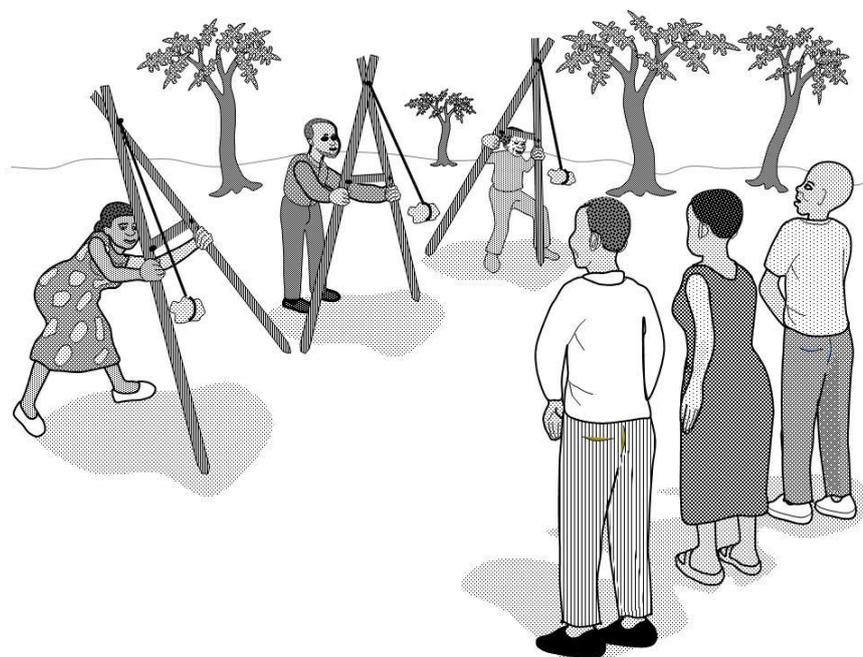


Action learning: Teaching others to engage with learners

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Through action research and development partnerships, Africa RISING will create opportunities for smallholder farm households to move out of hunger and poverty through sustainably intensified farming systems that improve food, nutrition, and income security, particularly for women and children, and conserve or enhance the natural resource base.

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Cover illustration: Mosher Chande.



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Contents

The value of this module	1
How this training module can be used	2
Start of program	5
A. Introduction	5
B. Overview of day.....	5
C. Demonstrating drama-approach for teaching	7
D. Discussion following drama presentation	9
F. How would you describe participatory teaching?.....	10
G. Group practice with the community.....	10
H. Role-play of participatory learning	11
I. What’s the point?	12
J. Final “round-robin”	13
K. Closing	14
Participatory learning program handouts for learners and facilitators	15
Handout 1: Possible participatory learning approaches	15
Handout 2: Words that describe the ways to teach others (Exercise A)	17
Handout 3: Short dramas (Exercise B).....	18
Learners’ notes	20
Workshop evaluation	21

The value of this module

The purpose of this module is not to train learners to use a technical skill such as contour planting but to teach others how to teach learners, using participatory approaches and action-learning. This is a training module to teach other trainers a way to teach others through interaction and fun activities, and for learners to try new techniques.

Everyone can learn; it's just that not all people learn best with the same approach. This module offers a mixture of different teaching approaches to maximize learning by all. This module is written to help you as a trainer or educator, no matter how much you have taught in the past. We want you to consider trying these approaches to teach others how to teach and use these approaches in your own teaching. This way may be a bit more difficult to teach since it requires a teacher to be a facilitator. That is, one who learns alongside the learners and encourages the learners to explore the topic; adding to their understanding based on their experiences and asking why and how. But one teaching method that may be a bit difficult is to be willing to adjust the teaching approaches based on the interests of the learners. This is a form of action learning—not only teaching, but encouraging the learner to see, ask, understand, try, and then you adjust the approach to work in this situation.

How this training module can be used

In our work, whether it is research or extension, we often rely on farmers and other “laypersons” to help get messages out to the end-users or stakeholders. Learning how to do something requires a special skill-set that many of us have developed out of the need to “do better” in our lives. This understanding is very useful to help others learn how to use knowledge to improve their lives. To get the most out of this module, we suggest you read it through before you teach so you can see how the demonstrations can help teach new teachers.

