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Preparation

Junior Farmer Field and Life School – Facilitator’s guide



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Module 1: Preparation

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Module 1: Preparation

INTRODUCTION

When about to start a JFFLS programme the first few months will be very important in setting the stage for the whole learning process to follow. Participants need to get to know each other and feel comfortable in the group. They will also need to choose an appropriate learning site for holding their JFFLS sessions. Ideally a place with good shade and enough space to hold meetings with easy access to water that is close to the school and to the learning field. Access to a learning field is also necessary, as well as to make sure, when necessary, that a feeding programme is in place. During the first few group sessions, the group should also discuss what they expect to learn and what they will be doing in order to make their fields and their lives healthy and productive. In order to prepare boys and girls for the activities to come it is also important that the participants gain an understanding of the cropping calendar as well as the life cycle of plants and animals and how this relate to their own life.

This module contains sample exercises for each of the learning activities, plus a number of sample energizers and cultural activities that can be used to keep the participants engaged and reinforce their learning. The activities should serve as examples to be modified and applied as appropriate.

By the end of this module participants should:

- Know each other and have made friends;
- Start to understand the JFFLS learning mode;
- Have expressed and discussed their expectations and goals for attending JFFLS;
- Understand the life cycles of animals, crops and human beings.

OBJECTIVES

A TYPICAL JFFLS SESSION (3-4 HOURS):



ENERGIZER AND FUN (30 MIN)



IN THE LEARNING FIELD (45 MIN)



AGRICULTURAL TOPIC (45 MIN)



MAKING THE LINK WITH LIFE (30 MIN)



CULTURAL ACTIVITIES (ART, DRAMA, SONG) (30 MIN)



ASSESSING PROGRESS



CLOSING ENERGIZER



Exercises

➤ GETTING STARTED WITH “ENERGIZERS”

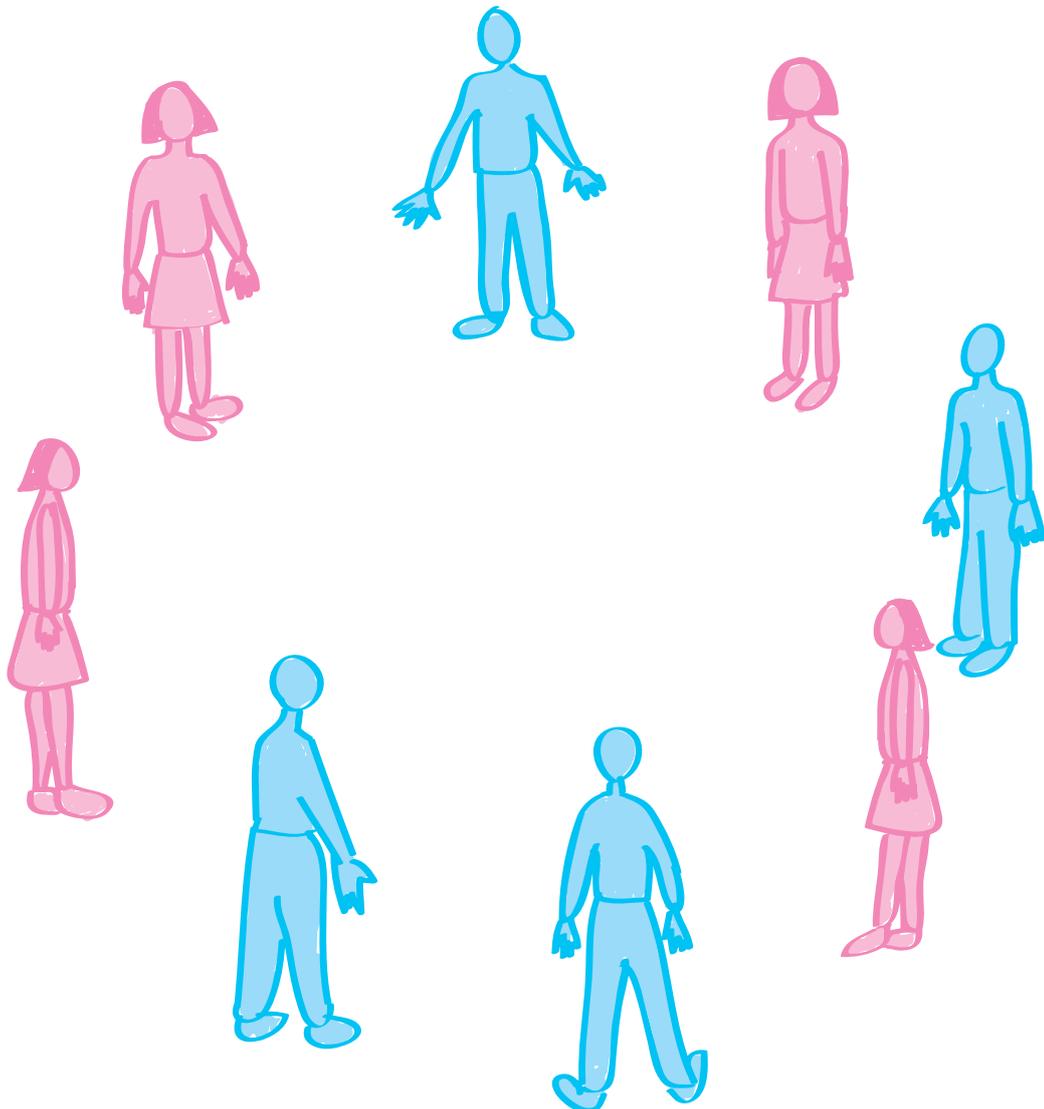
Some sample energizers that will also help to “break the ice” and make participants feel comfortable while at the same time introduce the module’s theme are provided below.

