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INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF FIELD SCHOOLS (FS) IN EXTENSION CURRICULA OF INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING IN EASTERN AFRICA

June 2021

SDGs:	
Countries:	The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, The Republic of Kenya, The Republic of Uganda
Project Code:	TCP/SFE/3701
FAO Contribution	USD 200 000
Duration:	18 September 2018 – 28 February 2021
Contact Info:	Subregional Office for Eastern Africa FAO-SFE@fao.org

Implementing Partners

Ethiopia: Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Hawassa University.
Kenya: Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Irrigation. Pwani University.
Uganda: Ministry of Education and Sport, and Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries. Kampiringisa National Farmers Leadership Centre.

Beneficiaries

Direct beneficiaries are the participating institutions of higher learning (IHLs) in the three countries. Indirect beneficiaries are the smallholder farmers to whom the improved agriculture extension services are provided.

Country Programming Framework (CPF) Outputs

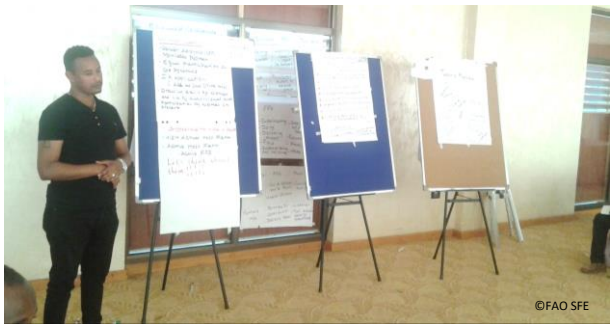
Ethiopia CPF Priority 1: Crop production, productivity and commercialization improved.
Kenya CPF Outcome 3: Improved management of land, water and other natural resources for enhanced food security and socio-economic development at national, county and community level; Kenya CPF Outcome 5: Access to and use of information, innovation, a global pool of knowledge and expertise drives holistic growth in the agricultural sector.
Uganda CPF Outcome 1: Sustainable production and productivity of agriculture, forestry and fisheries commodities for men, women and youth in targeted populations increased; Output 1.3: Capacity of selected public, civil society and private institutions for quality agricultural services and assets acquisition enhanced.

Background

The Farmer Field School (FFS) approach was developed by FAO and partners as an alternative to the prevailing top-down extension method. The approach promotes farm-based experimentation, group organization and local decision-making. Countries have expressed strong interest in integrating FS into their national policies, strategies and programmes. Considering the expansion of FS in terms of both numbers and geographic scale, concerns have emerged about how best to ensure a minimum level of quality of FS programmes while maintaining the required flexibility. A Global FFS Review, conducted in 2012 by FAO, identified the steps and conditions required to set up strong and sustainable FFS programmes, including the need for institutionalization to harness quality FS through standardized guidelines and harmonized implementation procedures.
Although FS are widespread in the Eastern Africa region, the mainstreaming of the approach within national extension systems varies widely and the integration of FS knowledge in mainstream Institutions of Higher Learning (IHLs) is minimal. As a result, extension graduates lack the level of FS expertise required in the field. This is exacerbated by the fact that policy-making regarding the integration of FS in IHLs cuts across multiple ministries, in particular, ministries of education, which govern colleges and universities, and ministries of agriculture, which host the majority of FS expertise and knowledge in the field. The project aimed to bridge this gap between ministries and IHLs in order to enhance harmonized, systematic capacity-building for future cadres of FS actors.

Impact

The project has enhanced the quality of agriculture extension and advisory services delivery, enabling the needs of smallholder farmers in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda to be met more effectively. The provision of agriculture extension services will assist farmers to sustainably produce crops and livestock, and have a positive impact on their food and nutrition security.



Achievement of results

The project successfully improved client-oriented agricultural extension service delivery by integrating the FS methodology into the extension curricula of selected IHLs in Eastern Africa. Nine institutions have integrated FS methodology in extension curricula, exceeding the original target of three. The project had two outputs: capacity-building of faculty staff members to integrate/deliver FS curricula in respective academic programmes and the development of FS curricula in selected IHLs.

Output 1 was partially achieved. The project developed the capacities of 45 faculty staff members in the project IHLs, five below the original target of 50. Financial resources limited the number of participants able to take part in the project. If financial resources are available in the future, consideration should be given to universities in Ethiopia and Uganda to enable their staff to reach FS Master Trainer (MT) level.

Output 2 was fully achieved. In Ethiopia, Hawassa University reviewed FS curricula against their established Community Outreach Programme and decided to maintain the two separately, instead of combining the curricula into one programme. As the curriculum revision within the academic programme was below the 30 percent threshold established by the University Senate, University Senate submission and approval was not required for the FS curriculum, which is now ready for implementation.

