

WHAT IS AMPLIFYING AGROECOLOGY?

renewability  
resilience  
equity  
diversity  
healthfulness  
interconnectedness  
spreading of practices  
community seed banks  
international conferences  
funding agroecology  
policy advocacy

+ Identity / Cultural Diversity  
+ Rights (broad to food, etc)  
+ Democratic Deliberation / Agency  
+ Local (localisation)  
+ Peace  
+ Rights, Justice  
+ Spirituality  
+ Cognitive Justice  
+ Solidarity

\* TRANSITION ↔ AMPLIFICATION OF FOOD SYSTEMS - INVOLVING EVERYONE  
\* STRUGGLE FOR WHAT SHOULD BE


# Agroecology Learning Exchange

SOME STRATEGIES TO AMPLIFY AGROECOLOGY

10-13 MAY 2016 MASAKA, UGANDA

AGROECOLOGY FUND  
ALLIANCE FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN AFRICA



A woman wearing a colorful headwrap and a yellow and orange patterned dress is speaking into a microphone. She is standing in front of a whiteboard with diagrams and notes. The background is slightly blurred, focusing on the woman and the text overlay.

“Agroecology is a process.  
You cannot expect a process  
to be perfect immediately. But  
once you make a step, you are  
moving.”

—Jowelia Mukiibi, farmer, Uganda

# Executive Summary



Ugandan farmers explain their strategies to Learning Exchange participants. Photo: Scott Fitzmorris

**From the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> of May 2016**, the AgroEcology Fund (AEF) and the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) brought together 70 people representing 30 organizations to share experiences and ideas about amplifying agroecology. True to its name, this Learning Exchange aimed to facilitate learning and cross-pollination of ideas among grantees, advisors and funders of the AEF, and to explore synergies to further the global agroecology movement. The meeting was held at St. Jude's Family Projects, a demonstration farm and training center for agroecology based in Masaka, Uganda.

The main objectives of this exchange were to learn, share and explore together. To facilitate this, a process was designed that combined creative group work, field visits, public events and various dynamic methodologies. Each day

was opened with a *mística*, a ceremony led by participants from different parts of the world that connected participants with each other and with the deeper purpose of the work.

## Interaction and creativity

On the first day, each collaborative made a creative poster depicting who they are, the main strategies they use for amplifying agroecology, and lessons learned from the work. These posters were presented in breakout groups throughout the rest of the day, followed by reflections on the presentations.

The second day was dedicated to learning about agroecology in Uganda through field visits to three farms, and presentations from Ugandan farmers and practitioners. Their stories helped

Amplification of agroecology is the transformation of food systems, rather than just the spreading of a set of techniques for food production.

the participants reflect on what amplification of agroecology may look like in practice and the day closed with these rich reflections.

On the third day, 'open sessions' gave participants the opportunity to lead a workshop on a topic of their choice. In group conversations, participants discussed the contexts in which particular strategies to amplify agroecology work well. The day was closed with insightful and hilarious sketches depicting the relationships among the science, movement, and practice aspects of agroecology.

On the last day, donor members of the AEF described the Fund's strategies as well as those of their own foundations, after which participants asked questions and provided feedback to the Fund. This was followed by a press conference in which people from four continents spoke about a biotechnology and bio-safety law that is currently under consideration by the Ugandan parliament. They also shared insights about the importance of agroecology with respect to feeding families and stewarding the environment. In the final session, participants were asked to observe, read and reflect on the insights and outputs of the four days of the meeting.

## Insights

Over the course of the Learning Exchange, participants generated many ideas, and they shared valuable knowledge and unique experiences. The intention was not to collect an exhaustive list of ideas as an output of this exchange. Nonetheless, the insights that emerged as a collective product of this unique gathering of great minds were incredibly rich. This summary presents some of the highlights of these insights.

## What is amplification of agroecology?

The notion of 'amplification' of agroecology was the central idea of the Learning Exchange. This was chosen as opposed to 'scaling up', which has a connotation of linear, pre-planned replication or enlargement, which is contrary to the way agroecology develops. So what exactly is 'amplification'?