Energizer: Three truths and a lie

Everyone thinks of three pieces of information about themselves. For example, “Alfonse likes singing, loves football and has five brothers”. Participants then circulate in the group. They meet in pairs and introduce themselves by giving the pieces of information about themselves and try to guess which of the “facts” is a lie among each others phrases.

Energizer: What we have in common

The facilitator calls out a characteristic of people in the group, such as “having a bed of their own”. All those who have beds of their own should move to one corner of the room. As the facilitator calls out more characteristics, such as “likes chicken”, people with the characteristic move to the indicated space.





GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

At the start of the JFFLS learning process it is very important that a friendly atmosphere is created so that the participants feel comfortable and excited about learning. This also helps in developing a feeling of mutual trust between participants, facilitators and other resource people. This topic focuses on participants getting to know each other and feeling comfortable in interacting with one another.

🔄 exercise 1

KNOWING EVERYONE ELSE'S NAME

OBJECTIVE:

To assist participants get to know one another.

TIME:

15 minutes

MATERIALS:

A ball, made out of old newspapers or any other locally available material.

STEPS:

1. Everyone stands in a small circle. (If the group is very large, it may be necessary to split the group into two circles). You start by throwing the ball to someone in the circle, saying the name of the participant as you throw it.
2. The participant who receives the ball then chooses someone to throw the ball to. Before throwing the ball, the participant names the person who threw the ball to him or her, and the name of the girl or boy he is going to throw the ball to.
3. Once everyone has received the ball and a pattern is established, introduce one or two more balls, so that there are always several balls being thrown at the same time.
4. You can use this game in future JFFLS sessions until everybody knows everyone else's name.

🔄 exercise 2

PARTICIPATORY INTRODUCTIONS

OBJECTIVE:

To assist the participants get to know one another and build trust levels between each other.

TIME:

20 minutes

STEPS:

1. Ask the participants to identify a friend in the group that they have never met or don't know very well. Each participant will then interview his or her new friend and ask: what is your name, age, where do you come from, what do you like and dislike, your dreams? etc.
2. After 5 minutes of interviewing each other, the participants will introduce their new friend to the group, summarising the main information about him/her.



SETTING THE LEARNING MODE

At the initial stage of JFFLS the group needs to be established by the participants agreeing on norms and rules that should regulate their sessions and activities. Participants also need to discuss their expectations and learn to deal with their fears. This will ensure cohesion among members and ensure that everybody has a common understanding of their group structure. Since learning in JFFLS is done very differently from the normal school setting it is also important that the participants start to understand the principles of learning in JFFLS and realise that they are not to wait for the facilitator to always give information, but that they themselves have to be active and observe and ask questions if they want to learn effectively. This exercise helps to introduce these aspects.