In Kenya, Pwani University successfully adapted the FS curriculum; this was submitted to the University Senate and received approval for implementation. The FS curriculum is in place and is now being taught. A curriculum for FS short courses was developed and passed by the University Senate.

In Uganda, participants across various universities took part in an FS curriculum review and adaptation process. The FS curriculum was finalized and agreed by the participating universities. As the curriculum review process is currently closed, the universities that participated must wait until the next national review period opens at the National Commission for Higher Education in order to submit the FS curriculum for review, approval and subsequent implementation.

Implementation of work plan and budget

In Ethiopia, most activities were implemented in a timely manner. Because of the prevailing local security situation in the project implementation area, the FAO team was forced to wait in order to schedule the Training of Facilitators (ToF) in a secure environment. Despite this, all activities were implemented successfully.

In Kenya, a short drought caused a delay in the implementation of a Letter of Agreement (LoA) with the service provider. The service provider was able to overcome this challenge in a rapid and efficient manner.

In Uganda, delays were experienced in the organization of key inception activities. Following consultative meetings with the country and subregional office structures, an understanding was reached and the agreed activities were delivered.

In Ethiopia and Uganda, all activities were implemented in line with the planned budget. In Kenya, the LoA provided to Pwani University did not provide sufficient financial resources for the establishment of FS learning labs at the University farm. An amendment was made to the LoA to provide these resources.

All risks and challenges to the project were managed effectively.

Follow-up for government attention

It is important to ensure that the FS curriculum designed for IHLs in Uganda is submitted to the National Commission for Higher Education when the next review period opens.

Post-project follow-up with outreach sites should be conducted to gather useful evidence on the sustainability of the FFS groups after the project. This would contribute to larger corporate initiatives like the FFS Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework.

SUSTAINABILITY

1. Capacity development

The project focused on developing the capacities of university professionals and government extension officials. In this way, it not only built the capacity of the target audience (faculty teaching staff) but also of local extension providers, thus ensuring sustainability of its capacity development efforts.

The project was designed to ensure that, at project closure, the participating IHLs could continue to provide FS training as part of their regular training programmes and could sustainably manage the FS content. In view of the rapid uptake and enthusiasm displayed by the participating universities, there is no doubt that FS course content will continue to thrive and grow.

This project strengthened relationships with the African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS), a continental body focused on enhancing the delivery of agricultural extension and advisory services within government structures. The partnership has led to funding opportunities for AFAAS on behalf of the FAO Investment Centre to focus on areas of FS institutionalization.

At the government level, the project has strengthened linkages with government programmes and extension services units in the participating ministries of agriculture. In Kenya, Pwani University has enhanced its partnership opportunities with the investment programme of the National Agricultural and Rural Inclusive Project, funded by the Government of Kenya and the World Bank/ International Development Association. In Uganda, the National Farmer Leadership Centre has become the preferred training centre for extension services, including FFS activities because of its involvement in the FS institutionalization project.

2. Gender equality

Men and women have equal opportunities to attend universities. The equal contribution of, and benefit to, women and men was ensured through the participation and involvement of men and women in training, awareness and education, as well as in decision-making. The project ensured that training participants included both men and women, and that their specific needs and priorities in enterprise development were addressed.

Although the project did not specifically focus on the FAO Policy on Gender Equality, equal opportunity for participation among men and women was ensured. In one particular FFS group in Kenya, 75 percent of the participants were women.

In Ethiopia and Uganda, female FFS participants noted their increased decision-making power, and were the main voice of the financial decisions in their FFS groups.

3. Environmental sustainability

The FFS methodology supports the ecosystem approach, thus making a direct contribution to environmental sustainability.

4. Human Rights-based Approach (HRBA) – in particular Right to Food and Decent Work

The project was implemented in a transparent, non-discriminatory manner among those able to participate in its activities. The FFS approach enables and empowers smallholder farmers, their families and rural communities to understand and respond to current challenges and to make their own critical contributions to the attainment of SDGs.

5. Technological sustainability

Before the project began, a problem analysis was conducted in each country to better understand the capacity gaps and needs to be covered. The project was adapted to meet each university's specific needs. In terms of FFS implementation, participants were able to voice their opinions through problem ranking to determine the appropriate technology to be introduced for the selected cropping enterprise. Options included organic production, cover cropping, homemade pesticides and improved varieties. The technologies provided were flexible and based on participants' needs.