About a facilitator: Helping others to learn something new requires the ability to effectively share what we understand and then “test this knowledge”. Once the teacher or facilitator has shared their knowledge, they can guide the learners to explore the information through questions, field testing, discussing with class mates and peers as well as trying to use the knowledge in their own home. After the learners experience the approaches, they can share their experiences with one another and build on the knowledge to make it useful to them in their environment. This module offers some guidance on how you, as a facilitator, can educate using this approach. This guide offers an approach to learn an effective way to teach others. It offers a step-by-step program to provide a way for a teacher or facilitator to deliver new information to laypersons (such as farmers) in a fun and effective manner. The module includes activities that invite action learning; learners working together to solve real problems through group engagement and seeing the results, which often leads to stronger outcomes. In a workshop that uses this approach, the participants try out the learning process through drama and team activities—making it fun and more engaging, thus encouraging adoption of this way to teach. Remember that this module is designed to show a teaching method by example that boosts the chance that the learners will retain the information. When the teachers practice these approaches, they will gain confidence so they can use this approach to teach others in other trainings.

Class Size: This type of training is best offered to small groups of 10–15 persons up to 50–60 persons. If the class is large (greater than 20), then the class can divide into sections and one section does one activity while the other section works on the next activity. For larger classes, it is helpful to have an assistant for every additional 20 persons. They can help answer questions and check in with the groups as they do the activities. Typically, upon completion of each activity, the groups can share their experiences from the exercise with the whole class. Note that the size of group should not too be large to ensure that all have a chance to participate.

What is needed for this training and other training sessions using participatory action learning

- **One facilitator** for each 20 persons in the group.
- Flip charts or paper (Place on easel or wall).
- Markers (check they do not bleed through paper if paper is hung on wall).
- Tape or nails to secure paper to wall or other upright surface.

- Handouts of the exercises for each participant—marked as “Handouts” found in this module.
- Enough copies of the dramas so each group has the description of one skit. (Five skits are included in this module). Note that you can also follow the format provided to write your own dramas to better fit your learners’ interests.
- A few props for actors to use in the dramas (e.g., farming items, hoe, bag of seed, planting stick, watering can).

To consider

Key objectives of overall training:

Engage with all the **learners; provide** opportunity for:

- Sharing personal experiences that relate to the theme.
- Building on their knowledge.
- Offering students the chance to try different approaches and share their experiences.
- Adjusting teaching or lessons based on learners' experiences and knowledge.

Start of program

A. Introduction

Welcome everyone and open with a prayer if relevant (Keep it religious neutral).

- Facilitators introduce themselves and share a funny/interesting story about their work that is related to the interests of the trainees. (The purpose is to allow students to get to know each other and you and feel comfortable with you as a teacher).
- Ask each participant to introduce themselves. Go around so all have a turn.
- Ask participants to share a story about an interesting farming season or crop or something of interest to the group. For example, if you are teaching health workers you can offer stories that talk about health care.

B. Overview of day

Ask participants a few questions to help the learners start thinking about the day.

- **Ask:** Who has heard of participatory learning or action learning? (Show of hands).

Ask: What is meant by participatory learning?

- **Ask:** Who has had any training for participatory learning, such as when they teach farmers or other community members.*

***Note if any of the** participants have raised their hands to indicate they have had training in **participatory** learning: **Share with them:** It is great they have some experience in this area. Let them know that you want everyone to feel this training will be valuable to them. Tell them this training will help them get to the next level of teaching, to be able to offer participatory training when they are working with and teaching other farmers or other community members from any area (health, nutrition, construction, any topic). They are encouraged to ask questions and make suggestions during the training to ensure all benefit from this program.

- **Ask:** If two volunteers will share what they learned during that past training (of those who raised their hand to indicate they have had attended a training before).
- **Ask:** If those two volunteers will share, which methods or approaches did they use or have tried when teaching others.

Explain: You hope that after this training they will have ideas of five or six other participatory approaches they can use to teach others.

Ask: If there is anything else **anyone** would like to include or talk about during the day of ways to share new knowledge?

Facilitator: Be sure to write down these answers and review them with all at the end of day. Answer them as best as possible as a group.

