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# PARTICIPATION & DESIGN THINKING IN RAS

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Host Biovision – Stiftung für ökologische Entwicklung  
Heinrichstrasse 147  
CH-8005 Zürich

Meeting mode: Hybrid

Date & time: 24<sup>th</sup> May 2023, 9-12 am

Facilitation: David Bexte, HELVETAS; Cesar Robles, HELVETAS; Tabea Rügger, HELVETAS;

Participants SFRAS members

Recipients SFRAS members, A&FS Shareweb

Minutes written by: David Bexte, Helvetas

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## Agenda

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Time	Input
09:15-9:20	Welcoming & brief introduction SFRAS <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Technical introduction</li><li>• SFRAS introduction</li></ul>
09:20-9:40	<u>“Regreening Kenya by scaling asset-based community-driven development tools and processes</u> (project by the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), funded by Biovision Foundation): on the importance of participatory processes and agency building to achieve sustainability in externally-funded agroecology projects”, by Lisa Fuchs, Social Systems and Engagement Scientist at World Agroforestry Centre, Nairobi, and Fabian Kohler, Biovision Foundation, Zurich.
09:40-09:55	Q&A
09.55-10.10	News from members
10.10-10:30	Combining Design Thinking and MSD approach in Myanmar’ Malte Reshoeft, Hilfswerk der evangelischen Kirche (HEKS)
10:30-10:40	Q&A
10:40-10:55	Break
10:55-11:00	Introduction Group Work
11:00-11:30	Group Work
11:30-11:55	Debriefing group work & discussion
11:55-12:00	Closing & Outlook <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Feedback form</li></ul>
12:00	Plant based lunch at Biovision

## Participants

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14	Brunner, Johannes	BFH-HAFL	johannes.brunner@bfh.ch
15	Fuchs, Lisa	CIFOR-ICRAF	L.Fuchs@cifor-icraf.org
16	Mekdaschi Studer, Rima	WOCAT/ CDE/ University of Bern	rima.mekdaschi-studer@unibe.ch

## Thematic session

All presentations are available [here](#).

## Introduction & Welcoming (by David Bexte, Helvetas)

- Welcoming all participants;
- Words of gratitude to Biovision for being the event host and organizing lunch for those interested;
- Short reminder: In case you should not be anymore the SFRAS focal point in your organization/leave the organization please briefly inform David Bexte.

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## **Presentation 1: Regreening Kenya by scaling asset-based community-driven development tools and processes: on the importance of participatory processes and agency building to achieve sustainability in externally-funded agroecology projects (by Lisa Fuchs, World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), Nairobi)**

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Since 2021 ICRAF is collaborating with Biovision (funder) as part of the Regreening Africa Project in Kenya. The key research questions to be addressed by ICRAF have been “Can the engagement process taken by external actors influence project participants’ behaviour – and, if so, how?” The thematic entry for the overall project is agroecology. Therefore, the Asset Based Community Driven (ABCD) Approach has been aligned to the 13 agroecology principles and the practice of applying them.

After the introduction Lisa Fuchs summarized the ABCD Approach and how the ABCD approach and agroecology come together. In a nutshell, ABCD fosters attitudinal and behavioural changes relying on key principles (“Start with what you have”, “everyone has gifts”, “relationships build community”). ABCD follows 4 major steps – focussing on assets and strengths:

- Appreciative interviewing
- Asserting existing strengths, assets and opportunities
- Integrated community action planning
- Participatory monitoring and evaluation

For more details on the ABCD approach in general the publication [ABCD at a glance. The approach, process and tools](#) is recommended. The manual [Facilitating an Asset-Based Community-Driven \(ABCD\) Approach for Holistic Community Development](#) also provides general information about the ABCD approach.

Concerning the alignment Lisa Fuchs highlighted that strong overlaps exist. For instance, the agroecology-oriented Regreening Africa contribution claim “individuals use what they have” bears a lot of similarities with the ABCD general principle “Start with what you have”. For more information on the overlaps you can consult the slides and/or consult the following guidance note [Sustainability Guidance Note Final.pdf \(regreeningafrica.org\)](#).