The project trained university staff to integrate and embed the FS curriculum into the selected academic programmes. The participation across the three countries enhanced the professional networks of the academicians involved in FFS. The participating universities are now able to ask technical questions and receive pertinent advice and suggestions from other FFS experts across Eastern Africa. Participants in all three countries are well connected and can liaise with one another if technical gaps arise.

6. Economic sustainability

No additional financial resources have been made available to continue the FS institutionalization process. However, negotiations are currently underway with the FAO Investment Centre to source additional funds to support the FS institutionalization process in Eastern Africa.

Following the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020, many traditional donors and funding agencies shifted their focus of funding mechanisms to emergency response in COVID-19. Pending the improvement of global conditions concerning the pandemic, efforts will be made to seek additional funding to support the institutionalization process in Eastern Africa.

Documents and outreach products

- **Mweri, B. M., Duveskog, D., Mounde, L., Mutungi, P., & Pratt, O.** 2018. Institutionalizing farmer field schools in institutions of higher learning: The case of Pwani University. Proceedings from the Sixth African Higher Education Week and Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) Biennial Conference, 22-26 October 2018. Nairobi.
- Introduction to farmer field schools: A Reader for Institutions of Higher Learning. 2019. http://www.fao.org/3/ca3605en/ca3605en.pdf
- Universities across three Eastern African nations integrate Farmer Field School methodology into curricula. April 2020. http://www.fao.org/farmer-field-schools/news-events/detail-events/en/c/1271209/
- A paradigm shift in Farmer Field Schools methodology in Eastern Africa. 23 March 2021. http://www.fao.org/news/countries-good-practices/article/en/c/1382854/
- FAO (in press). 2021. Good and promising practices in the integration of Farmer Field Schools methodologies into Universities' Curricula: The Case of Pwani University in Kenya.
- Instructional video on institutionalizing the FFS methodology (approximately 15 minutes). In development – expected in July 2021.

ACHIEVEMENT OF RESULTS - LOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Expected Impact	**Contribute to increased inclusiveness, participation and ownership of agricultural knowledge generation and dissemination among farmers**		
Outcome	Client-oriented agricultural extension service delivery improved through the integration of FS methodology in extension curricula of IHLs in Eastern Africa		
	Indicator	Number of IHLs that fully integrate FS methodology in extension curricula into academic programmes.	
	Baseline	0	
	End Target	3	
	Comments and follow-up action to be taken	The number of institutions that have integrated the FS methodology in extension curricula in academic programmes stands at nine. This exceeds the original end target, as more institutions in Uganda took part than originally expected. Follow-up actions are to liaise with the institutions to receive an informal progress update on the curriculum implementation process.	
Output 1	A critical mass of faculty staff members in selected IHLs have the knowledge and skills to integrate/deliver FS curricula in respective academic programmes		
	Indicators	Target	Achieved
	Number of faculty staff members at three IHLs that are well conversed in the integration of FS curricula in respective academic programmes.	50	Partially
Baseline	15		
Comments	The project was able to develop the capacities of 45 faculty staff members in the beneficiary IHLs. Financial resources constrained the number of participants able to take part in the project. If financial resources become available, consideration should be given to universities in Ethiopia and Uganda to enable their staff to reach FS MT level. The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent standard operating procedures slowed down student and farmer interactions and other community outreach activities by the IHLs.		
Activity 1.1	Publication of International Institute of Rural Reconstruction FS core reader for dissemination to selected IHLs		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	Some delays with the co-author organization to return the publication to meet publication workflow system (PWS) standards were incurred. However, once PWS approval was achieved, the publication faced no delays in printing and distribution.	
Activity 1.2	ToF on FS methodology for faculty staff members (Ethiopia and Uganda)		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	In Ethiopia, the planned ToF was conducted without delay. In Uganda, delays incurred with the service provider affected the timing of the training modules and slightly affected the quality of the outcome. Follow-up action in Uganda is necessary to ensure that future identified service providers fully understand FAO's expectations of their role.	
Activity 1.3	Establishment of FS outreach groups (Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda)		
	Achieved	Yes	
	Comments	In Ethiopia, one outreach group was identified. This activity was limited by the available resources and staff time of Hawassa University. In Kenya, five outreach groups were established and exceeded the expectations of the project. The only impediment encountered was the short drought in May 2019. The farmers were unable to plant their maize crop because of the lack of rainfall. However, once the rains began in June, the crop was planted and the outreach groups proceeded without further problems. Farmer facilitators were trained and enabled to initiate the FS laboratories (second generation FFS) for student-learning purposes. In Uganda, two outreach groups were established. Delays were experienced on the part of the service provider as a result of a lack of understanding regarding the establishment of the outreach sites. Conversations among the Lead Technical Officer, Country Office and the service provider provided clarification and the challenges were resolved. Post-project follow-up with the outreach sites would gather useful evidence on the sustainability of the FFS groups after the project. This would contribute to larger corporate initiatives like the FFS Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework.	

