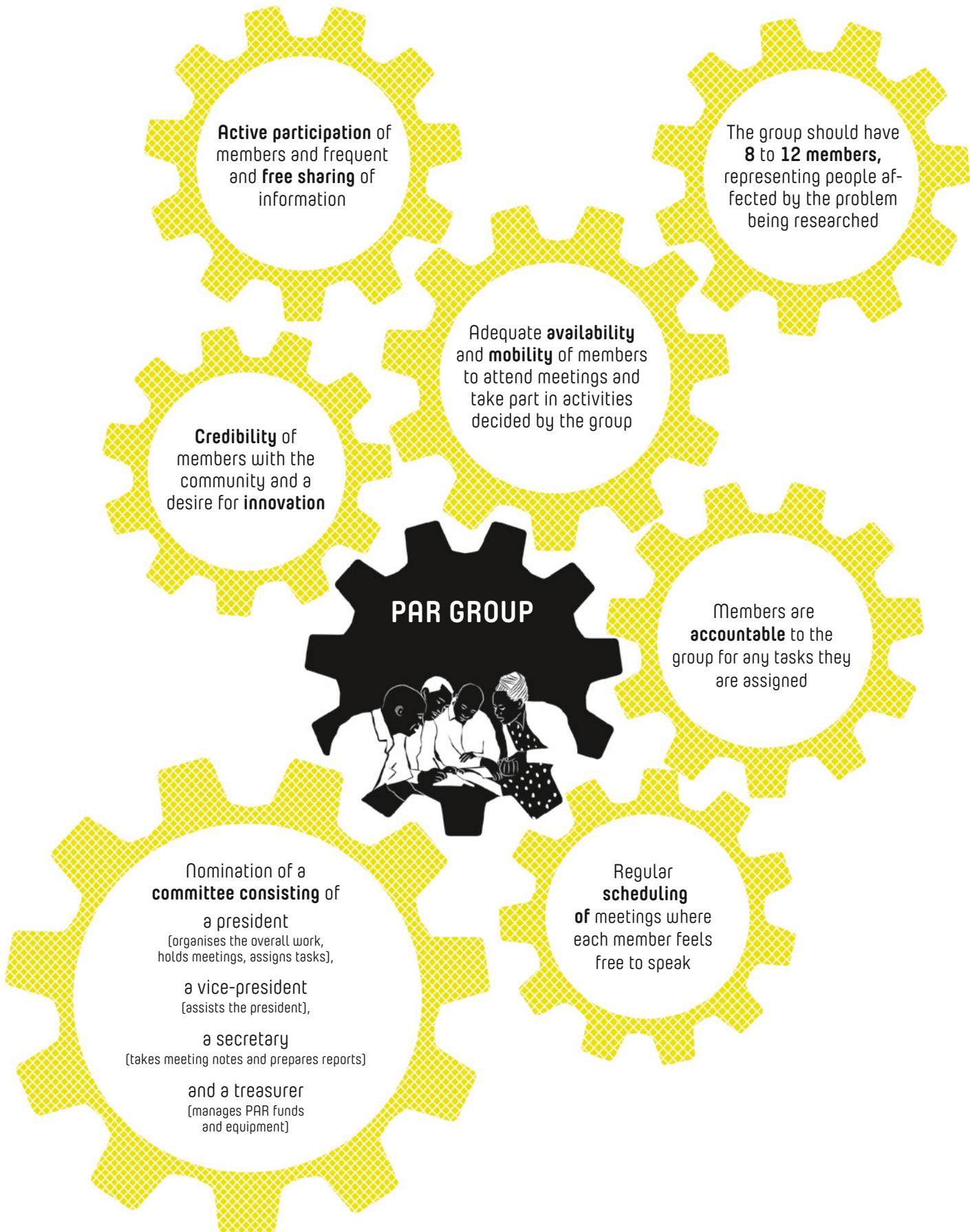
TESTING OF PRE-SELECTED SOLUTIONS & REPORTING THESE TEST RESULTS TO THE COMMUNITY

Here, the technology/solution proposed is tested in a practical manner on the ground and evaluated with a maximum participation of farmers. The technical institution or research center is involved in the research for support, to allow for greater result validity. But most of the research is conducted by the farmers, members of the PAR group.

The PAR group is directly in charge of implementing and monitoring the testing.