Amplification of agroecology was understood, by the participants of the Learning Exchange, to be the transformation of food systems, rather than just the spreading of a set of techniques for food production. Amplification of agroecology therefore encompasses all of the actors in the food system, including consumers. It promotes alternative forms of economic exchange, and places agrobiodiversity, the struggle for land, control over seed and local knowledge (especially that of women) at the center of change processes. Amplification of agroecology strengthens people's rights, and increases their autonomy. It is a long-term process that is led by social movements. Agroecology is understood as a continual process, therefore, there is no end goal in its amplification, save for the broad objective of transforming food systems around the world.

## When is agroecology likely to be amplified?

Participants at the Learning Exchange pointed to various enabling conditions. They said that amplification of agroecology is more likely to take place when farmers are aware of the negative aspects of conventional agriculture, when they have access to traditional seeds and other necessary natural resources and when they can share their knowledge in safe spaces. Agroecology is likely to be amplified when consumers and producers are connected, and when there is trust between them. Furthermore, amplification is more likely to occur when there is a group of committed farmers, scientists and governments from around the world that are able to network through a proactive and integral strategy. Another enabling condition of the agroecological transition is when farmers are prepared for a crisis or for a window of opportunity.

Therefore, in the eyes of Learning Exchange participants, amplification starts from strengthening local farmers, food producers and their organizations and federations. Training and education are essential elements of the process of amplification, including the training of teachers in agroecology and awareness-raising of the general public. Amplification of agroecology is about improving communication and bridge-building between actors in the food system. It requires mainstreaming agroecology into government programs and building momentum in policy change and in philanthropy. It needs investment in research on transformative agroecology and a shift in the conventional narrative. Many elements of these strategies for the amplification of agroecology were discussed during the Learning Exchange and are synthesized below.



Talking about the importance of corn in Mexico. Photo: Rucha Chitnis

## How to amplify agroecology?

Various key amplification strategies emerged at the Learning Exchange. There is no particular order to this list.

### Strengthen farmer organizations

Strengthening farmer organizations is critical for amplifying agroecology, because together farmer organizations can create a grassroots movement that is capable of influencing mindsets and policy. Moreover, organized farmers help to build evidence that supports agroecology as a modern way of farming in the face of climate change. Insights about how best to strengthen farmers' organizations point to farmer-to-farmer learning. Learning from one another allows farmers to confidently build knowledge from experience, and to develop a sense of ownership and leadership over their organizations. It is necessary to ensure strong and genuine farmers' umbrella organizations that can give farmers a space to express themselves and advocate for their own rights.

Valuing women's knowledge and leadership must be a central element of any amplification strategy.

### Put women at the forefront

Women are an important source of agroecological knowledge. Valuing women's knowledge must, therefore, be a central element of any amplification strategy. Putting women at the forefront can be done, for example, by seeking their leadership in campaigns and supporting their own struggles, enabling them to learn from other farmers and providing them with opportunities for technical, political and economic education.

### Create direct relations with consumers

Consumers are one of the central agents of change in the agroecological transition. Therefore, strategies for amplification of agroecology should prioritize connecting farmers and consumers. This enables farmers to sell a diversity of products directly to consumers, and to receive vital feedback on the quality of their products. Such connections are particularly effective when they are embedded in local culture, organized as a joint initiative with shared values between consumers and producers, and accompanied by awareness-raising efforts.

### Strengthen agroecology schools

Agroecology schools are a special way to engage people, especially youth, in agroecology. There are different kinds of agroecology schools but, in general, they are spaces where youth can talk about issues that are of concern to them, and they can help make agriculture attractive for the young generation. Agroecology schools rely greatly on the principle of peer-to-peer learning between farmers-- valuing local knowledge-- and often also include two-way learning processes between policy makers and farmer groups. They provide a forum in which people who hold important local knowledge about farming can share their experiences. One of the lessons learned for effective agroecology schools is that the schools must be autonomous from government and universities, and are best when organized and run by a farmer organization. In addition, it is crucial to have good facilitators that understand how to support a social movement and create an effective feedback mechanism for students. Many successful schools started at the regional or national level, after which they were replicated at the local level by trained farmers.