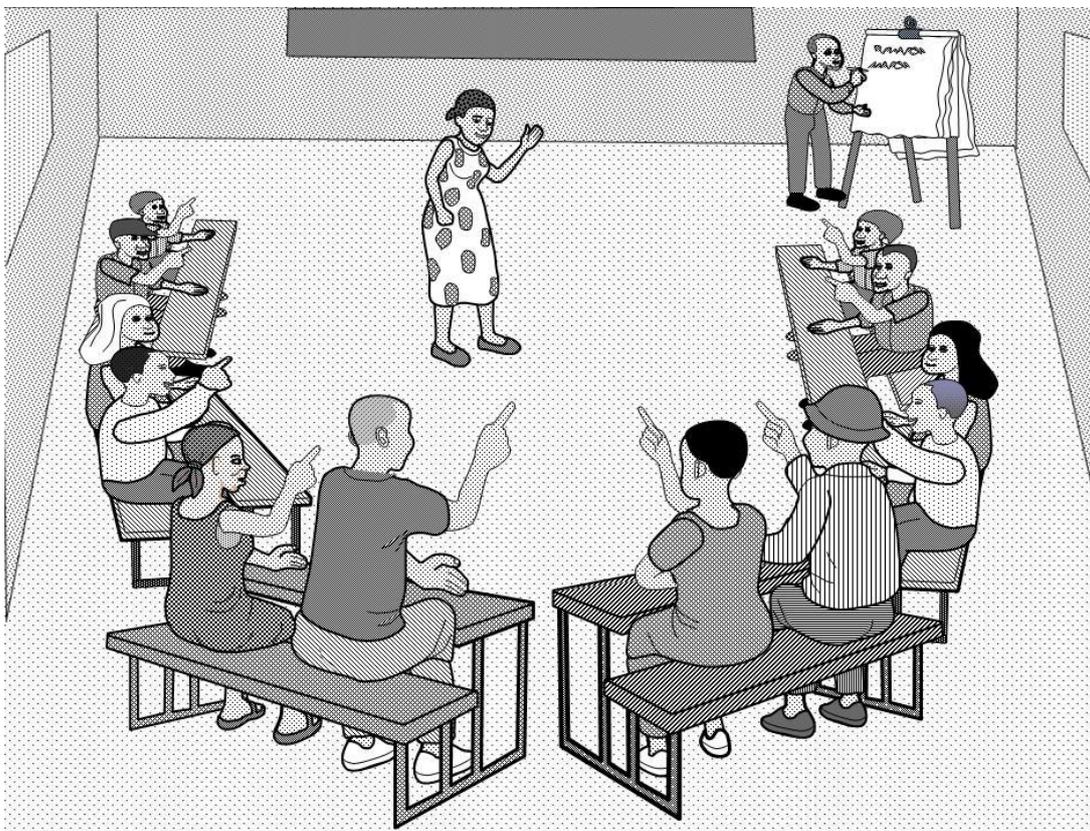
Do: “Round-Robin” (all sit in a circle or “U-shape” so you can see each other)

Ask each participant if they have done any of the following or attended a program **with...**

1. Demonstrations that include farmers doing the demonstration.
2. Invited farmers to participate in an educational program.
3. Worked with farmers to participate in a field study or field demonstration.
4. Farmers sharing information about a technology they have tried or now do on their farm.

Point out that these ways of teaching are participatory, action-learning methods.

Finally: Ask learners why they think they are being encouraged to use participatory learning when teaching farmers. Encourage 2–3 persons to respond. These responses will guide you to the next activity.



Facilitators demonstrate to the learners a drama that is a type of action learning exercise. As the learners see how this is done, they too can use these approaches when teaching others. To help the learners see how they can use these tools they share examples of how they will teach others in the future, such as farmers or health care workers. Illustrated by: Mosher Chande.

C. A demonstration-drama of teaching methods

Facilitator: Explain that now you are going to ask for volunteers to help demonstrate the value of action-learning.

Ask for 4–6 volunteers to prepare a drama presentation to show the others.