The group judges the efficacy of the expected solution and presents the results to the community. If the research is conclusive, the PAR group is responsible for seeing that the solution is adopted by the farmers in the community by encouraging them to incorporate it into their Integrated Farm Plan. If not, a new PAR cycle is started.

A FEW PAR GROUP RULES OF CONDUCT



5

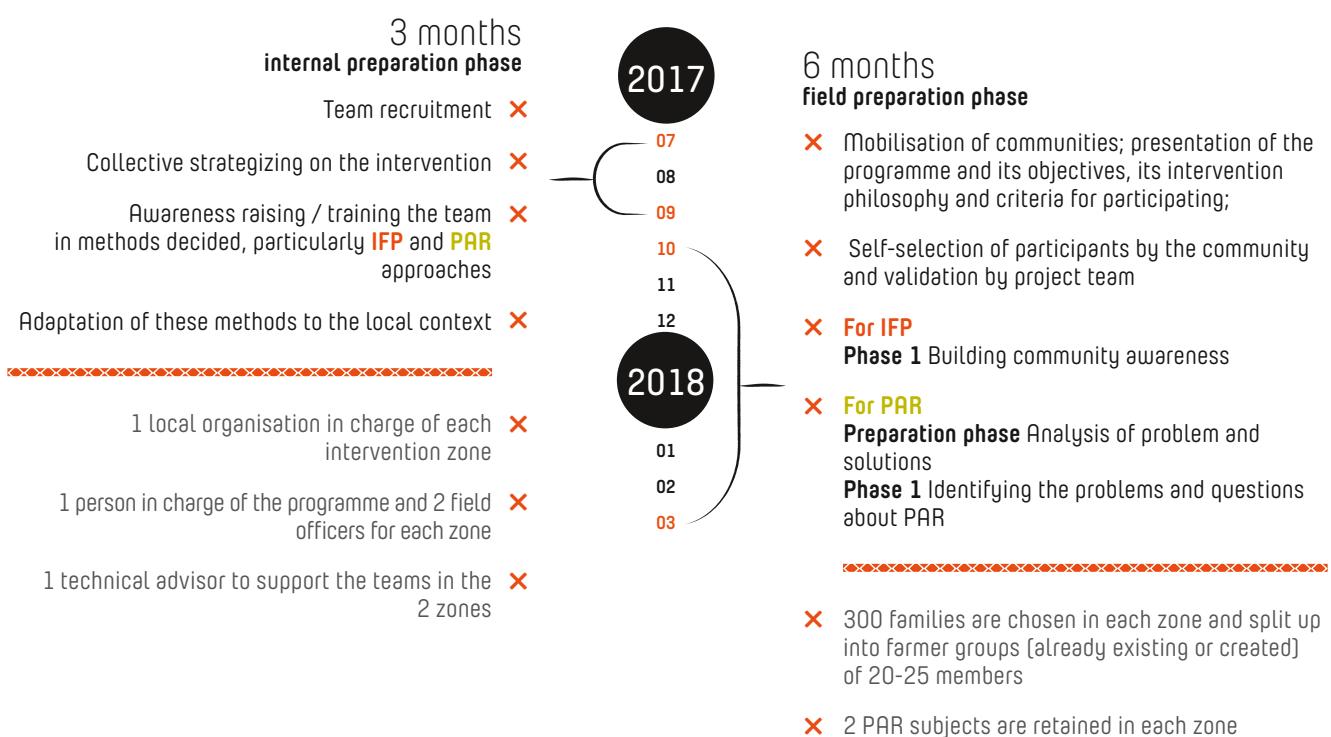
Chronology of the cross-use of the IFP and PAR in Western Uganda

