Agroecology TPP

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Sustainable scaling models for Regreening Africa

Focusing on Smallholders' Assets and Agency to Increase Agroecological Integration in western Kenya

The Regreening Africa project, recognised as UN World Restoration Flagship in February 2024, was implemented in eight African countries from 2017 to 2023 with the financial support of the European Union. Its main objective was "to restore large areas of land for the triple benefit of people, biodiversity, and climate" (Bourne, 2024).

In view of both projections and early experiences, Regreening Africa actively sought to identify **sustainable scaling models that could support achieving the project targets** in Kenya, and could potentially be replicated in the other project sites. In response to this challenge, the Regreening Africa and asset-based community-driven development (ABCD) teams at CIFOR-ICRAF collaborated on the so-called 'ABCD in Regreening' project. The project was implemented from 2021 to 2023 in Homa Bay County, one of the Regreening Africa intensification sites.

Table 1: Different perspectives and approaches in community development

Type of approach	Deficit model; medical model	Charity model	Social model; Coproduction; externally facilitated ABCD	Fully community-driven ABCD
Localisation of power and agency	Top-down	Top-down	Top-down + Bottom-up	Bottom-up
The role of the people	Everything is done *to* and *without* the people	Everything is done *for* and *without* the people	Everything done is *for* and *with* the people	Everything done is *for* and *by* the people

ABCD builds on people's agency and capacity. It was initially theorised and popularised by Kretzmann & McKnight (1993, 2005) at the Institute for Policy Research at Northwestern University in Illinois, USA, and was adapted to an international development context by the Coady Institute in the early 2000s. It has been appropriated by many institutions and actors around the world. ABCD draws on and aligns with numerous theoretical and conceptual sources. Its innovation lies in providing a **conceptual and operational framework** for appreciating that communities have been driving their own development since time immemorial – and in providing a **structured co-creation process that fosters responsive external action**.

Drawing on the extensive previous research undertaken by the ABCD team, the three main underlying ABCD principles, and the five steps of the ABCD practice wheel, the ABCD team developed **five core *intrinsic* contribution claims** for ABCD. They address both **attitudinal and behaviour changes**.

Beyond that, the ABCD team has long sought to evidence its **conceptual and practical contribution to agroecology**. While ABCD, indeed, is a content-neutral engagement 'vehicle', its focus on assets and their efficient and sustainable use pairs well with CFS HLPE (2019) Agroecology Principles 1 to 7 falling under the operational principles of Resource Efficiency and Resilience.

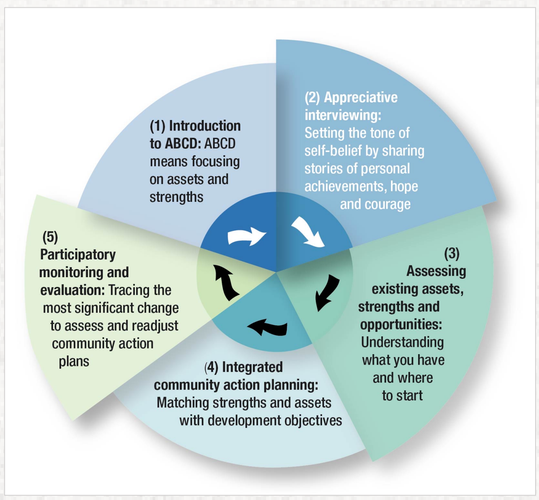

Figure 1: ABCD practice wheel

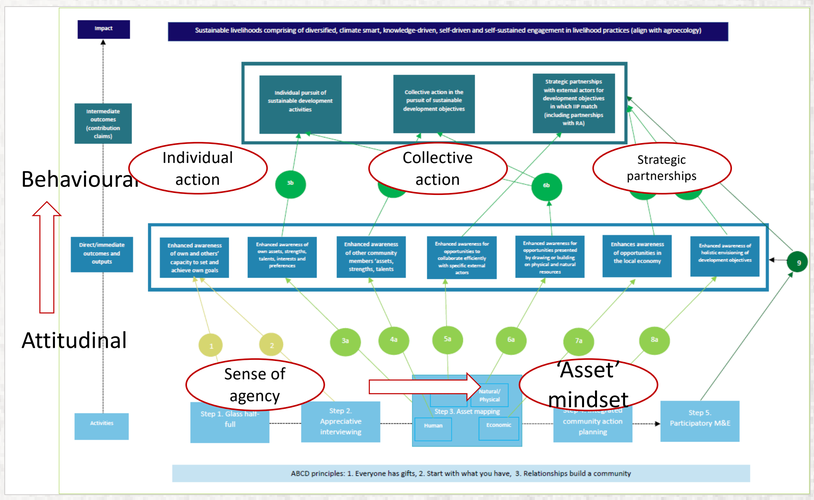

Figure 2: Theory-of-change and intrinsic contribution claims

At the same time, ABCD's focus on agency, which encompasses considerations related to empowerment, inclusion, and participation, pairs particularly well with considerations subsumed under Agroecology Principles 8 to 13 and the operational principle of Social equity. Beyond that, there are numerous specific ways in which the ABCD principles and practice can be mapped to all the individual 13 principles.