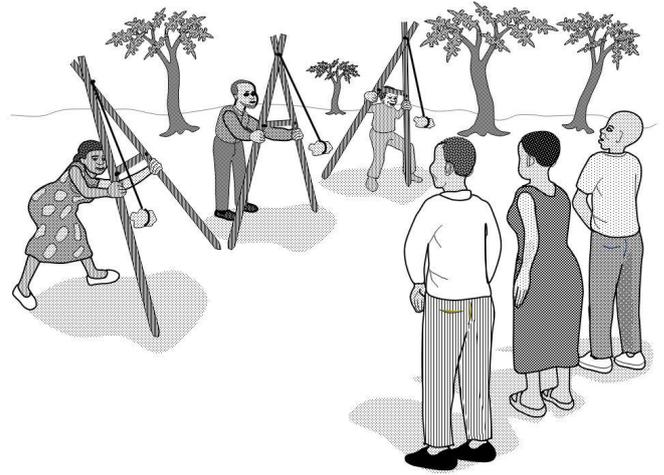
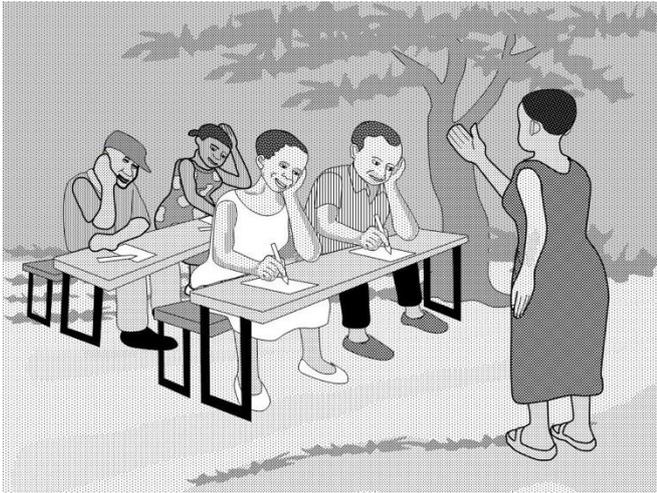
- **Note: While this group is preparing for the drama with a facilitator or assistant, the other learners can do “Exercise F” with two persons from each group.**
- If the group is larger than 30, then have 7–8 persons present the drama. Adjust the roles and numbers of actors depending on class size.

The facilitator should ask the actors to go with him/her to a different area or room. Here the facilitators should explain to the actors that the drama will be in two parts to show two different ways to teach and share knowledge (This can be called Act I and Act II).

- One person will play the teacher in Act I and another the teacher in Act II. The other actors in the drama will be learners (students participating in the training). The drama should take place in a classroom, field, or garden.
- Share the following information with the actors:
 - **Act I:** This teacher will act like a typical school teacher telling the students the information and not encouraging discussion or questions by the students. The teacher expects the students to take notes and listen carefully.
 - **Act II:** The other teacher will interact with the students in ways to encourage full participation, discussion, and sharing of knowledge and experiences about their approaches (as it relates to what is being taught). The teacher will ask the students to participate in the activity or a demonstration of a new technology.

Description of drama: Two approaches to teaching: This is a drama to compare teaching styles

Choose a common technical theme based on what your learners are interested in or the technical theme of your work (such as soil health using a soil pit, comparing different maize varieties that are resistant to disease, eating nutritious food to stay healthy, using a family budget to use money wisely) to demonstrate the two approaches of “teaching”. The drama can be on any technical theme. The important point is showing how the information can be shared, comparing the different ways to share information and encourage learning.



Shown here are two types of learning: Top-down learning on the left and Participatory learning on the right. Note the differences: **Top-down learning** offers little interaction with other learners or the teacher. The teacher tells the information and the learners take notes. Students ask questions just for clarification, not sharing their knowledge or experiences. **Participatory learning** encourages learners to participate in an exercise while the teacher guides the students and answers questions. The teacher encourages learners to share their experiences related to the activity. Illustrated by: Mosher Chande.

Drama

Setting: Students have gathered to learn a new approach to... (the actors can choose about what).

Act I. First the “Top Down” group presents their drama for all. The facilitator should help them plan the acting. The actors should emphasize the typical “old-school” actions such as taking many notes, offering little discussion, requiring students to pay attention, demanding no talking to each other. There should be no hands-on activities in this act.

Note: The drama can exaggerate these ideas so the audience clearly sees the differences.

Act II. The second act is about a teacher that uses participatory methods, teaching the same technical theme as in Act I. This act should be “heavily emphasized” to demonstrate participatory approaches. An example is a student asking the teacher a question and with the teacher’s encouragement, other students discuss possible answers to the question. The teacher shows approval as the students engage in conversation to answer the same question. Students explore the question as a group rather than the teacher just giving a quick answer. Another example would be if the teacher asks if any of the students have tried a practice (for example, family budgeting) and if so, ask for a volunteer to demonstrate to the others, then discuss what they saw and how this technology can be used.

Review of this demonstration/drama: What did we see?

- **1. Top-down** This method is when the teachers tell the students *how it is* and *why it is* important. There is no room in this method for student engagement.