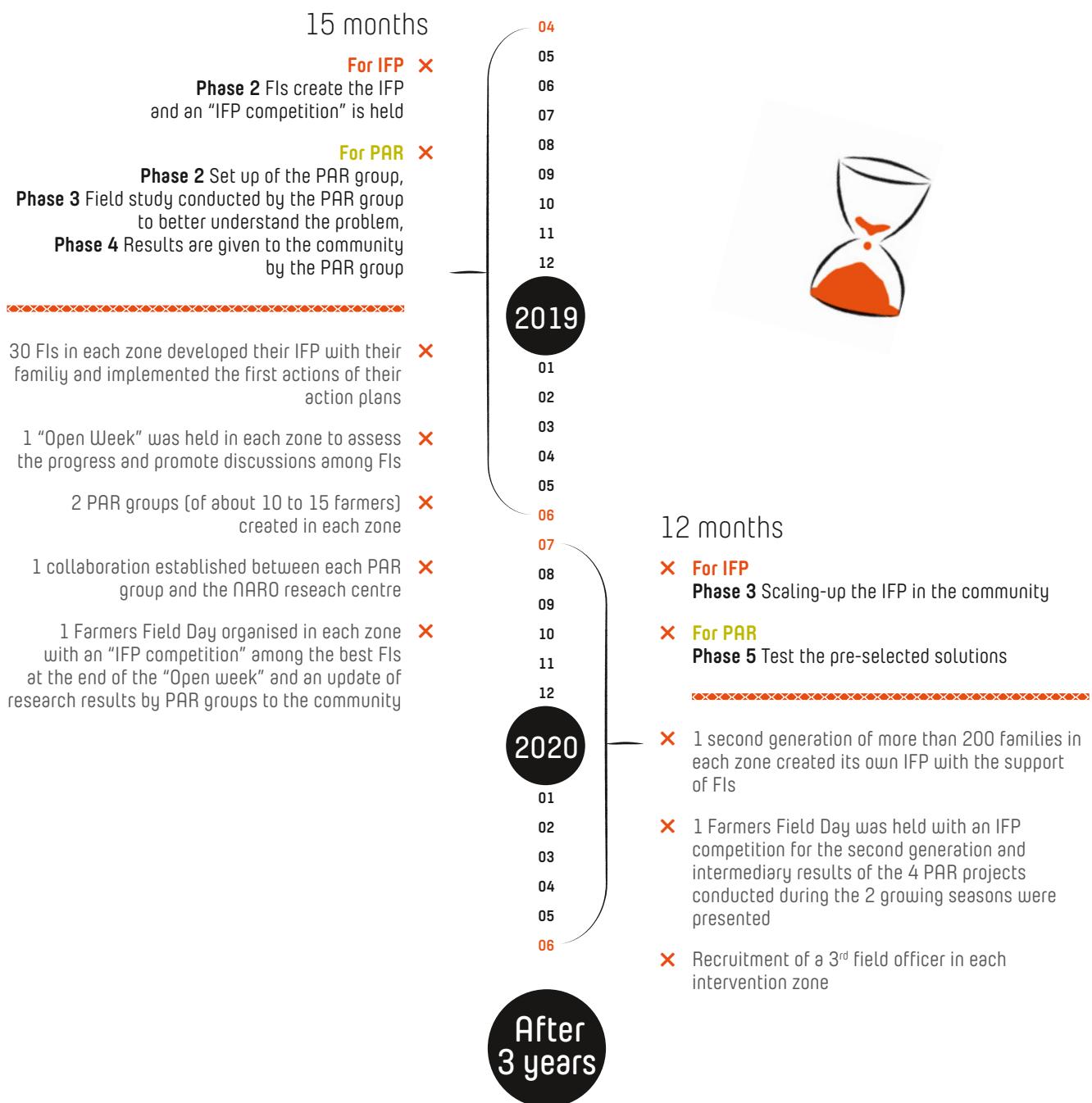
The advantages of combining IFP with PAR are outlined in more detail in the next section, but at this stage we can say that the initial goal was two-pronged.

- ✗ On one hand, PAR was used to bring out solutions which would be easily adopted by their integration with an IFP.
- ✗ On the other, conducting both processes together allowed for greater community participation in making the changes desired, as PAR groups were not composed only of FIs.

The following is an overview of the main steps taken during the three years of the combined use of the IFP and PAR which contributed to a change in mindsets in the communities and to the kick-start of a movement to agro-ecological transition spearheaded by those communities.

Three years of using the combined IFP and PAR approaches





AS A RESULT OF THE COMBINED USE OF IFP-PAR

- X Farmers directly targeted are actively involved in an agroecological transition process
- X Effects of changes are also noticed among some families of the community not directly targeted by the project
- X In each zone, a "basket of transition actions" co-created by the farmers and the project technical team with the "musts" and "optional solutions" allows for more systematic guidance during the transition