🔄 exercise 1

UNDERSTANDING FEARS AND EXPECTATIONS

Participants coming together in one JFFLS groups probably have quite different expectations. They might also have certain fears that could affect their learning while involved in various activities within the group. It is important for the facilitator to recognize the expectations and fear at the start and try to see how they might enforce or provide hindrances for the objective of the programme.

OBJECTIVE:

To understand what is expected to make the JFFLS a success.

TIME:

30 minutes

MATERIALS:

Flip chart, marker pens and cards.

STEPS:

1. Ask the participants to write down (or draw) on a card one expectation for being in the group.
2. Collect the cards, read them out and post them on a flip chart or on the wall.
3. Discuss each expectation and come to an agreement if it is realistic to achieve it during the course of JFFLS and which factors might influence its success.
4. Thereafter brainstorm on participants' fears for participation in JFFLS and try to encourage them to help each other to come up with ideas for how to reduce or eliminate their worries.

🔄 exercise 2

DEVELOPING GROUP NORMS AND RULES

OBJECTIVE:

To agree on learning mode and develop rules and norms for the group.

TIME:

1 hour

MATERIALS:

Large sheets of paper and markers.

STEPS:

1. Briefly revise the expectations and JFFLS activities mentioned and discussed in the previous exercise.
2. If necessary, discuss the expectation in more details using the following guiding questions:
 - What do you expect to learn during the JFFLS?
 - What do you want to learn during the JFFLS?
 - Are you interested to learn more about agriculture?
 - About which crops or animals do you want to learn more about?

- Do you want to learn more about health, nutrition or about setting up a small business?
3. Ask the participants what kind of rules and regulations the JFFLS should follow to create a successful environment for participants to work and learn together. List all the rules and regulations mentioned on a large sheet of paper – for example: be on time, participate fully, respect each other opinion, listen to each other, speak one by one, no fighting, etc. If necessary probe the discussion by using the following guiding questions:
 - Do you like to learn through practice?
 - Are you used to work in groups?
 - What does it mean to work and learn in groups?
 - What do you think is important when you have to work in a group?
 - What kind of different tasks have to be fulfilled to be able to work effectively in a group?
 - What kind of roles and regulations need to be respected when working in a group?
 4. Add any missing ones to the list. Especially probe for any needed norm or rule in relation to gender interactions in the group.
 5. Ask the participants if they are prepared to commit themselves to participate fully in all JFFLS sessions, prepared to work in small groups, to learn through practice and to respect the prepared list of rules and regulations of the JFFLS.
 6. Summarize the discussions.

🗣️ exercise 3

HOW TO BEST LEARN

Providing an opportunity to the participants to learn through discovery should be enhanced in the JFFLS group. It is important for the facilitator to understand when and how the participants learn best. In this exercise the participants will reflect on their preferred learning style.

OBJECTIVE:

To assist the facilitator in understanding participants' preferred learning style.

TIME:

1 hour

MATERIALS:

Flip chart and marker pens.

STEPS:

1. The participants are requested to complete the sentence below in pairs:
 - "I learn best when..."
2. Once all of them have done this, each participant should hand over what they have noted to their neighbour pair for reading it out and posting it on the flip chart by the facilitator.
3. Discuss in the group how the learning in the group will/can take into consideration as much as possible the different aspects highlighted by the participants.
4. Introduce at the end the learning principles of the JFFLS (see an introduction to the JFFLS approach).

🔄 exercise 4

LEARNING BY DISCOVERY: WHAT IS THIS, WHAT IS THAT?¹

The goal of discovery-based learning is to provide an opportunity for participants to learn through curiosity and by experimenting and discovering, rather than by memorising facts. One way of stimulating a critical thinking is to ask questions that allow the participants to develop their own analysis and understanding. When a participant asks a question, instead of answering the question directly, the facilitator directs the participant towards the answer by asking probing questions. In this way, participants are given the opportunity to learn by themselves and come up with their own solutions.

OBJECTIVES:

- To help participants learn through discovery and curiosity;
- To guide them to critically analyse an issue and make their own decisions on a given problem.

