



MEV-CAM BEST PRACTICES:
ENGAGE, LEARN, INSPIRE

Resilient
FOOD SYSTEMS



THEATRE FOR DEVELOPMENT TO ENGAGE LOCAL COMMUNITIES



BACKGROUND

Theatre for Development (TFD) is a vital tool for communication and advocacy in the Global South, encouraging local communities to become more involved in their own development by assessing issues and discussing possible solutions.

Over the past five years, TFD has been implemented as a best practice in rural farming communities across three regions of Malawi, the Karonga, Machinga district and Phalombe districts, as part of the Enhancing Resilience of Agroecological System Project (ERASP). Young people used the practice to spark discussions and raise awareness on challenges within their communities, and it has enhanced irrigation farming, catchment management, good agricultural practices, market linkages, nutrition and income diversification.

The practice has benefitted the local communities and has the potential to be upscaled across other countries.

MEV-CAM'S BEST PRACTICES AT A GLANCE

This best practice was extracted by the Food and Agriculture Organisation's Making Every Voice Count for Adaptive Management (MEV-CAM) initiative, working alongside communities participating in GEF-6's Resilient Food Systems projects to be upscaled throughout GEF-7's Sustainable Forest Management Impact Program on Dryland Sustainable Landscapes interventions.

This document aims to show the impact of best practices on local communities. MEV-CAM is now working to disseminate knowledge on these best practices through the South – South Cooperation Knowledge Gateway, promoting long-term ecosystem restoration and resilience.

"We use Theatre for Development because it allows people to realise the problems at hand and offer their own possible solutions to ending it."

Rowlands Kaotcha, ERASP beneficiary in Malawi

FIVE SIMPLE STEPS TO IMPLEMENTATION

1 Project staff reach out to community chiefs through existing local committees in targeted areas to share the Theatre for Development practice, explaining the concept and highlighting the benefits it brings by increasing community engagement and improving community participation.

2 With support from front-line government and project staff, the community works to identify the main problems that are currently being faced in their landscapes. They then create a script highlighting the issue that will be used to spark discussion at community meetings.

3 Community members perform the script at committee and community meetings. Community members discuss the issues, and with support from the government or project staff, they identify the best techniques to solve them.

4 TFD can be used to raise awareness of practices that negatively affect the local landscape, livelihoods or communities. It is also used to disseminate the good practices that have resulted from previous discussions.

5 The actors involved take their scripts to even the most rural villages in the community, ensuring that all areas can benefit from the discussion and eventual solutions.

WHAT HAS THIS PRACTICE ACHIEVED?



351 youth involved -
185 of which
are female



14 843 farmers
have learned
about and are
implementing
good agricultural
practices



104 young
people have
been enticed
into farming and
joining Farmer
Field Schools

WHY SHOULD THIS PRACTICE BE UPSCALED?

Restoration

As highlighted by the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration, restoration should strive to integrate all types of knowledge including Indigenous, traditional, local and scientific. Theatre for Development contributes to this by:

- Being a method of knowledge sharing, it raises awareness of environmental issues and sparks debate in local communities on the importance of environmental conservation and how to be a part of it.
- Involving all stakeholders, especially under-represented groups such as local communities, Indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, women, youth and LGBTIQ+ people. It encourages their participation in restoration and development activities that were usually carried out only by local governmental committees.

Gender

TFD promotes ecosystem restoration by addressing socio-economic objectives, especially those related to gender inclusion:

- It is practice often promoted by local women's committees. It increases women's access to knowledge and new capacities that can bring a significant change in their lives.
- This is particularly important in rural communities where it is harder for women to access education, or are less able to participate in public life.
- It enables women play a key role in sharing messages and are given a tool for advocacy.
- This practice also encourages women to play roles that are usually attributed to men, bringing with it a change in social perspectives.

Sustainability

TFD is sustainable in the long term because:

- It equips young people with skills including public speaking, environmental awareness, community participation and knowledge of best farming practices.
- It enables communities to get together and discuss issues in an enjoyable way, through the form of entertainment. This means communities are more likely to continue it.
- It can be implemented without expensive inputs or running costs.

TIPS FOR REPLICATING THIS PRACTICE

- It is vital to have the support of community leaders and for them to see the potential benefits of TFD. Without this, it will be difficult to integrate this practice into existing community forums and meetings, and ensure women are included in the interventions.
- It is also important to make use of existing local governmental structures and committees to reach the communities, disseminate the benefits of TFD and integrate this practice.
- Ensure that frontline workers understand their role in supporting the community while they carry out this practice, helping them identify issues and priorities.
- Involve young people to increase their engagement in local community development issues and agricultural knowledge exchange. Doing so can inspire more young people to become involved in farming and restoration projects.

INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE?

- FAO: [South-South Cooperation Gateway](#)
- FAO Publication: [Governing land for women and men](#)
- Resilient Food Systems knowledge centre: [Malawi](#)



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