Agroecological Transition Sheet



Plan A
Today's farm



Plan B
Future /dream farm

Rank	Activity	Inputs	Timeline	Action	Status
MUSTS	1. Soil & Water Management				
	1 Trenches/terraces [contour bunds for soil and water retention]	△△△ ≈ →	July	Learning visit	Planned
	2 Mulching	△	Continuous	Collect maize stems and leaves Cover soil with it	Started
	3 Agroforestry: Grevillea, Calliandra, Musizi trees	\$ △ ≈ →	August	Define location where to plant Purchase tree seedlings adapted to location	Not started
	2. Integrated Pest Management	△△	September	Follow training given by Rwenzori farmers group	Planned
		≈	July	Plan in the seasonal workplan	Planned
	3. Farm diversification	→	Continuous	Learning visit and practice	On-going
		\$ \$ △ ≈ ≈ → ≡	March	Get information from Mr Apooli located in Bwera village	Not started
		\$ △	June	Delimit a plot near the kitchen Buy – collect - reuse seeds	On-going
OPTIONAL	1 Beekeeping	\$ ≈ → ≡	January	Visit the beekeepers cooperative of Rubona	Not started
	1 Lorena stove	\$ ≡	May	Request about the builder / stove installer Save money in our VSLA	Not started

(\$ Money △ Labour ≈ Knowledge → Maintenance ≡ Equipment)

EXAMPLES OF PAR TOPICS

Karangura

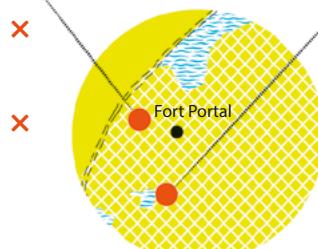
Formulation of ecologically friendly pests and disease management strategies for coffee berry borer and banana bacterial wilt

Development of an appropriate package for usage of human waste from Eco-san toilets in crop fertilization for increased productivity

Kabambiro

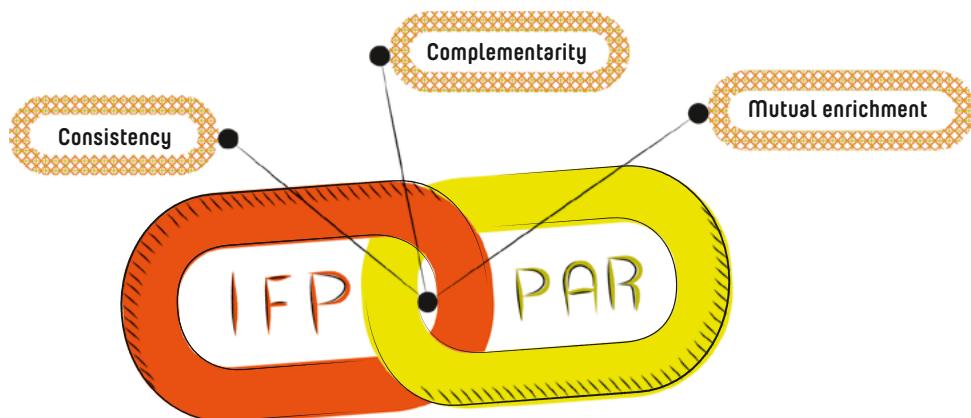
Identification and promotion of adaptable and popular varieties for maize and beans

Formulation of ecologically friendly pest and disease management strategies for bean wilting and yellowing



6

Advantage of combining the two methodologies



CONSISTENCY

IFP and PAR are “participatory” methodologies. These two “bottom-up” approaches place farmers who are supported through aid program as actors, rather than recipients. Combining and interlinking them increases methodology consistency and strengthens awareness, on the one hand at the level of the supported communities of their capacity for change, and on the other hand at the level of the project team of the role of “facilitator” rather than “advisor” that she should play.

COMPLEMENTARITY

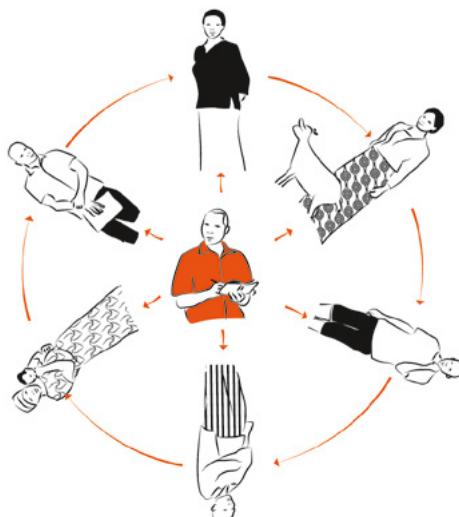
Even though they have features in common, the interlinkage of IFP and PAR is also complementary. By emphasizing the different but complementary features, the interlinkage allows for the introduction of more holistic changes. Among the salient and more specific IFP features is the family aspect which allows for the inclusion of youth and women as well as the introduction to the idea of integration. This helps them discover the positive interactions that may exist within a family farming business. As for the PAR approach, it helps to underscore in a particular way, the importance of co-creation which is one of the basic

principles of agro-ecology. PAR also allows for putting into practice the three basic principles of IFP: empowerment by valuing the role of farmer-researcher, a desire for innovation through practical experimentation and collaboration by having the PAR group work hand-in-hand with a research center or a technical institution.