TIME:

1 hour

MATERIALS:

Field, plastic bags, notebook and pens/pencils.

STEPS:

1. This is a role play. Assign the following roles to the different participants: farmer and facilitator.
2. The “farmer” should focus on something in their agricultural system (parasite, disease, plant etc.) and ask: “What is this?”
3. The “facilitators” should instead of supplying a direct answer, respond with one of the following type of probing responses: “Where did you find it?”, “Have you seen it before?”, “What do you think it is?”, “What do you normally do when you see this?”, “What do others do?” (Keep asking questions).
4. NEVER PROVIDE THE DIRECT ANSWER TO A QUESTION – THAT KILLS CURIOSITY. THE QUESTION IS A VALUABLE CHANCE TO LEARN!
5. After the members have taken their turns in each role, process experiences and lessons learned through a plenary discussion.

¹ Adapted from Livestock Farmer Field Schools, Guidelines for Facilitation and Technical Manual (Groeneweg et. al., 2006)



ESTABLISHING THE FIELD LEARNING SITE

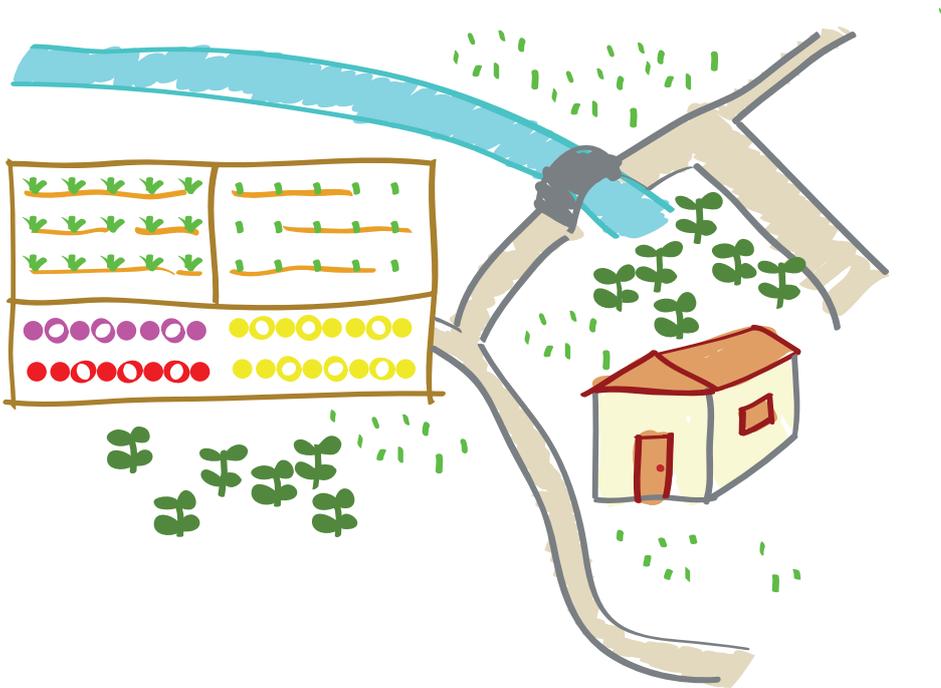
An important place of the JFFLS is the learning field. Since an important principle of JFFLS is to learn through experiments the learning field is where the participants will learn agricultural practices and management skills. Participants will discover themselves the best way of growing a certain crop and dealing with erosion problems or other agricultural issues. In this topic participants will be introduced to the objectives and the different kind of activities they will undertake in the learning field.

🔄 facilitators' notes 1

LEARNING SITE: CONSIDERATIONS

Characteristics of a good learning site:

- The site should be relevant for the enterprise.
- The site should be easy to access.
- Close to school and secure.
- Should have enough space for holding learning sessions.
- Experimental sites should not be too far from one another.
- Soils should be suitable, fairly fertile and well drained.
- Closer to a good source of water.
- The terrain of the land should be flat or gentle sloping.
- The host should have willingly given out the land or there should be a written agreement if its rented.



🔄 exercise 1

GETTING TO KNOW THE LEARNING FIELD AND EXPERIMENTATION

OBJECTIVE:

To think about the need for a learning field and activities to undertake.