- Students will be told to listen and observe, and ask questions only when they need clarification of what the teacher has said.
- No discussion is welcome and the teacher just describes everything without demonstration.
- The teacher stresses listening and following directions.
 - The students are expected to take notes of what the teacher writes on the board.

2. The Participatory approach of learning is when teachers share some information and then ask students for their experiences and ideas.

- The students are invited to “see for themselves” and participate in the action learning—in a hands-on manner.
- Students will be asked to participate and be part of the learning experience, all questions and discussions will be welcome, and anyone who knows about the topic can answer, not just the teacher.
- It is important to guide the responses so all have a chance to contribute their ideas. If one person dominates, ask tell them to let others have a turn.

Summary of approaches

- **Top-down teaching** is an approach in which the teacher tells the students how something is done or exactly what it means. Little time is left for discussion and only the teacher’s information is valued. There are no demonstrations or hands-on activities. The information comes from the teacher and is passed down to the student: top-down.
- **Participatory learning** is a teaching approach that uses action-learning to engage the students and encourages them to learn through understanding what is meant, rather than just memorizing facts. The students can do this by asking questions, discussing alternative approaches, and discuss why one technology may be better for them than another approach. Discussions are encouraged with the whole class. The teaching is even stronger if it includes hands-on activities. The teacher encourages the students to ask questions, see and try for themselves, and share their experiences that help in understanding. Learning and new ideas often occur through all, even the teacher.

D. Discussion following drama presentation

- Ask the learners (whole class) what they observed in the two dramas and what were the differences in **how** the information was taught.
- Ask for volunteers to share learning experiences from when they were growing up or more recently that show an example of either type of teaching. They should describe the approach and how they felt.
- Ask them how they like to learn and why they prefer this way?

F. How would you describe participatory teaching?

The learners should work together to complete *this* worksheet- Exercise A. *Together* they choose if the phrases belong to “top-down” or “participatory learning” columns.

Tell students to use the *handouts* labeled “Exercise F”. Give them about 5–10 minutes to complete the exercise *in their small groups*, then invite all to share their answers.

Once everyone has finished, go through the list, one item at a time and ask for the correct response. If there is confusion or mixed answers ask a participant to explain their answer.

After responses have been shared, ask:

- Why is the first teaching method that was shown called, “top-down”?
- What does *participatory* learning mean to you?
- Which way do they prefer to teach? Share some reasons why?

To conclude *use a proverb like*: You can catch more flies with honey. *Ask students to make their own proverb to describe this teaching approach.*

G. Group practice with the community

Goal: Ask participants to raise their hands if they have experienced using participatory methods to teach others, no matter the topic.

The participants that raised their hands will take the role as a teacher or facilitator. The remainder of the class will divide into groups of 5–6 participants.

Each group of 5–6 works together. The facilitator and assistant should spend a minute or two with each group to be sure they are “on track”. This activity will allow the groups to practice participatory skills, as they have seen demonstrated in the workshop.

Exercise: Drama to demonstrate how to use participatory teaching.

Each group should work to develop a plan for this year’s group farm demonstration. They should try to include as many participatory learning approaches as possible.

Each group decides what the demonstration will be about.

Allow 15 minutes for the groups to plan their sample demonstration. The facilitator should go around each group and check with them to see they understand what is expected.

Trainer, if participants do not seem to be on track, then share some possible examples.

- Remind them that the goal of this activity is to include participatory ways they could use in their teaching. Please remember that these ways will help

farmers learn, try, modify, and implement, as being discussed during this training.

- After the activity is complete, one person from each group describes their group's plan with the whole class. The facilitator (you) should make a list of all the participatory methods they note (flip chart).
- Ask for others to share if they have other suggestions to do that type of participatory learning. Write these down on a flip chart. Use this list to promote discussion.
- Do this for each group.

H. Role play of participatory learning

Ask the group to divide into five sub-groups. Each group will be asked to share a drama of what is on the paper they will receive as found in Handout 3.



This shows an example of a drama. A drama is an effective way to share with groups about a technical aspect. This approach offers a way for learners to be active in the class and share what they know and have learned. Everyone likes to see their friends “up on stage”. Combining fun with learning improves learners’ understanding and helps them to remember the new information. Illustrated by: Mosher Chande.

What to do - Facilitator: Use the included list of dramas or ones that you have created based on the technical theme (agriculture, health, primary school teaching)

of the group. Five dramas are included here, numbered 1–5 on the sheet called “Short Dramas-Exercise-B”.

