

Striking a Balance: Developing a Green Economy around Lake Bunyonyi - Farmer Field School Activity Report for October, 2020

Friday Christopher

Assistant Lecturer

Department of Political & Administrative Studies

Kampala International University

E-mail: fridaychristopher@rocketmail.com

Project Background:

Self Help Africa (SHA) in collaboration with African International Christian Ministry (AICM) and the local authorities of Kabale and Rubanda Districts are implementing a three (3) year EU funded project around Lake Bunyonyi “Striking a Balance: Developing a Green Economy around Lake Bunyonyi”. The project’s overall objective is contributing to the inclusiveness and low- carbon economic transformation of communities in the Lake Bunyonyi basin, generating sustainable economic growth, increased employment, reduced poverty, improved nutrition, and the sustainable management of their environment.

The specific objective is to improve the institutional framework for sustainable environmental and economic management of Lake Bunyonyi through capacity building of local authorities. These objectives will be achieved through the implementation of activities under three key objectives

Project Out puts;

- a. Increased skills and knowledge of Local Authorities to enhance their institutional framework and policy development to support the sustainable environmental and economic management of Lake Bunyonyi basin.
- b. Increased skills and knowledge for community led natural resource management in Lake Bunyonyi basin.
- c. Enhanced skills and knowledge of Local Authorities to support employment and livelihood opportunities in the green economy.

Introduction to FFS approach

The FFS approach:

Is an innovative, participatory and interactive learning approach that emphasizes problem solving and discovery based learning. FFS aims to build farmers’ capacity to analyze their production systems, identify problems, test possible solutions, and eventually encourage the participants to adopt the practices most suitable to their farming systems (FAO, 2003 c). FFS can also provide an opportunity for farmers to practice and test/evaluate sustainable

Land use technologies, and introduce new technologies through comparing their conventional technologies developed with their own tradition and culture.

Specific objectives of the farmer field school:

- To enable farmers to learn from each other and share ideas.
- To enable smallholder households use climate smart agricultural practices
- To train 500 smallholder farmers on soil and water conservation practices.
- To cover aspects of production of various crops suitable for cultivation in seasonal wetlands and surrounding farmland, incorporating SWC practices such as construction and reinforcement of terraces and drains, contour ploughing, organic composting (mulching) and cover cropping to help bring about sustained improvements in water infiltration, soil quality and fertility within the catchment, as well as reduce the risk and potential impact of natural disasters such as mudslides. Nutrition awareness will be mainstreamed into training content to support the project’s overall objective of improving household dietary diversity.

Gardens of beans in Kashenyi village, Rubaya Sub County in Kabale district. Below is the Agricultural Advisor and the project coordinator and the farmers in Kashenyi village



Stakeholders that were involved during the month of October, 2020

- a. Project Officer
- b. Project Coordinator
- c. Local council members.
- d. Agriculture Extension Officer.
- e. Farmers.

Methodology.

Farmer Field Schools have been used as learning sites where all project interventions have been integrated and conducted. The activities include demos on soil and water conservation, Nursery bed establishment & planting of agro forestry trees, Natural Resource Management, saving with a productive purpose, enterprises among others.



On the left are the farmers planting improved irish potato varieties, followed by the germinated seedlings and a garden of beans for an early adopter in Kashenyi village in Rubaya subcounty, Kabale district.

Approach of accomplishing FFS activities.

- Putting farmers in learning small groups where learning and demonstrations can easily be conducted. This enhances learning and adoption at a household level.
- Demonstrations, site demonstrations were chosen and prepared for participants to learn and adopt at a community level; these have been done through participatory approaches that will have all the activities being done by the project team in all our project villages and it is on these demos that farmers will come together and share their ideas.
- Due to Covid-19 Pandemic, farmers were divided into groups and they could plant on a rotational schedule each time with a group monitor who had been trained during the TOT training.



Line planting



Staking



Mulching

FINDINGS ABOUT THE ADOPTION RATE OF THE FARMERS IN FARMER FIELD SCHOOL ACTIVITIES.

| Farmer Field School name | Improved seed selection | Line planting | spacing | weeding | Controlled use of pesticides | Planting agroforestry | Digging trenches and check dams | Grass bands |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|------------|------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|-------------|
| Kashenyi Tukwatanise FFS | 30 | 26 | 26 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 30 |
| Kashenyi FFS | 20 | 25 | 28 | 30 | 22 | 30 | 30 | 30 |
| Kagasha Tweyombekye FFS | 25 | 30 | 30 | 30 | 20 | 30 | 25 | 30 |
| Ndarura FFS | 30 | 28 | 30 | 30 | 24 | 30 | 30 | 30 |
| Ndarura Ruinga FFS | 20 | 25 | 30 | 30 | 22 | 30 | 26 | 30 |
| Musamba Turinde Eitaka FFS | 25 | 24 | 30 | 30 | 23 | 30 | 26 | 24 |
| Musamba Tuhinge FFS | 22 | 20 | 20 | 30 | 25 | 30 | 23 | 25 |
| Murambo Bataka Tukorehamwe FFS | 16 | 20 | 21 | 30 | 20 | 30 | 23 | 22 |
| Murambo Tukorehamwe FFS | 20 | 22 | 20 | 30 | 22 | 30 | 20 | 20 |
| Kyevu FFS | 18 | 20 | 20 | 30 | 18 | 30 | 30 | 23 |
| Karengyere FFS | 20 | 22 | 26 | 30 | 21 | 30 | 20 | 19 |
| Kagasha Tukorenamani FFS | 20 | 25 | 30 | 30 | 23 | 30 | 25 | 24 |
| Total | 266 | 287 | 311 | 360 | 270 | 360 | 308 | 307 |

266 famers have adopted improved seed selection, 287 line planting, 311 spacing, 360 weeding, 270 adopted controlled use of pesticides, 360 planting of agroforestry trees, 308 digging of trenches and check dams and 307 farmers have adopted the planting of grass bands in their gardens.

Generally, farmers were not supported with seed for their second season as they had their own seed after harvesting in their first season.

Skills gained:

- *Farmers were trained how to plant Irish potato seedlings in lines with the correct spacing of 1ft and 2 ft from one line planted by Irish potatoes to another line and also beans were to be planted too with a spacing of 30cm.*
- *The farmers were trained how to use recommended rates of fertilizers with Irish potatoes*
- *Farmers were trained how to plant improved Irish potato seedling varieties.*

Lessons learnt:

- Some farmers who changed their enterprise from Irish potatoes to climbing beans harvested more than what they harvested in their previous enterprise and compared to Irish potato farmers.
- Farmer field school approach has strengthened capability, increased knowledge ownership through discovery based learning, built self-confidence and enhanced decision making capacity and changed deep rooted beliefs and practices.

Challenge(s) faced.

- Most farmer field school activities continued being affected by Corona virus Disease (COVID-19) as there was still fear, quarantine and other preventive measures that were set by the government of the Republic of Uganda.
- Soils continue to be infertile due to over cultivation and this affected the yields.