MUTUAL ENRICHMENT

Finally, combining IFP and PAR allows for the improvement of each separate methodology. In fact, by reflecting on a vision of change, the IFP brings a frame into which the PAR finds naturally its place. The PAR then becomes a motivated activity: “We initiate a PAR as we want to find solutions to a problem that is hindering our vision of the future”. With this, we see a possibility of gaining from the PAR dynamic process, not only a solution to the problem, which is the goal of the research, but also to update and highlight a series of “tacit know-hows” existing in the communities. Hence, these end up filling the “basket of transition actions” from which families can choose for their IFP. This results in an “IFP+” where families appreciate the importance of regularly revising their family plan.

7 Recommendations & best practices



WHAT THE FARMERS SAID

"Thanks to our family plan, we decided to try beekeeping and we started to pay greater attention to the environment. We included trees in our planting as well as coffee plants. So we placed our hives in amongst the coffee plants."

Kikoora Samuel
Kibagha Thyikolere
Farmers group

Concerning the management of human resources

A CHANGE IN MINDSET IS NEEDED AT ALL LEVELS

As previously explained, IFP and PAR are meant to effect a change in mindset among the supported communities. The importance of changing attitudes among the project team as well as other stakeholders who will be involved in the process cannot be emphasized enough.

For the project team, it is essential that the staff on the ground be able to take on the role of facilitator, rather than as advisors who give "top-down" information. It is a must to consider the importance of behavioral skills when recruiting, and to re-enforce these before working on the ground. In any case, it is really important to have the project team taking ownership of the participatory approaches. While the principles underlying the IFP and the PAR are valid in all contexts, the application should be considered and adapted by the team. This adaptation / appropriation work to be carried out upstream is a particularly favorable time to instill the desired state of mind within the teams.

Similarly, when external players are involved in the process, such as a research center or a technical institution who will be helping with the PAR, it may be useful to train their team in what is implied by the participatory dimension of the operation. This is when a genuine meeting of farmer know-how and scientific knowledge can occur.



Concerning project planning/management

ALLOW ENOUGH TIME, ESPECIALLY FOR THE PREPARATORY PHASES

A SOLID FOUNDATION. Both IFP and PAR are processes that need to be created for the medium and long term. As shown in the chronology of the Uganda IFP-PAR articulation, a period of 3 years is essential to lay down a good base for the expected dynamics. However, we think that this period, that we could call the “kick-start” to transition, is not enough to create sustainable results. Ideally, it should be extended by an additional period of three to five years minimum.

REALITY ON THE GROUND. The time spans in some manuals that discuss these methodologies are often theoretical. In reality it is the reality on the ground that dictates the pace. The context in the beginning may especially influence the length of time needed. In Uganda, the preparation phases for both IFP and PAR took longer in the Kabambiro zone. Group dynamics in that zone were very limited at the beginning due to the social fabric that is marked by various migrations. It is very important to take into account the specifics of the context in rolling out these methodologies. It may be counter-productive to stick to schedules that are too tight, or even to skip certain steps to catch up in the implementation. The order in which the steps are taken is of utmost importance in the IFP process and the PAR cycle.

Finally, we think the best advice is still to allow enough time for the preparatory phases, including preparation of the project teams. Patience and time investment in these phases is mostly made up for in the later stages of the process.

THE NEED TO ADOPT AN “AGILE” METHOD OF MANAGEMENT

MANAGE THE UNCERTAINTIES. IFP and PAR are essentially participatory methodologies. This participatory aspect is not just window dressing. We must therefore provide ourselves with the means to manage the uncertainties that can arise in a genuinely participatory process. Not everything can be written in advance. So it means being able to adapt the implementation of one’s operation as it unfolds on the ground.