Cut the sheet of paper into 5 parts, so that each piece includes one drama. Place each piece of paper in a bag and have one volunteer from each group take one piece of paper. That is the drama they will act out with others in their group.

While the groups are preparing for their acting, the facilitator should go around to each group to help as needed by listening to each group’s discussion and asking the group questions. This will guide them to produce a short drama that follows the theme listed on the paper.

Instructions for drama

- Ask the learners to divide into groups so you have a maximum of five groups (or one group for each drama you created). Each group takes one slip of paper from the bag, which describes a drama. Note that the dramas include different participatory learning methods.
- If learners are not freely dividing into groups, you can have them count off 1 thru 5 and all the same numbers (for example, all 1s) make up one group.
- Give groups 5–10 minutes to prepare their drama that is described on the slip of paper.
- The groups take turns to act out their drama in front of the class. They can use the props you have available.
- After the dramas, the class identifies and discusses the participatory learning method(s) they observed in each skit. Prompt them to help them remember each drama.
- After all groups have shared, ask if anyone knows of other approaches of action learning.
- Ask the group: “How is this learning approach different from others they have used or know of?”

I. What’s the point?

Goal: To understand why you are encouraging the learners to use these methods in their teaching.

Questions to ask learners: From what we have learned so far....

Facilitator: Make a list of the answers on the flip chart so all can see them.

- Q1. What are the values of these methods?
- Q2. What are the challenges of these methods?
- Q3. How can you use these methods in your work as a teacher of farmers (or other types of learners)?

Exercise: Ask for 3–4 volunteers to explain how they can use *participatory* learning methods based on the following *situation*: Ask them to try to use participatory approaches.

- When group members do not know each other and you will do a day-long training with them.
- You want to encourage farmers to participate in demonstrations (when they don't want to at first).
- When you want to get feedback, and encourage sharing by farmers (when they are shy or unsure).
- When some learners talk a bit too much and some not at all (you want a balance).
- Encourage adaptations (using a technology) and modifications (changing a technology so it works better for that user) of technologies by the learners.

If learners are not sure of the last point, encourage adaptations using a technology modification:

Ask a person in the group: *What does it mean to adapt (to change to make it fit) a technology? Why do this?*

If they have not used participatory learning methods, ask them to share examples how they can do this in the upcoming agriculture year?

Note to facilitator: *Encourage learners to include some examples from their recent work with “laypersons” or other community members when describing these examples.*

J. Final “round-robin”

Facilitator says: “We have discussed and seen many examples of participatory learning in groups. Now I hope you can each share about one of the approaches you would like to use when teaching people in your community. Please try and share ways different from what your neighbor just shared.

Go around the room and ask each participant for an example of an approach of participatory learning:

Facilitator: You can write down the ideas of the participants to make a list. Then, **ask** the learners:

- Do you have any questions about how to use this approach in your teaching?

Go around the room and ask each person to share a positive thing (value) or negative thing (challenge) for one of the approaches on the list.

Then again ask

1. How will using any of these approaches change a program? Ask for a couple of volunteer answers.
2. What difficulties may arise when you use this type of teaching?

K. Closing

Ask if there are any questions or comments they would like to share before closing. Consider these questions.