The key message coming from the presentation is to *be mindful of and deliberate in how we engage relationships that foster partners’ ownership*.

That means partners/communities are...

- **Seeing** a problem and/or opportunity
- **Feeling** concerned by the problem and/or opportunity
- **Realising** they are able to do something about it (‘sense of agency’)
- **Being** included in identifying and defining solutions
- **Steering** implementation of proposed solutions

Remark: At the end, the presentation lists multiple **additional resources for ABCD in general and the work of the ABCD team** in case you are interested to dig deeper. In addition, the **agroecology citizen science tool** is something interesting to explore if you work on agroecology/aim to strengthen the work on it. The tool is actually promoted as part of the recently launched One Million Voices citizen science initiative (funded by SDC). You can create an account there and share your practices. Link: [One Million Voices \(agroecologymap.org\)](#)

Additional information: The project is actually an add-on project to world vision’s regreening africa project which is implemented in 8 African countries. So the activities aiming to promote agroecological

practices are actually implemented by the regreening africa project. In Lisa's project an analysis is conducted on the difference in the effect and impact of agroecological practices due to improved agency and ownership.

Key insights from Q&A:

- Using the facilitation manual - insights: Strong emphasis should be put on a well trained team. It is important that staff members are well selected and have the time and the resources to develop their facilitation skills. Ensure also that there is sufficient communication among team members. Care about relationship building! – The initial approach needs to be informed by curiosity and appreciation of the people we want to work with.
- How much support is needed during implementation? Work with people in a way that they are able to identify solutions for themselves and to define pathways. Self-realization is a crucial component in that process (in between having a vision and implementing visions). Also, it is working well if after the broad engagement process specific support is provided relying on your mandate and strength (diversifying and than specialising approach).
- Challenges in facilitating such a process: Do not overestimate the ability to contribute to change! Change depends on achieving changing the behaviour of people, which takes time. Also, build networks on the ground that are reliable for people to come back to and in all processes, e.g. M&E, have a regular 2-way communication.
- How to work best with people who could contribute a lot based on their skills but are not interested in the topic (e.g. Agroecology)? Recommendation: Work with people who are interested in what you offer! If something does not work well we often focus on the approach and the method but we should ask ourselves if we work with the right people. Also, facilitate the community action planning process in a way that the community defines by itself what it needs.

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## News from members

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CDE:

- Mrs. Mekdaschi-Studer informed the audience about ongoing projects: 1) "Agripath", focus on digital advisory services leading to behaviour change, SDC funded – see [Research: Agripath – Sustainable agriculture through effective and efficient digital pathways - Centre for Development and Environment \(CDE\) \(unibe.ch\)](#); 2) Just finished project on extension services to scale-up sustainable land management, partnership with IFAD, a manual is available [Supporting Extension Services to Scale Up Sustainable Land Management: The potential of WOCAT's tools and methods \(ifad.org\)](#); 3) Contribution to Regreening Africa, small assignment on how to apply foresight;

ETH:

- NADEL short course on behaviour change in December
- Inviting people to the Conscious Food Systems Alliance [Conscious Food Systems Alliance | United Nations Development Programme \(undp.org\)](#)

SKAT:

- SUFOSEC Alliance soon sharing synthesis product (agroecology guide for practitioners) – you find more about the SUFOSEC alliance here [Sufosec – Alliance for Sustainable Food Systems and Empowered Communities](#)
- Agrarökologische Tage (agroecological days) in October: Offering 3 workshops in English

HAFL:

- 20th June the annual conference of the HPC institute will take place focussing on agroecology [HAFL Hugo P. Cecchini Institute | BFH](#)

FiBL:

- Kenya: Participatory market development [FiBL - Accelerating the Organic Market Development in Kenya – PMCA Follow-up Project](#)
- Crops 4 HD [CROPS4HD | About Us & Masab project](#) [FiBL - Markets and Seeds Access Project for Small Grains and Legumes in Zambia and Zimbabwe](#)
- Briefing meeting 31st May 'Agroecological approaches in times of fertiliser crisis - Evidence from Swiss-EU collaboration in the Global South'

Mentioning that the final stage of SDCs food systems learning journey is taking place in June.