This necessary flexibility needs to be considered from the very beginning and in drawing up the project. As for PARs in Uganda, it appeared quite useful not to identify in advance, the research centre with whom “farmer-researchers” would collaborate. Hence, we were able to contract out with a research centre that seemed to us the most appropriate one for the research themes identified by the accompanied communities. This way, the risk of wanting to turn away from what the community has expressed can be avoided.

SEVERAL SECTIONS. But the flexibility of implementation should go beyond this aspect of autonomy in contracting out with external players. As previously explained, the pace needed to develop some dynamics can vary. And it may be counter-productive to eliminate some phases. The planning of activities should always be reviewed and updated regularly by the project team. The



WHAT THE FARMERS SAID

“I am pleased to have been chosen as the best innovative farmer of our village. I was selected because I had improved my farming practices.

This motivates me to work even harder, so that one day I can be recognized throughout the whole district.

I encourage women like me to never lose hope, or lose their motivation, and to always take training sessions.”

Biira Betty
Kibagha B Farmers group

project team should be able to adopt an AGILE⁶ method of project management which is by the way in perfect keeping with the recommendations made to farming families in the IFP approach. Indeed, it is important to set a target of three or five years for example, but the process or the transition needed to get there should be divided into several sections, short enough to allow to integrate at all times lessons learned and to thus enrich the programme.

This consistency between what we recommend and what we apply to ourselves may seem natural. But our experience in Uganda has shown us how this more dynamic method of project management is largely unknown by most of development organizations, who are often used to roll out their programmes according to a plan that has been validated once and for all by the funder. A component of capacity building of our local partners in using the “Agile” type of project management and its resulting series of tools and practices proved indispensable.

ADOPT A NEW MODE OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT. This support for our partners had to be long-term because it is through practice that an organization can gradually adopt a new mode of project management. Things were not always perfect, but adopting the AGILE method proved very useful for mutually enriching the IFP and PAR approaches



WHAT THE FARMERS SAID

“In our participatory action research, we are in trying to identify the banana plants that are affected by the bacterial wilting disease. With this research, we will be able to find the solution to this disease.”

Murandi John
Lwabala Farmers



Concerning the choice of activities

THE TRAP OF EXTERNAL INCENTIVES; THE POWER OF FARMER TO FARMER EXCHANGE AND COLLECTIVE MOTIVATION

To hasten the process and to obtain tangible results, it may be tempting to stimulate community participation with external incentives such as giving out free equipment or financial rewards for taking part in activities. It is important to avoid these practices which may prevent the intrinsic motivation needed to produce sustainable changes.

NOT A “MAGIC BULLET”. In the first presentation of the project to Uganda communities, it was pointed out that the project was not a “magic bullet”, and that we were launching the IFP process with an empty “basket of transi-

⁶ The AGILE method is a project management approach that is collaborative, iterative and incremental. It is called agile, because it takes into account both initially identified needs and those generated by future changes. Initially developed for IT project management, its principles and values can be used to manage any type of project.

tion actions” that can “only” be filled by proposing to accompany them in completing their development plan. They found this disconcerting at first, but with time, the project team began to see a growing acceptance from the families for this self-enhancing and accountable approach. Conducting study trips to see what is possible by meeting “farmer to farmer” was a very powerful means of kick-starting the process. We were able to conduct these study trips to start the process, and to create a better understanding of the concept of integration in the IFP method, to deepen questions related to the various PARs and to stimulate the creation of “a basket of transition actions” for the IFP.

ORGANISATION OF FESTIVE EVENTS. Another way to increase motivation, from our experience in Uganda, was to enhance collective motivation later in the process with celebrations. At first, the project team was somewhat doubtful about the value of holding “IFP contests” as recommended in the Wageningen Environmental Research IFP manual. Not only did the experience remove all doubts but it led to results that exceeded expectations. These moments were decisive in launching the scaling-up phases in the community and to bring local authorities on board. In Uganda, we chose to culminate the IFP contests at a “Farmers Field Day” where the PAR groups were also able to present their progress reports to the community.

SELECT PAR FROM VARIOUS CATEGORIES

THEMATIC DIVERSITY. In the case of PAR, the type of research theme can affect the length of the cycle. So, for topics that have productive aspects, depending on growing seasons to conduct trials can considerably prolong a complete cycle. Several seasons may, in fact, be needed to produce sufficient solid scientific data. During our Uganda experience, the first four PARs (two in each zone) concerned this type of research. In light of this experience, our advice would be to have more thematic diversity among the first lot of PARs selected in order to include, for example, some research on equipment that might hasten the cycle. At the same time, it is still important to respect the order of priorities identified by the community at the initial participatory workshop.