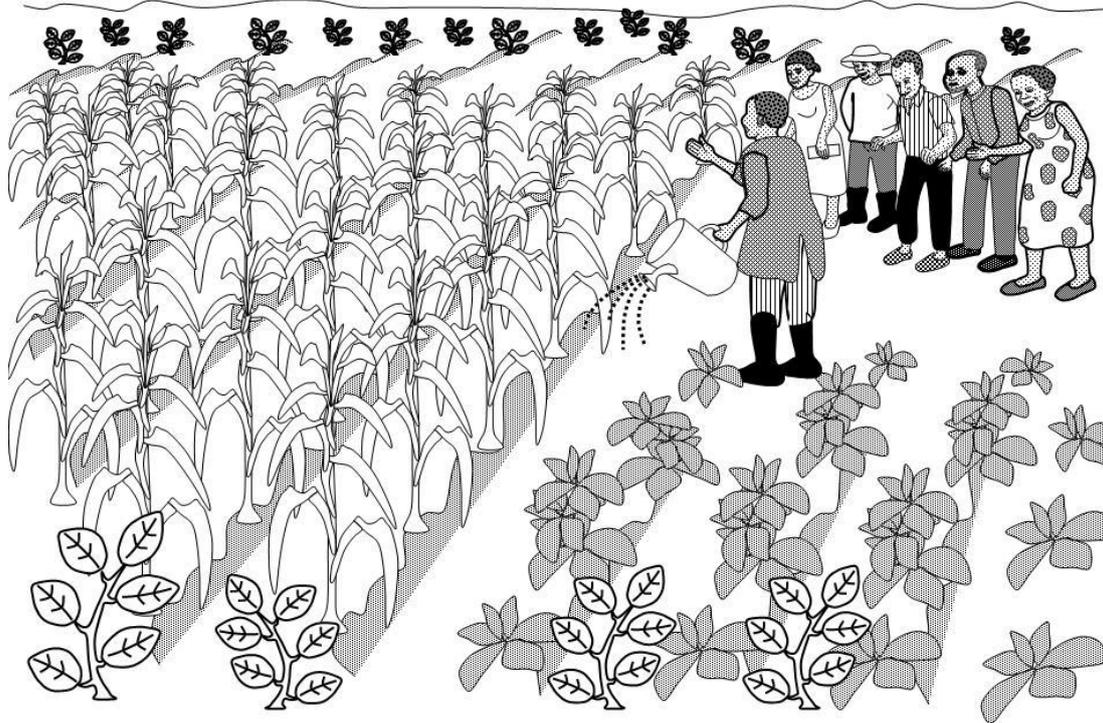
- Do they have new ideas of how to teach?
- Do they understand how to use these methods (the one they like the best)?
- Do they know what is needed to prepare to use this teaching approach?

Facilitator: *Answer their questions as well as you can. If it's a technical question that you do not know the answer to, tell them you will ask an expert and get back to them (and really get back to them).*

- Thank all for their participation and willingness to share to make it a much better day.
- Have a closing prayer if appropriate.
- Provide any housekeeping info (lunch, transportation, stipends, next meetings...)

Participatory learning program handouts for learners and facilitators

Handout 1: Possible participatory learning approaches



This picture demonstrates how learning from each other offers a way to demonstrate and experience the technical information. Sharing experiences also offers encouragement to others to try on their own. Illustrated by: Mosher Chande.

A guide to a better learning experience

Classroom: Have participants sit in a circle if possible (instead of rows). Have the classroom as comfortable as possible (good temperature, enough light, enough chairs, water to drink).

Introductions: Ask each person to introduce themselves and share something about their farming or teaching experiences. They can stand while speaking so all can see and hear them better.

Share day agenda/plan: Give an overview of what is going to happen for the day at the beginning. Ask if there are other things they would like to add to the plan.

****Teaching approach:** As a facilitator share some stories and a joke to brighten up the teaching. Use simple language when explaining. Use a flip chart if the group

wants to see the words. Always ask if there are questions after explaining a new concept.

Timetable: Set times for the day based on the agenda. Keep to the times you indicate and try very hard not to go over closing time.

Group participation: Round robin—go around in a circle with each person taking a turn to share (this allows everyone to participate).

Hands-on: Offer a chance for each person to try for themselves (in field, on paper, on flip chart).

Discussion leader: Have the learners take turns being the leader of a discussion or activity.

Testing ideas: In addition to field demonstrations, have field testing, such as two maize varieties side by side for all learners to see the differences.

Demonstration sites: Ask for suggestions of what technologies or crop types to include in field demonstration sites; what are they interested in comparing.

Learner-led demonstrations: Someone from the group who has experience on the topic leads a demonstration.

Modify approaches: Encourage learners to adjust approaches or technologies to better meet their conditions (physical ability, equipment, crop, land size, labor availability, interest) and try this approach for comparison. This is REAL action learning.

Team participation: Offer learners the chance to work in small groups of 2–4 (depending on how many in the whole group). Then ask one person from each group to report back to the whole group after the exercise.

Group question and answer: Ask group to ask questions, then let others from the group answer the questions, not just the facilitator (teacher). Host a discussion if there is a debate.

Handout 2: Words that describe the ways to teach others (Exercise A)

Top-down or participatory learning?

Tick the correct column for each description. Add your own if you would like to.

Description	Top-down approach	Participatory approach
Teacher knows best		
Group discussion		
Sharing ideas		
Field demonstrations		
Learners ask few questions		
Writing many notes in class		
Learners share a different way of doing than described by		
Only one idea is correct		
Trying out new ideas as a group		
All follow the reading without discussion		
Treat learners as if they know nothing		
Group work		
Learners are encouraged to ask questions		
Discussing before doing		
Not everyone does it the same		
Debating why or the value of an approach		

Handout 3: Short dramas (Exercise B)

Select drama: Each short drama should take 5–10 minutes to present to the whole group. Cut and place the 5 slips of paper that you have into a bag or bowl. Ask for a volunteer from each group to take one slip of paper from the bowl or bag. This is the drama they will act out for the group. The group then works together for 10 mins to prepare for the presentation.