TIME:

About 2 hours

MATERIALS:

Large sheets of paper and markers.

STEPS:

1. Introduce the topic of a learning field. Ask the participants why the JFFLS has a learning field and what they think they will do in the learning field during the JFFLS sessions.
2. Explain that the learning field will be used to learn about good agricultural practices and management skills through hands-on practice. Make sure they understand that agricultural production is not the main objective.
3. Explain to the participants that they are allowed to make mistakes when learning, since learning from mistakes and understand them is a very effective way of improving their knowledge.
4. Go with the participants to the identified learning field and observe the area. Ask them what they would like to grow there and why.
5. Explain that they first need to prepare a plan on what, where, when and how they would like to cultivate in the learning field and that the plan should include some small experiments with different cultivation practices.
6. Ask the participants why they should include some experiments in the plan.
7. Explain that there are many ways of growing a crop depending on the conditions of the field and the skills of the farmer. Each farmer should find out the best way of cultivating based on his/her circumstances. The best way to do this is by testing different ways of cultivation on small pieces of land.
8. Explain that during the coming weeks they will start planning the different activities they would like to do in the learning field through a number of exercises.

(C) exercise 2**IDENTIFYING A GOOD LEARNING SITE**

OBJECTIVE:

To make participants understand the characteristics of a good learning site.

TIME:

30 minutes

MATERIALS:

Flip chart, marker pens, masking tapes.

STEPS:

1. Divide the participants into subgroups.
2. Ask them to discuss in their small groups the factors they will consider when identifying a learning site for their group.
3. Ask them to write their input down on flip charts after agreeing in the groups.
4. Invite them for plenary presentations.
5. Summarize the key characteristics for a good learning site.



THE SEASONALITY OF FARMING

Which crops that are grown and when are in most cases depending on the agricultural seasons and rainfall patterns of a particular area. It is important that the participants understand this seasonality of farming and how it influence both workload pattern and availability of food in the household during the year. This topic aim to help participants understand the cropping calendar and related food security situation.

☞ exercise 1

THE CROP CALENDAR

OBJECTIVE:

To think about the life cycles and seasonal calendar of crops and relate this to farming workload across gender groups.

TIME:

1 hour

MATERIALS:

Flip chart, masking tapes, marker pens.

STEPS:

1. Ask the participants to describe the different phases of the life cycle of plants.
2. Select two crops that most participants have experience in growing (for example, corn, sorghum, beans).
3. Ask the participants to describe the life cycle of these crops, in particular during which months these crops grow, when are they planted and harvested.
4. Introduce an empty crop calendar, such as the one below.



5. Divide the participants into groups, with two groups for each crop that you are working with. Encourage the participants to complete the table through questions such as:
 - “When do we plant this crop?”
 - “When do we harvest this crop?”
 - “What agricultural activities are involved in each phase/step and when?”
6. Ask the groups to draw a boy and a girl, showing who is doing which task (together or in groups). They will need to decide in which circumstances more work is involving girls or boys for example by drawing bigger figures or repeating smaller figures a few times to indicate work carried out.

In order to promote understanding, you may want to show the participants the calendar prepared for corn that is illustrated .

Steps of agricultural calendar for: corn/maize



exercise 2

FOOD SECURITY CALENDAR

OBJECTIVE:

To think about how availability of food fluctuate across the year.

TIME:

1 hour

MATERIALS:

Flip chart, marker pens, score cards, masking tapes.

STEPS:

1. Ask the participants to draw a big/large circle on ground and divide it into 12 equal parts. Label the months of the year in the 12 parts.
2. Ask them to indicate in which months of the year food is plentiful and ask them to mention the type of food available at that time (both crops and wild foods). Which ones are more abundant than others?
3. Ask them to show this by drawing a picture of the food item on their score cards and by placing them onto the corresponding month in the calendar. If a crop is abundant, then this can be shown by having more cards.
4. Ask them which time of the year food is not readily available. What do they do then?
5. Discuss how these fluctuation and change in food availability influence their health and body conditions across the year.