WHAT THE FARMERS SAID

“In designing our plan, we realized that besides our cash crops, we also needed crops for food security. So we started growing yam and beans and we made a vegetable garden of cabbage, “dodo”, eggplants and other vegetables.”

Kuule Ayubu
Nyakitokoli
United Farmers Group

8

Limits and outstanding questions

Using IFPs to address gender equality and youth inclusion: a way-forward?

Even though it is too soon to make definite conclusions, after three years of implementation, the changes observed within family dynamics, especially concerning the involvement of youth and women in decision-making, encourages us to continue on this course.

The IFP family approach in the Uganda programme served as a base to sustain our strategy of gender equality and youth inclusion.

- ✖ *Why include the all family in the planning process?*
- ✖ *What resources, including human resources, can family bring to the plan?*
- ✖ *What are the wishes of each family member?*
- ✖ *How are the tasks in the action plan assigned*

were questions raised when planning with the families and allowing to tackle those cross-cutting thematics. The larger framework for developing the family farming business offers the advantage of addressing these issues in a positive and less stigmatizing way. The gender issue can therefore be better addressed from a positive masculinity perspective.



Limits to “scaling-up” by “indigenous farmer-trainers”

On paper, the IFP approach may not seem very demanding in terms of the human resources required, especially when trained FIs of a first generation act as “indigenous farmer-trainers”. The reality is not that simple. Our experience in Uganda, corroborated by many previous experiences in other contexts, obliges us to question all very attractive presentations of an exponential “scaling-up”, generation after generation, resting solely on the intrinsic motivation of “indigenous farmer-trainers”.

NEED FOR SUPPORTING PERSONNEL. On the contrary, our practice invites us to consider the relatively strong need for supporting personnel as a limitation or constraint, particularly with the IFP method. The success of the IFP approach rests, in fact, largely on the capacity of staff on the ground to facilitate the process of change. And if we are to adhere to the idea that each family has its own particular aspirations, then coaching sessions will be required sometimes for family to family.

In Uganda, we quickly decided to add a third field officer in each intervention zone. Due to the reality on the ground we opted for a “mixed” strategy for scaling-up the IFP, where the FIs came to assist the project team who continued its work well beyond the training of a first generation of FIs.

GROUP MEETINGS-TRAINING SESSIONS. An alternative to scaling-up has been suggested by Hugues Dupriez⁷, that of holding group “meetings-training sessions” taking place each time at a different family. This was done from time to time, but it probably should have been used on a more regular basis.

In Uganda, we also decided to not be too strict in using the “generation to generation” approach. From the beginning of the programme, activities organised specifically for FIs were mixed in with other activities with not only the FIs but also families of the “second generation”. For instance, PAR groups were mostly composed of non-FIs. There is a greater advantage in doing this way: it avoids creating “super FIs” with whom the community no longer identifies, and stimulates a more organic ripple effect. We were pleased to see non-FI families decide to create their own IFP spontaneously.



WHAT THE FARMERS SAID

“Members of our research group and I are currently working with the NARO Research Centre. We planted several varieties of beans to see which ones would grow best in Kabambiro. Which ones grow the fastest? How each variety is affected by rain and sun?”

Gafabusa Scholar
Bwera Central farmer

"Transition à la carte" versus "Directed transition"

As mentioned previously, the IFP approach is based mainly on the notion that each IFP is unique in that it reflects the vision and aspirations of a particular family. There is still the question of the role of the facilitator in guiding the process from the current situation to an envisioned future. The line between helpful advice and intrusion can be fluid.

BASKET OF PRIORITY ACTIONS. In Uganda, we let each family design freely (perhaps too freely) their own action plan, which undoubtedly increased the work of field officers. Yet, by proceeding in this way, and by encouraging much “farmer to farmer” sharing, a “basket of transition actions” specific for each intervention zone was progressively developed. Certain actions in this basket clearly appeared as priorities and essential for everyone, and others were more optional. This result, which constitutes a sort of arrival point after three years, conceals according to us, a potential for scaling-up that may be even greater than the one based only on the intrinsic motivation of FIs. This opens up, in fact, the perspective for a more systematic transition accompaniment, while keeping the liberating IFP aspect, resting on an itinerary developed over time by the community itself and not handed over “key in hand” by a development actor.