Forging new connections at the Learning Exchange. Photo: ILEIA



Sharing insights in small groups. Photo: Rucha Chitnis

## Work on the ground, document, and disseminate it

Work on the ground with farmer communities can support them to diagnose and prioritize their problems; to identify, test and adapt agroecological principles and to engage in vigorous farmer-to-farmer and village-to-village learning networks. This process fosters the emergence and spread of vibrant, effective localized examples that demonstrate the power and success of agroecology. In order to achieve wide, systemic change, it is critical to document such successful practical experiences, learn from this work, and find ways to leverage the lessons. Documentation of successful agroecological alternatives provides evidence that agroecology works, but also provides insights for policy change and strengthens the agroecology movement. Video, participatory video in particular, can be a useful tool for documentation.

## Advocate

For long-lasting change, it is necessary to mainstream agroecology in policy frameworks as part of a bottom-up process. Engaging in dialogue with local government authorities can be very effective, as well as educating people about

existing laws and ways to demand that local government protect their rights.

Effective advocacy can help to generate public support for agroecology. Policy advocacy for agroecology generally works well when it is embedded in broad collaborations between farmers, researchers, and civil society organizations, and specifically includes women and indigenous

people. Advocacy must also be based on the documentation of successful agroecological practices and supported by rigorous research. Farmers must be supported to advocate for their own rights, rather than being represented by others advocating for them. Farmers' capacity to advocate is enhanced through their active participation in meetings and dialogues, and advocacy, in turn, is more effective when farmers can actively participate.

Documentation of successful agroecological alternatives provides evidence that agroecology works, but also provides insights for policy change and strengthens the agroecology movement.

## Communicate and reach out

Communication and outreach is fundamental for amplifying agroecology, making the case that agroecology is the agricultural system of the future. Communication can be especially effective when it uses humor and cultural references. It is powerful when it is based on solid data and research to debunk the claims made by agribusiness and to raise awareness about agroecology as an alternative to industrial agriculture. It is important that the content is created in partnership with others, especially food producers, and that outreach is well-planned and implemented in a participatory manner. Social media, multimedia, documentary films and curriculum development were mentioned as strong outreach tools.

## Share knowledge

Sharing knowledge about agroecology from farmer to farmer is an important strategy to spread practices. This is especially effective when based on ancestral knowledge,

respecting the values and principles of the farming communities and responding to concrete needs. It works when it is based on showcasing and adapting living examples as opposed to relying on theoretical assumptions. Furthermore, knowledge sharing is fruitful for the agroecological transition when technical and political knowledge exchanges take place simultaneously.

## Resist *and* transform

Many campaigns are based on resisting the industrial agriculture model, corporate power over productive resources, and policies that marginalize small farmers. This is necessary to stop developments that limit agroecology but it is crucial that agroecology also offers well-evidenced alternatives that build up a new agricultural system, through education, science, culture and policy. For this purpose, it is important to have a strong network of partners committed to the promotion of a transformative type of agroecology, as opposed to one that conforms to the status quo.



Appreciation in the audience. Photo: Rucha Chitnis



A major recommendation was to maintain a horizontal collaboration by minimizing institutional interests, logos and egos.

### Create a new narrative

Framing and messaging emerged as central elements in amplifying agroecology because agroecology is based on a completely different set of values about food, nature and people. For this reason, it is necessary to develop a new narrative that is not defensive but rather presents the principles of agroecology. The new narrative must include a reevaluation of agroecology as a viable vocation. It is important to get rid of the notion that farming and agroecology are activities that reflect failure in society, and rather assert that they can bring employment, income and wellbeing. To achieve this it will be crucial to deconstruct the norms, habits, cultures and policies that are working against women and youth. Values of agroecology that should be part of a new narrative were identified at the Learning Exchange as: identity, human rights, democratizing deliberation/agency, localization, peace, rights of nature, and spirituality.