LINKING THE LIFE CYCLES OF PLANTS, ANIMALS AND PEOPLE

This topic provides the “magic” link to life, based on the agricultural related learning topics undertaken. As with all living things, crops also go through a number of development stages in their life. During each stage their needs are different and it is important to know these needs if the crops are to grow healthy. The participants will here begin to understand the life cycle of plants and animals and how they are linked to the life cycle of people.

🔄 facilitators' notes 1

CROP STAGES

Background information

The total growing period of a crop is divided into 4 growth stages (see figure below):

1. **The initial stage:** this is the period from sowing or transplanting until the crop covers about 10% of the ground.
2. **The crop development stage:** this period starts at the end of the initial stage and lasts until the full ground cover has been reached (ground cover 70–80%); it does not always mean that the crop is at its tallest.
3. **The mid-season stage:** this period starts at the end of the crop development stage and lasts until maturity; it includes flowering and grain setting.
4. **The last season stage:** this period starts at the end of the mid-season stage and last until the last day of the harvest; it includes ripening.

Crop needs per growing stage: Maize (the more + are indicated the more protection is needed)

Crop needs\ stages	Initial stage	Crop development stage	Mid-season stage	Late season stage
Water	++	++	+++	+
Fertilizer	++	+++	+++	-
Protection*	++++	+++	++	+

*Protection from pests & diseases and weeds

🔄 exercise 1

THE STAGES OF A CROP'S LIFE

OBJECTIVES:

- To understand the different development stages of crops;
- To understand the different needs of crops during each stage so that they can grow healthy.

TIME:

1.5 hour

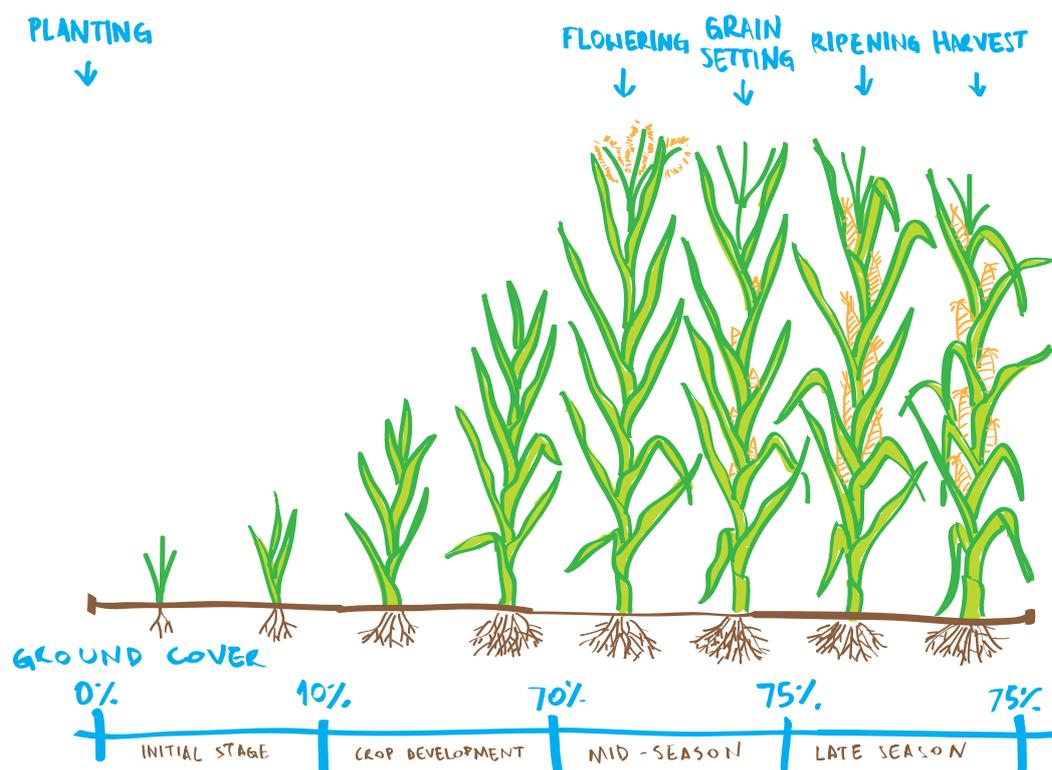
MATERIALS:

Flip chart paper, markers and examples of plants (crop) in different stages collected by the facilitator before the session.