To evidence the effect of ABCD on sustainable agroecological scaling, the team followed a methodical process to first **"define what matters", then developed specific tools that allowed them to "measure what matters", and finally to "produce evidence on what matters"**. In the end, the ABCD-infused version of Biovision's Farm-level Agroecology Criteria Tool (referred to as FACT+) demonstrated a clear increase in agroecological integration among the ABCD sample. While there are notable differences between the projections and the actuals, the positive effect of ABCD was clearly evidenced.

Table 2: Projected effects of ABCD project on FACT+ criteria

Notes. Notes. Green denotes a 'likely direct positive effect'; yellow a 'likely indirect positive effect'; blue 'likely no effect'; and marron indicates the new ABCD criteria for which direct positive effects were expected as well. Symbols were placed in the criteria that are not applicable in the western Kenyan context: ° Switching to renewable energy; * Negative appraisal of zero-grazing; † Reaching organic markets; ‡ Going local; ^ Land tenure change.

Table 3 : Within-group comparisons for ABCD sample for AE principles

Principle	Baseline (N=300)	Endline (N=261)	Test of difference: Difference	Test of difference: *t*-test
Recycling	1.726	1.718	-0.008	-0.248
Input reduction	1.472	1.476	0.004	0.094
Soil health	1.273	1.401	0.128	2.865***
Animal health	1.152	1.266	0.114	1.854*
Biodiversity	1.006	1.236	0.230	5.092***
Synergies	0.766	1.068	0.302	5.627***
Economic diversification	0.780	1.266	0.486	12.251***
Co-creation of knowledge	0.537	1.097	0.560	8.830***
Social values and diets	1.176	1.440	0.264	4.402***
Fairness	1.464	1.400	-0.064	-0.864
Connectivity	1.279	1.670	0.391	4.501***
Land and natural resource governance	1.666	1.944	0.278	4.883***
Participation	1.472	1.566	0.094	1.206

Note: *, **, and *** denote statistically significant difference in means at 10%, 5%, and 1% levels, respectively.

Table 4: Within-group comparisons for ABCD sample for system components

Component	Baseline (N=300)	Endline (N=261)	Test of difference: Difference	Test of difference: *t*-test
Soil	1.851	2.017	0.166	4.610***
Water	0.892	1.091	0.199	4.504***
Crops	1.125	1.160	0.035	0.718
Livestock	1.669	1.507	-0.162	-2.443**
Trees and woody species	1.087	1.191	0.104	2.293**
Household	1.260	1.724	0.464	9.435***
Workers	0.617	0.575	-0.042	-0.508
Energy	0.567	0.722	0.155	2.901***
Pest and disease	1.260	1.622	0.362	9.777***
Policy	1.277	1.490	0.213	2.698***
Community	1.378	1.540	0.162	3.049***
Value chain	1.178	1.318	0.140	1.229
Other	0.739	0.981	0.242	4.099***

Note: *, **, and *** denote statistically significant difference in means at 10%, 5%, and 1% levels, respectively.

Figure 3: Changes in agroecological integration between baseline and endline (n=600; n=524)

Related publications:

- Fuchs, L.E., Orero, L., Kipkorir, L., Apondi, V., Owili, S. Sustainable scaling models for Regreening Africa: Focusing on Smallholders' Assets and Agency to Increase Agroecological Integration in Kenya. [forthcoming]
- Fuchs, L.E., Orero, L., van Dien, L.C., Apondi, V., Kipkorir, L., Kamau, A., Muia, D., Michuki, G. and Njiru, R. Evidencing that Process Matters: Conceptualising and Evaluating the Contribution of an Asset-based and Agency-focused Engagement Approach on Strengthening Regreening Africa Outcomes in Kenya. [forthcoming]
- Fuchs, L.E., Kipkorir, L., Apondi, V., Orero, L. Facilitating an Asset-Based Community-Driven (ABCD) Approach for Holistic Community Development: A Manual for Community Organising, World Agroforestry (ICRAF), Nairobi: Kenya, 2020, 36 pp. http://www.worldagroforestry.org/publication/facilitating-asset-based-community-driven-abcd-approach-holistic-community-development