A new narrative should include the following elements: 1) Agroecology is mainstream; it is scientific. Family farmers are feeding the world and we need more of them, while industrial agriculture causes hunger when it dismantles family farming. 2) Agroecology

is a knowledge system in its own right.

There should not be a competition between knowledge generated through science carried out at universities and knowledge generated and kept by farmers, because these two types of knowledge are compatible and complementary.

3) Agroecology must be presented as a continuous process of transition, as a dialogue between people, and between Mother Earth and people, that is inclusive and participatory.

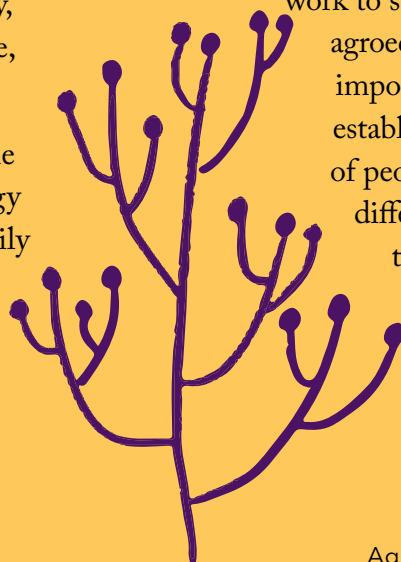
### Develop effective ways to work together

Participants of the Agroecology Learning Exchange shared many lessons drawn from work on agroecology that was undertaken within coalitions. In this respect, a major recommendation was to maintain a horizontal collaboration by minimizing institutional interests, logos and egos, and collectively

work to strengthen the movement. For

agroecological amplification, it is important to work with a loosely established, broad coalition. A variety of people and organizations can bring different experiences and knowledge to the agroecology movement(s).

In such broad coalitions it is necessary to clarify the role of each partner, to develop a set of core principles to help different





partners work well together, and to create tools for problem solving. Moreover, upholding accountability to those impacted is another fundamental necessity. Another important lesson is to avoid economic dependence among the different partners in a coalition.

### **Fund flexibly**

A key strategy to achieve the amplification of agroecology relates to funding of the organizations that do this work. As agroecology is embedded in complex contexts, flexibility on the side of both grantees and donors is necessary to allow for adaptation of plans and strategies. Funding schemes should include long-term core funding that is directed to and reaches the grassroots. With regards to results, donors should not focus too much on quantitative outcomes, but rather on qualitative changes achieved through a different kind of flexible, trust-based relationship with grantees in order for the work to move forward effectively. Ideally, funding for agroecology is based on shared values between donors and grantees, is regenerative, supports social transformation and policy shifts, happens

at a landscape or bioregional level through collaborative, multi-partner initiatives, and includes cross-regional learning exchanges every two or three years.

### **Final words**

Every participant in the Learning Exchange had two things in common: a deep commitment to creating change in the world, and a conviction that the work that each organization is doing is a necessary piece of the greater puzzle to build a strong and effective agroecology movement. Many exchanges that took place were cultivated over coffee breaks, meals and late night chats and are invisible in this report. The unique dynamics that were created in the exchange, the personal connections and the creation of a sense of a global community will undoubtedly continue to contribute to the agroecological transition for a long time to come.

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Photo: ILEIA

# 1 Introduction



Mariann Bassey (AFSA) and Jen (Swift Foundation/ AEF) close a session together. Photo: Rucha Chitnis

## 1.1 The Agroecology Learning Exchange

From the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> of May 2016, the AgroEcology Fund (AEF) and the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) brought together 70 people from 30 organizations for an Agroecology Learning Exchange. The goal of this Exchange was to share experiences and ideas about amplifying agroecology. Participants in the Learning Exchange included grantees, donors, and advisors of the AEF, all of whom met with the aim of exploring synergies to further the global agroecology movement. The Learning Exchange took place at St. Jude's Family Projects, a demonstration farm and training center for agroecology in Masaka, Uganda.