Furthermore, in July the UN food systems summit +2 stocktaking moments will take place [Overview and Updates \(unfoodsystemshub.org\)](#)

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## **Presentation 2: Combining Design Thinking and Market Systems Development (MSD) approach in Myanmar (by Malte Reshoeft, HEKS)**

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Malte Reshoeft presented on how HEKS has been combining Human Centered Design (HCD; adapted from Design Thinking) and MSD in Myanmar as part of a HEKS project in Myanmar. The project is implemented in the multi-ethnic Shan State in North-Eastern Myanmar. The region is known for its horticultural crops and beverages (tea and coffee) and maize.

As an intro he shared insights on key intrinsic and extrinsic elements influencing intention and underlined the necessity to move from intention to “justified behaviour”. A list of key takeaways such as Make your assumptions, beliefs, mindsets as visible as possible and put them to test was provided. Project activities were designed before the war in Ukraine. The effects of the war were also felt in Myanmar and made a readjustment necessary mainly because agriculture input costs tripled (comparison 2021/2022). An HCD cycle was applied in May 2022 to find a solution. HCD targets to develop customized prototypes (feasibility, viability, desirability) which are tested and if delivering positive results implemented.

The HCD approach proved to be very helpful as in collaboration with a private sector partner an affordable organic fertilizer (Bokashi; alternative to synthetic fertilizer) was developed. In a final survey (January 2023) 90% of the farmers reported to continue to use Bokashi.

Finally, key lessons learned and challenges as well as information on next steps were shared. For more details please see the presentation.

### Q&A:

- How did you address the 4 elements on motivation in the project? It is still an ongoing discussion internally as the coup d'état was not expected to happen and evolved quickly. – Working on social norms is definitely challenging but one option we explore is to work with deviant behaviour (both positive and negative). Is there any deviant behaviour we can build on? However, much more difficult in Asia than in South America.
- Recommendation concerning changing social norms: Very valuable lessons learned can be gained from the Open Defecation Campaigns and the fight against Female Genital Mutilation – there are strong social norms in play. Reducing the penalty from not following a social norm has been very effective in order to arrive at a better, desired behaviour.
- Social norms are a lot about perception and self-image as I think about what others might think/how they might perceive it.
- It is critical to expose yourself and be aware of self contradictions.

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## Group work

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As the discussion on the 2 presentations was very rich and the group a bit smaller than usual it was decided to take group work questions up in the plenum as the concluding session to the meeting.

The guiding questions for the group discussion were presented to the plenum:

- How can we avoid/prevent that unconscious mental models by us as advisors take over?
- How can we facilitate best the process so that in the end alternative practices are applied?
- How do we address a situation where change actual takes place but not in the way intended?

Discussion:

- Good/best practices/ success stories: Are good practices only good in a specific context? Success also depends on suitable conditions!
- Recognize the triggers that help to move the scale! However, recognizing these triggers takes time – so a period of transition needs to be taken into account.
- Are we only creative if we are kind of forced to? External trigger can play a huge role in that perspective. Seeing external triggers as important contributors to change?
- Create spaces where it is possible to make the guiding mental models visible! Do we need safe spaces for this purpose? Would Internal ethic reviews help?
- Key question: How do you bring science to the table without dictating what people should do?
- Self-reflection as an important step → How are we perceived and which piece of our scientific knowledge can meaningfully support behaviour change?
- Is it actually more about the process trust-building, relationship -building and less about the evidence itself?
- Behavioural changes often focus on the individual but than we often aim/are forced to work at scale, where then conflict arises.

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## Closing

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The moderator thanked all participants for joining in person or online and thereby closed the meeting.