



Experience of AFIRD – Agency for Integrated Rural Development
In Nkoowe, Kampala-Hoima Rd./UGANDA

Schools in this area faced various challenges, including: hot and dusty compounds, flooding, low enrolment, limited gender inclusiveness, and isolation from village communities. Moreover, many young people have lost interest in agriculture, yet it is one main source of income. Farming methods characterized by low production and environmental destruction are used extensively. Many are frustrated by the results.



The solution: An interactive participation of pupils, teachers, and women (parents) in the redesigning of school grounds from bare areas to sustainable and inclusive gardens with useful plants, which provide healthy food, shade, and extra income.

Experience description

After having promoted sustainable agriculture among smallholder farmers, we noticed that schools and their often baren grounds could be remodeled for ecological land use at community level. Guided by technical assistance, the ILUD/Permaculture approach was used with a view of promoting inclusive ecological and social justice. With the participation of community leaders, the school grounds were designed as the communal epicentre for sustainable agriculture knowledge transfer. This practice is being adopted by other schools, boosting the awareness and reputation of sustainable agriculture.



Other characteristics



IMPACTS

- Improved diet and income both at school and household level
- Acquisition of practical knowledge about agriculture
- More conducive learning environment and improved pupil performance
- Improved reputation and increased school enrolment
- Adoption of ILUD approach by other schools



CHALLENGES

- Prolonged droughts, unpredictable rains and seasons impacted the productivity
- School lockdowns due to COVID-19 posed challenging moments
- Initial misconceptions about the project (some community members felt the school compounds were being destroyed reducing pupil's playing space)



LESSONS LEARNED

- Solving community challenges is a collective responsibility. Working with all stakeholders (kids, teachers, parents and local leaders) and with gender inclusion was key in ensuring project ownership and sustainability.
- It helps to discuss the objectives and the added value of school gardens during meetings and to engage influential community and religious leaders in creating awareness.