## 1.2 The background: motivation, hosts and facilitators

The AgroEcology Fund (AEF) is a collaboration between 14 foundations that are committed to supporting agroecological solutions across the globe. Since 2012, the fund has, in three cycles, granted 2.83 million USD to leading small-scale farmer organizations and advocates around the world. In total, 24 collaboratives (groups of organizations working together) on 5 continents, encompassing 100 organizations, have received support from the AgroEcology Fund. The Fund is supported in its decision-making by an advisory board of experts from around the world.

The Learning Exchange emerged from the AEF's desire to learn more about the experiences of their grantees. Grantees from the first two rounds of funding were invited to the Learning Exchange to both share their knowledge with each other and participate in strategy conversations among donors and advisors regarding future grant cycles.

The Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) is a Pan-African platform comprised of smallholder farmers, pastoralists, hunter/gatherers, indigenous peoples, citizens and environmentalists from Africa. The alliance shapes policy on the continent in the areas of community rights, family farming, the promotion of traditional knowledge and knowledge systems, the environment, and natural resource management. AFSA, in coordination with the staff at the center where the Exchange was held, St. Jude's Family Projects, graciously took care of all local arrangements for the meeting. *St. Jude's Family Project*, run by Josephine Kiiiza and her family, is an inspiring training center and demonstration farm, which educates thousands of people annually.

ILEIA, the Center for Learning on Sustainable Agriculture, designed and facilitated the Exchange and prepared this report. ILEIA works to strengthen family farming rooted in agroecology by bridging science, movement, and practice.



Small farmers in Africa produce 80% of our food largely on their seed system. In these systems you find diversity and resilience. It is crucial to support the right of farmers to choose their means of production and survival.

Mariam Mayet  
African Center for Biodiversity

AFSA

AGROECOLOGY FUND

PHOTO: RUCHA CHITNIS

## 1.3 The objectives

The objectives and desired outcomes of the Agroecology Learning Exchange were developed as an iterative process of co-creation between donors and grantees. The objectives were formulated as follows:

1. To learn about one another's work;
2. To share lessons learned in amplifying agroecology;
3. To explore synergies that can help us strengthen agroecology as a science, a movement, and a practice;
4. To deepen our understanding of the current and future contribution of the AgroEcology Fund to amplifying agroecology.

## 1.4 The process

As the main objectives of this Exchange were learning, sharing and exploring, a process was designed that involved creative group work and dynamic methodologies. Each day was opened with a *mística*, a ceremony that connected



Starting day 1 with a celebration of traditional crops and food. Photo: ILEIA

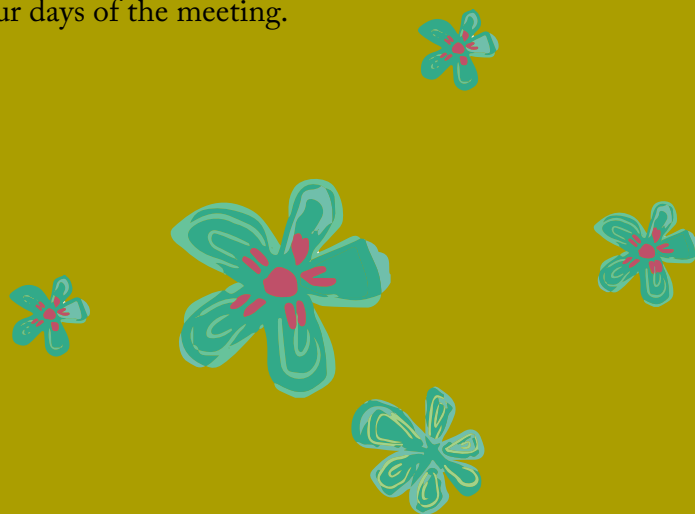
participants not only with each other, but also with the deeper purpose of the work. Each day this was led by people from a different part of the world.

On the first day, attendees participated in activities designed to get to know each other and each other's work. Each collaborative made a creative poster depicting who they are, the main strategies they use for amplifying agroecology, and lessons learned from their work. These posters were presented in breakout sessions throughout the rest of the day, and the day closed with reflections on the presentations.