Role play: The point of this is to demonstrate a way of participatory learning. Each drama can be done with three or more actors. Note that group actions can be changed if the group has a different idea of how to accomplish the problem using a different participatory action.

1. *Farmers have learned about a way to reduce soil erosion by building ridges. They had a training the day before to learn how to build them. After the training, they ate dinner together and discussed the day. They all realize they do not like this approach to control erosion. On the 2nd day they return and discuss why they do not like this approach and what they suggest instead.*

Action by group: Start off by asking what they think about the training yesterday. Farmers tell you they do not like building tied-ridges. You need to help the farmers discuss why and other possible ways to reduce erosion. As a group, come to an agreement of a different way to control erosion.

2. *Farmers are going to plant a Mother demo. There is enough space for four crop types. You work with the group of farmers to list possible crops they would like to try. Write the list on the flip chart or just read the list to the group during the drama. You need to have more than four crop types on the list to show that choices can be made.*

Action by group: Once you have a list, ask the farmers to “vote” on which crops they prefer. They vote by raising their hands. The four crops with the most votes will be planted in the Mother demo. If there is a tie in the vote, have a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of each approach.

3. *Farmers are together for training. They do not know each other so well.*

Action by group: Farmers form a circle, but are very quiet. You realize they do not know each other. You invite each farmer to share their name and something about their farm or family they would like to share. Encourage each one to be free and participate. As a group clap for the person speaking. Some farmers will be shy, but continue to encourage them. *You can use any approach you think useful to get the group to be comfortable to speak with each other and confident to share.*

4. *Farmers are working with the Lead Farmers or Mother Farmers to choose inputs (crop types, fertilizer, planting plans) for the coming year. These inputs will be given to the farmers in small packets, based on their choices.*

Action by group: You start a discussion with the farmers to choose which crops or types of crops and fertilizers they want to grow and buy. You are careful to ask for everyone's input. There may be a limited number of some packets so compromises will need to be made. Some cannot agree so have a discussion.

5. *A farmers' group does not agree which of the four bean varieties are better. You suggest to them they can try all four and see. You organize a Mother demo to grow these varieties, side by side. As a group, you plant the bean varieties next to each other and make observations together over the season. When harvest time comes, you cook them in a couple of recipes to taste them. Together you talk about how the crop grew, how it yielded, and how it tastes. You discuss the differences and similarities of the four varieties.*

Action by group: You start a discussion with the farmers to look at all the varieties and suggest each chooses their best variety. Ask them to look at differences and think about the best traits and worst traits based on their needs. Then ask each to share which variety they prefer and why. They can consider taste, plant health, disease resistance, yield, cook-ability, nutrition, and market price. Vote, discuss, find compromises if needed, and select the best varieties.

Learners' notes

Use this space to take notes. If you have questions about participatory learning and teaching you can contact:

Name of facilitator: _____

Mobile number: _____

Name of local extension agent: _____

Mobile number: _____

Workshop Evaluation

Please tell us your ideas and impression of today's workshop. Circle your response. Return this paper to a facilitator before leaving.

Key: 1 = Very Much 2 = Good 3 = Fair 4 = Poor

1. Was this workshop worthwhile to you? 1 2 3 4
(1 is very worthwhile and 4 is not worthwhile)

2. What was the best part of this workshop _____ or circle
a. Dramas b. Teaching drama exercise c. Group discussions d. Lunch
e. Introductions f. Sharing your ideas

3. What was your least favorite part of this workshop _____ or circle
1. Dramas 2. Teaching drama exercise 3. Group discussions
4. Lunch 5. Introductions 6. Speaking in front of others

4. Do you think what you have learned will help you be a better community teacher?
1 2 3 4
What was the most important thing you learned?

5. Will you share what you learned with others?
_____ Yes _____ No

6. If yes, which groups will you share with?

7. What will you use from today's workshop in your teaching?
Please describe

Any other Comments?

Thank you very much for your participation and time. Please hand this form to the facilitator (teacher) before you leave. Thank you for completing the evaluation! Have a safe journey!