9 Conclusions

Supporting an agroecological transition movement, led by peasant communities and giving full place to the co-creation of knowledge, cannot be improvised. Having recourse to proven methods is an immense assistance.

In this regard, the results observed in Western Uganda after three years of using the IFP and PAR methods concurrently, are particularly encouraging. Of course, as we pointed out in this paper, the process is not always straightforward. Some adjustments to the management of human resources may be necessary. More flexibility would undoubtedly be helpful in managing the project. Above all, moving too hastily must be avoided, particularly during the first phases of these methodologies. But these reminders should certainly not prevent us from moving forward with these methodologies.

Move to action of farmer community in Kabambiro and Karangura, by farmers who are proud and determined to be involved in agroecological transition, is on the contrary, an invitation to explore this approach.

In conclusion, we highly recommend that readers view the video capsules included with this report, as the faces and expressions of the principal actors sometimes say more than words as to why we wanted to share widely what we have learned by working with them.



10

Three video-capsules to learn more

Do you want to open a reflection on the methodologies likely to stimulate an agroecological transition movement self-supported by the communities? To begin a discussion on a particular aspect of agroecology? The short video capsule format that we propose will allow you to use them according to your objective and your audience.



"MOTIVATING FARMERS TOWARDS CHANGES THROUGH INTEGRATED FARM PLANNING"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GnuSN3by2Bk&t=3s>

This five minutes video capsule describes the IFP used in Western Uganda. While it re-explains the main features of the approach, the emphasis is more on the activities conducted at the end of Phase 2 when the scaling-up approach is launched more widely in the community targeted by the intervention.

- ✖ Actionable themes: IFP method; integration; kick-starting of a transition movement.
- ✖ Questions to spark a discussion: Are you aware of any other method to begin a movement to transition to agroecology? Should the entry point of the transition focus on techniques or attitudes? What is the point of focusing support on the family as a whole? How to create a ripple effect throughout the whole community?





"WHEN SCIENCE AND INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE MERGE"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dxFC3WZa4MI>

This video of close to five minutes highlights the various stakeholders involved in the participatory action-researches conducted in Western Uganda. The video focuses on Phases 3 and 5 of the PAR cycle, when “farmer-researchers” work hand-in-hand with researchers of the “National Agricultural Research Organization”, to better understand certain problems (Phase 3) and conduct tests on some possible solutions (Phase 5).

- ✖ **Actionable themes:** PAR methodology; the principle of knowledge co-creation promoted in agroecology.
- ✖ **Questions to spark a discussion:** What other approaches do you know that applies the principle of knowledge co-creation as promoted by agroecology? How much traditional knowledge is still present in your zone? Is it truly appreciated? Are the results of the research projects usually adopted by farmers? Does agroecology mean traditional farming?



"AGROECOLOGY AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO SYNTHETIC PESTICIDES IN UGANDA"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k4Z4pxldKpE&t=6s>

This three minutes video-capsule presents some basic agroecology principles. It is mainly an illustration of the transition movement to agroecology which began in certain Western Uganda villages after three years of using the combined IFP and PAR approaches. It focuses particularly on farmers adopting new practices in their biological fight against pests and diseases.

- ✖ **Actionable themes:** Agroecology in practice; the biological fight against pests and diseases.
- ✖ **Questions to spark a discussion:** What agroecology principles are applied in this video? What techniques are there in your zone to fight pests and diseases biologically? What are the various negative impacts of using synthetic pesticides?

VIEWING ALL THREE CAPSULES

www.ilesdepaix.org/savoirs-agroecologie-videos-en/

In addition to the actionable themes in each individual capsule, a viewing of all the different capsules could lead to a discussion on the concomitant use of several methodologies. What methodologies can complement or even strengthen each others?



As mentioned in the 10 elements of agroecology and the HLPE 13 agroecological principles, there is now a broad consensus on the importance of rethinking the production of knowledge and its sharing, and of including the agroecological transition processes in participatory approaches.

At first glance, these principles may seem simple, but putting them into practice can be challenging. How can these intentions be turned into concrete development actions?

In Western Uganda, Iles de Paix has chosen to frame its intervention on two complementary methodology approaches that are the “Integrated Farm Plan” (IFP) and “Participatory Action Research” (PAR).

At the heart of this dossier, the reader will discover the lessons learned from this concrete experience.



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