The second day was dedicated to learning about agroecology in Uganda through field visits to three farms and presentations from Ugandan farmers and practitioners. The objective of the day was to reflect on what amplification of agroecology may look like in practice.

On the third day, 'open sessions' gave participants the opportunity to lead a workshop on a topic of their choice. Discussions on past and future strategies for the amplification of agroecology were held as well. The day closed with skits depicting the relationships among the science, movement, and practice aspects of agroecology. In the evening live music organized by AFSA brought everybody onto the dance floor.

On the last day, donor members of the AEF described the Fund's strategies, as well as the strategies of their own foundations, after which participants asked questions and provided feedback to the Fund. This was followed by a press conference in which Learning Exchange participants from four continents spoke about a biotechnology and bio-safety law that is currently under consideration by the Ugandan parliament. They also shared insights about the importance of agroecology with respect to feeding families and stewarding the environment. In the final session, participants were asked to observe, read and reflect on the insights and outputs of the four days of the meeting.



# 2 DAY ONE, MAY 10: Getting to know each other's work



Everyone made posters depicting their organisations and their work. Photo: ILEIA

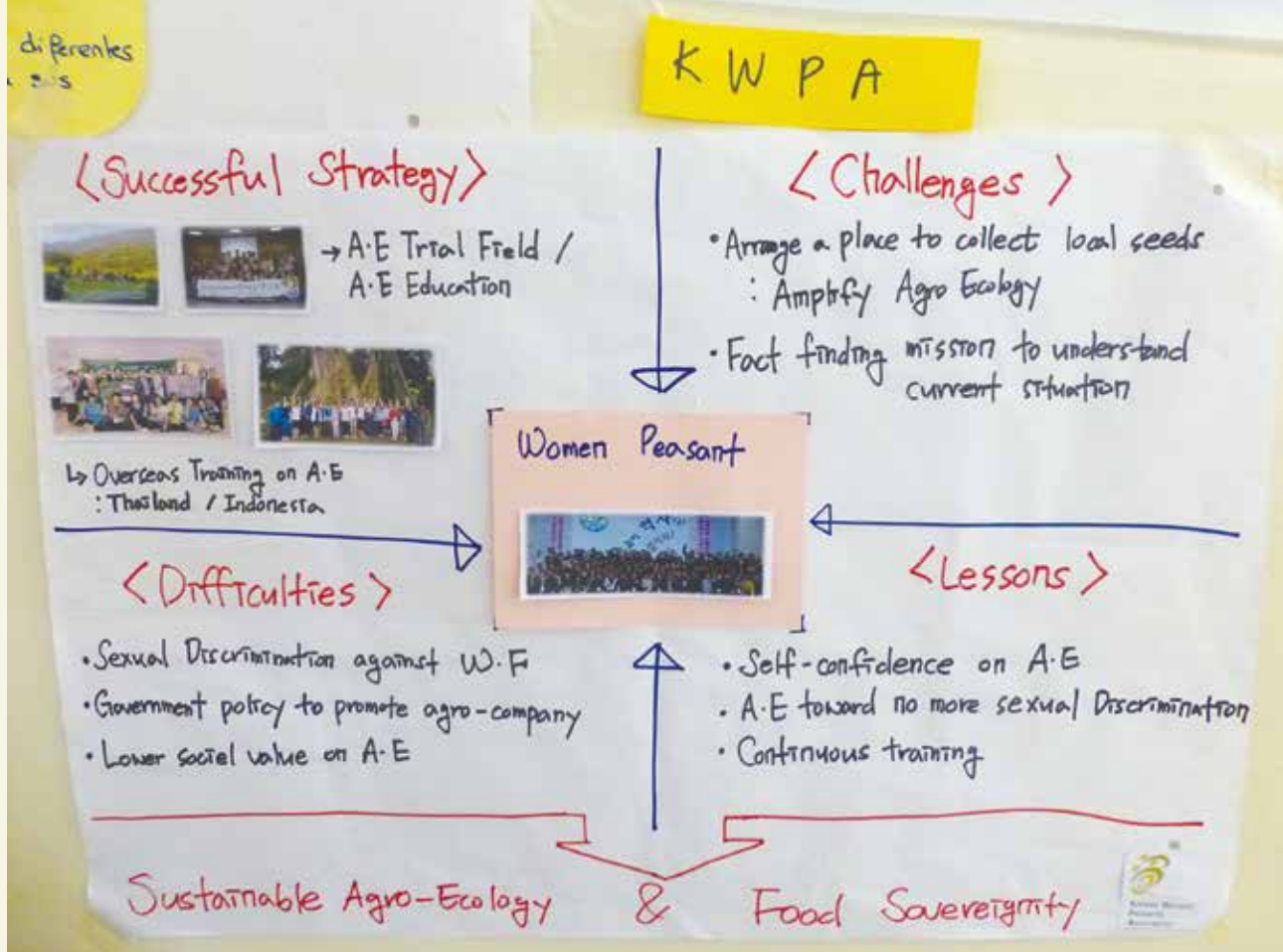
## 2.1 Objectives and process

Following a beautiful *mística* organized by AFSA, their coordinator, Million Belay, welcomed the group. A lively exercise then allowed for initial introductions, during which participants were reminded of how agroecology is a holistic approach that connects many themes. The AgroEcology Fund gave a short presentation about the motives for convening the Learning Exchange. Jen Astone of the Swift Foundation explained that AEF was

interested in learning more from grantees about what works and what doesn't work when trying to amplify agroecology.

The main activity of the day was making and presenting posters about the work carried out in each collaborative. These posters depicted: 1) who is in the collaborative, 2) what they do to amplify agroecology, and 3) key lessons learned in their work. Summaries of the poster presentations are presented below.