Activity 1.4	Training of university staff as FS MTs (Kenya)	
	Achieved	Yes
	Comments	Fifteen university professors and lecturers from Pwani University took part in the season-long learning cycle to become FFS MTs. Each participant was tasked to form a small group to lead the establishment of an FFS outreach group. No impediments were encountered and no follow-up action is needed.
Activity 1.5	Participation in RUFORUM biennial meeting of deans and vice-chancellors	
	Achieved	Yes
	Comments	FAO, in collaboration with Pwani University, presented at a side event at the RUFORUM biennial meeting of deans and vice-chancellors in October 2019 in Nairobi Kenya. The side event had high participation and many conference participants showed great interest. No impediments were encountered and no follow-up action is needed.

Output 2	FS curricula developed and prepared for delivery in selected IHLs		
	Indicators	Target	Achieved
	Number of IHLs that undertake the FS institutionalization pathway for the preparation of curricula, as well as the submission of curricula for Senate and Commission of Higher Education approval.	3	Yes
Baseline	0		
Comments	In Ethiopia, Hawassa University reviewed the FFS curricula against its established Community Outreach Programme and determined that the two be maintained separately instead of being combined into one programme. As the curriculum revision within the academic programme was below the 30 percent threshold established by the University Senate, the FS curriculum was not required for University Senate submission and approval. The curriculum was approved at faculty level and was ready for implementation in the coming academic calendar. In Kenya, the FS curriculum at Pwani University was successfully adapted, submitted to the University Senate and approved for implementation. The curriculum is now in place and is being taught at the University. A curriculum for FS short courses for those interested in FFS was also drafted and passed by the Senate. In Uganda, participants across the different universities took part in an FS curriculum review and adaptation process. The FS curriculum was finalized and agreed across the universities. As the curriculum review process is currently closed, the universities must wait until the next national review period opens at the National Commission for Higher Education to submit the FS curriculum for review and subsequent implementation. Across the three countries, no impediments were faced in the development, revision and finalization of the FS curricula. For follow-up action in Uganda, it is important that every effort be made to ensure that the FS curriculum is submitted to the National Commission for Higher Education when the next review period opens.		

Activity 2.1	Curriculum sensitization and planning meeting with Hawassa University (Ethiopia)	
	Achieved	Yes
	Comments	The meeting took place in November 2019. Sensitization was conducted, and attendees from Hawassa University took part in the planning of their own ToF.
Activity 2.2	Joint meeting with Uganda counterparts for planning of FS course	
	Achieved	Yes
	Comments	No impediments were encountered and no follow-up action is needed.
Activity 2.3	Revision and finalization of FS core and short course curricula	
	Achieved	Yes
	Comments	At Hawassa University in Ethiopia, a review of the FS curricula took place. It was decided that the FS course should stand alone from the existing Community Outreach Programme. The FS curricula were finalized and approved by the faculty for implementation. No impediments were encountered and no follow-up action is needed.
Activity 2.4	External review of FS core and short course curricula	
	Achieved	Partially
	Comments	In Ethiopia, Hawassa University reviewed the FS curricula against their established Community Outreach Programme and determined that the two be kept separate instead of being combined into one programme. As the curriculum revision within the academic programme was below the 30 percent threshold established by the University Senate, University Senate submission and approval was not required and the use of the curriculum was decided by the faculty, in line with university regulations. No impediments were encountered and no follow-up action is needed.

Activity 2.5	Accreditation terms and conditions between Kampiringisa and the IHLs developed and formalized	
	Achieved	Partially
	Comments	Meetings were held to discuss formal operation terms between the National Farmer Leadership Centre (NFLC) and IHLs in Uganda. There is a need to determine the exact status of the accreditation terms and to establish how the formal operations between the NFLC and the IHLs will proceed.
Activity 2.6	Facilitate approval processes of FS content through the Commission of Higher Education as well as university senates	
	Achieved	Yes
	Comments	In Uganda, participants across the different universities took part in an FS curriculum review and adaptation process. The FS curriculum was finalized and agreed by the universities. Because the curriculum review process is currently closed, the participating universities must wait until the next national review period opens at the National Commission for Higher Education to submit the FS curriculum for review and subsequent implementation. The only impediment faced was that the curriculum review process was not open when the final FS curricula in Uganda was finalized. For follow-up action, it is important that every effort be made to ensure that the FS curriculum is submitted to the National Commission for Higher Education when the next review period opens.

Partnerships and Outreach
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