STEPS:

1. Explain to the participants that plants, like every living thing, develop through a number of stages.
2. Ask the participants what they think the different development stages are for one crop, for example maize, that they would like to grow in the learning field.
3. Repeat step 2 for one or two other crops the participants would like to grow in the learning field.

4. Introduce the four different stages normally used in books: initial stage, crop development stage, mid-season stage and late season stage. Explain the different stages and show the participants examples of the different stages.
5. Ask the participants to mention which are the needs for a plant/crop to grow healthy. List them down on a large sheet of paper and, if needed, use the following guiding questions:
 - Is there a crop stage when the crop needs less water?
 - Is there a stage when the crop cannot do with less water?
 - Are there crop stages when the crop needs special protection measures?
 - Do the fertilization needs differ for each crop stage?
6. Discuss with the participants one by one the plant/crop needs mentioned.
7. Divide the participants in small groups and ask each group to select one crop and to discuss in the group how the different crop needs differ from one crop stage to the next. Ask each group to write their notes on a piece of paper.
8. Ask each group to present the outcome of their discussions.
9. Summarize the discussions.



☞ exercise 2

UNDERSTANDING LIFE CYCLES

OBJECTIVE:

To understand the similarities between stages in crop, animal and human development.

TIME:

1 hour

MATERIALS:

Flip chart, marker pens.

STEPS:

1. Allow the girls and boys to shout out everything that they know about the life cycles of plants, animals and humans and note what they say on a sheet of paper. Or encourage the participants to do a role play on the main phases of the life cycle of
 - A) plants;
 - B) animals and
 - C) people.

The life cycle of a plant, an animal and a person

Childhood

Adolescence

Adult

Elderly

Death



2. Split the group into three. One group should mime the life cycle of plants, a second the life cycle of animals and a third the life cycle of people. Give 10 minutes to each group for preparation. Ask each group to show what they know through miming. While one group is miming the others should observe!
3. Ask to the participants to summarize what they saw about the life cycle of plants, animals and people and complete the ideas presented (on the flipchart/blackboard) following the table in the handout below.
4. Introduce the following questions (for plants, animals and people). In their respective groups above, ask them to discuss the questions:
 - What are the principle characteristics of each phase?
 - What are the needs of plants, animals and humans for each phase?
 - How do we ensure these needs are met?
5. Have each group present its work in front of the other participants.
6. Facilitate discussions on the following question: "Are the needs for people during the different phases similar to those of plants/animals?"
7. Ask the participants to reflect on which stage they themselves are now and what their present needs are. Share the reflections in the group.
8. Summarize the importance of understanding the different phases of the life cycle in learning how to take care of plants, animals and people, so they can grow-up healthy.



CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

The following activities will help the participants to reflect on what they have done or learned by a creative outlet for expressing it such as singing, drawing, poetry, drama. Of course, you can also use cultural activities of your own choice or you may want to ask the participants if they have any activities of their own that they enjoy!

ACTIVITY 1. Song about the crop calendar

Writing songs is a way to promote self-expression and to build teamwork. In this exercise, ask the participants to write a song about a typical week taking care of crops. Each part of the song should talk about one day of the week. The participants can work in smaller groups or they can all work together. Here is an example of one song that was composed.

Monday before lunching

On Monday before lunching,
A girl wanted to take a walk
She cannot take a walk
Because she has to work
She was working like this, like this (3 times)
I've seen her working like this...

On Tuesday before lunching
A boy wanted to take a walk
He cannot take a walk
Because he has to sow seeds
He was sowing like this, like this (3 times)
I've seen him sowing like this...

On Wednesday
A girl had to water

On Thursday
A boy had to plant

On Friday
A girl had to weed

On Saturday
A boy had to harvest

On Sunday
They had to play

ACTIVITY 2. The story of my life

This activity will help participants to get to know each other better and to create a feeling of trust. They will be encouraged to talk about their lives and to create positive feelings in terms of their personal experiences, so that they can think about their life in a more positive way.

TIME:

60 min (30 min. for each part – possibly done in two sessions).

MATERIALS:

Material for making puppets, a piece of material to make a stage, a model puppet to use as a demonstration.