## 2.2 Poster presentation summaries

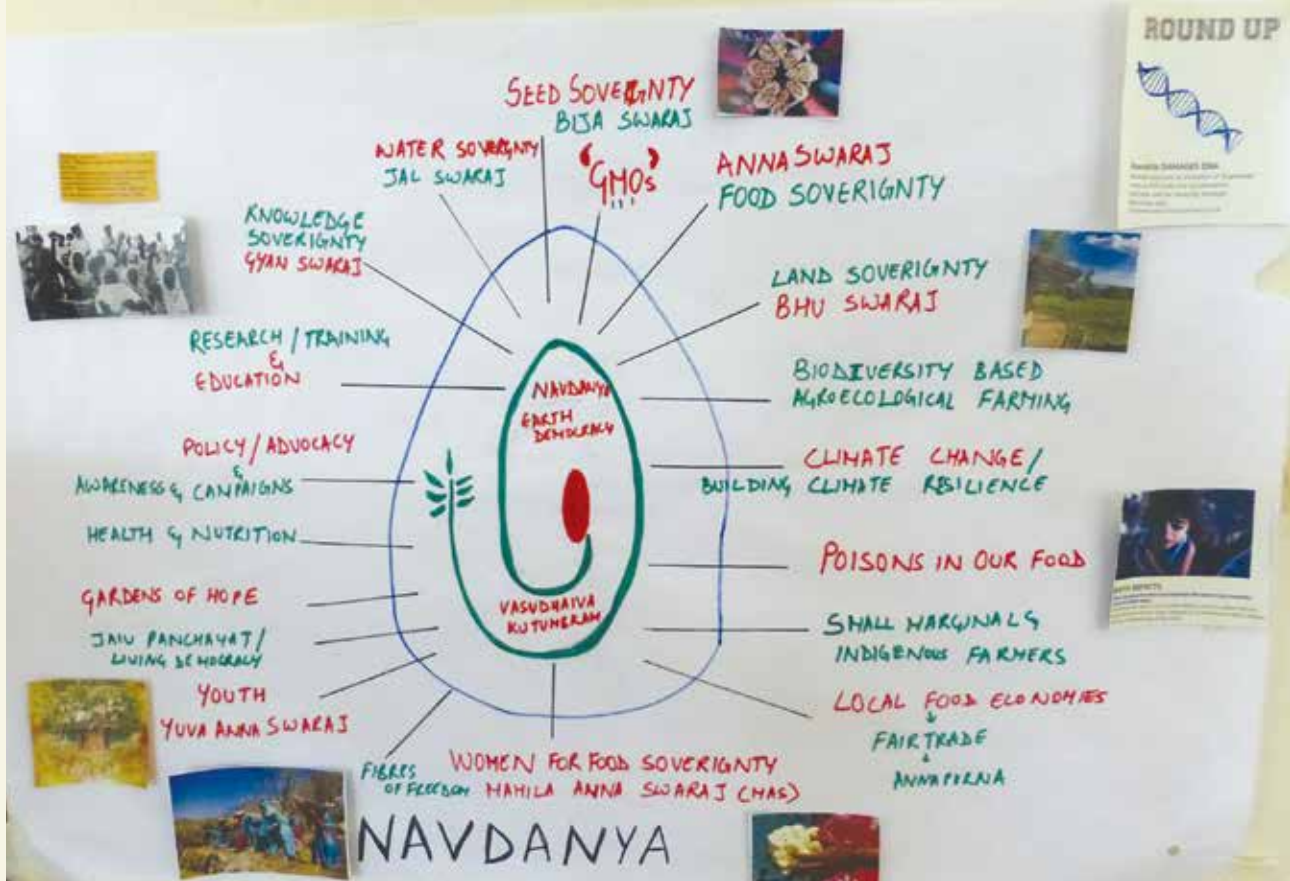
### Korean Women Peasant Association

This initiative aimed to spread agroecology among women farmers in Korea and Southeast Asia. The successful strategies used were: 1) setting up demonstration fields that show agroecological practices and 2) training in agroecological practices and principles for women farmers, including overseas training in Thailand and Indonesia.

One of the challenges faced by this collaborative was the lack of facilities to collect and store local seeds. To overcome this challenge, KWPA established 12 locations around the country for this purpose. Another challenge was low public awareness of agroecology. In an effort to address this, KWPA conducted fact-finding missions to analyze the current situation of agroecology

in Korea. They identified obstacles to, and potential opportunities for amplifying agroecology. The obstacles that were identified included sexual discrimination against women farmers, a government driven by corporate interests, and a society in which agroecology is not generally valued. These analyses helped to design targeted awareness-raising campaigns and training activities.

There were many lessons to be learned from their work. One memorable lesson was the importance of women gaining confidence in their ability to work with agroecology through exchange with other women farmers. This was evident during the training in Thailand, where women significantly built their self-confidence through contact with Thai women farmers. Another important finding for KWPA was how agroecology can help to overcome sexual discrimination, especially when trainings are organized with continuity, and when practical training is combined with political training.