STEPS:

Part A

1. Form group of two participants (who don't know each other very well). Think about keeping the girls and boys separate, as they will have to sit on the floor hand in hand, knee to knee and looking into each other's eyes.
2. Explain to them that they should keep eye contact with their friend and that their hands and knees should be touching throughout the exercise.
3. Ask the participants to guess the story of their friend's life without asking any questions and without letting their friend speak or comment. The participant who is guessing tells the story the way that he/she imagines it.
4. After five minutes, have the participants change roles and repeat step 3.
5. Ask the participants to sit on the floor in a circle and to comment one by one:
 - How did you feel when you were asked to tell the story of your friend's life?
 - How did you feel when you were listening to the story of your life imagined by your friend?
 - Is there anything in the story invented by your friend that you would like to have done or would like to do in the future.

Part B

6. Ask the participants to go back to the same friends, explaining that this time, each one should tell his/her real story, but only bringing out the positive events, mentioning the best moment of his/her life.
7. Ask the participants to sit in a circle on the floor and, one at a time, to tell everyone how they felt when they heard their friend tell their story.

ACTIVITY 3. The journey across the river

STEP:

1. Read out the story below for the participants.

The story of Masha and Vidzo's journey across the river

Once upon a time in a village called Viriko there was a boy named Masha and his sister Vidzo. One morning after New Year celebrations their parents woke them up for a journey across the river Galana. Masha and his sister were so excited that they were going to visit their great grandparents.

When they crossed the river they saw many people clearing their farms. As they passed one farm after another they could clearly see that most people were engaged in their farms.

When they reached their destination they were pleasantly welcomed home by all and sundry. A big male goat was slaughtered for them. Masha and Vidzo were so happy to meet the other children and they played happily after that sumptuous meal!

The following morning all the villagers went to prepare their land and this followed day in day out. All the children were accompanying their parents to the farms.

One morning Masha observed a heavy cloud hanging over the sky. His grandfather told him that it was a sign of rain. Two hours later it rained heavily for almost half a day. The following morning most of the villagers went out planting in their farms. This continued for about 2 months and there were grasses all over the place. Masha and Vidzo were delighted to see how both young and old worked communally in the farms to tend to the crops for about 3 months.

Unbelievably most farms were full of a very good maize, cow pea and simsim crops. Then came the harvesting time when the rains had subsided and it was dry again. This marked the beginning of the festive season in the village with most of them celebrating the bumper harvest.

After this came the short rainy season and Masha was amazed to see a repeat of the whole range of activities. This continued for the next 3 months until the Christmas season when most of the villages again went festive after a successful harvest. For Masha and Vidzo this was such an unforgettable experience!



ASSESSING PROGRESS

🔄 exercise 1

DREAM VISIONING²

This exercise helps participants to think in terms of their long-term visions and aspirations, and thereby bring them beyond the immediate daily problems. It provides a good basis for planning JFFLS activities as it builds on participants own dreams. In order to later on be able to monitor and assess progress it is important that the participants have clearly articulated their visions and agreed on some common goals to strive for in the group. Thus this exercise should be carried out as one of the first activities of the JFFLS.

OBJECTIVES:

- To articulate participants' dreams and visions for the future;
- To identify potential indicators for assessment of progress later on.

TIME:

About 1.5 hour

MATERIALS:

Flip chart, marker pens.

STEPS:

1. Explain to the group members that they will be required to describe how they would like things to be in 3 years time from now. The dreams vision should relate to the persons livelihood and life as a young farmer.
2. Allow 15 minutes for personal reflection before sharing in sub-groups or directly in plenary until a single common future is created from the individual reflections. Guiding questions might be: "What are the characteristics of the ideal situation we wish to achieve here in the long term?" or ask them to complete the sentence: "I know that my vision for this situation has been achieved when I see..."
3. Ask the participants to make a drawing of their dreams, and then discuss these in the larger group. In the discussion the dreams can be specified further including timeframes for achievements.
4. Once expressed and discussed the dreams can help to identify indicators to be assessed later on in order to see if the dreams are being realized.

² Adapted from Discovery-based Learning on Land and Water Management: Practical Guide for Farmer Field Schools (FAO and IIRR, 2006)



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