## Navdanya (India)

This AEF-funded program in India is built on the longstanding work of Navdanya, which originally started working on seed sovereignty and then evolved to working with food sovereignty, water sovereignty, and knowledge sovereignty. They call these different topics ‘Earth Democracy’.

Women are the focus of much of the work in Navdanya. The program, ‘women for food sovereignty’, sought to provide space for women to influence decision-making about farming.

For example, women farmers had been selling kidney beans for a very low price to traders. As part of this project, Navdanya worked with them to identify, grow and conserve traditional varieties of beans, and supported the women in processing the food they grew. The women then began to sell their value added produce in the local market and

formed ‘food circles’ to circumvent the traders and further strengthened the local economy.

The project also included a campaign against the herbicide Roundup (a trademarked chemical pesticide), which has wiped out entire stretches of bamboo plantations in Andhra Pradesh. Navdanya is now fighting genetically-modified (GM) bananas and brinjal (eggplant). The biggest problem, however, is BT cotton. The campaign, called ‘Fibres of Freedom’, includes actions to establish several seed banks in order to conserve the seeds of local cotton varieties.

A lesson learned from Navdanya is the importance of involving both producers and co-producers (connecting producers and consumers). Another take-away message from their presentation was that promoting home gardens near women’s homes, as well as near schools or other forms of collective property, was an effective way to involve women in agroecology.



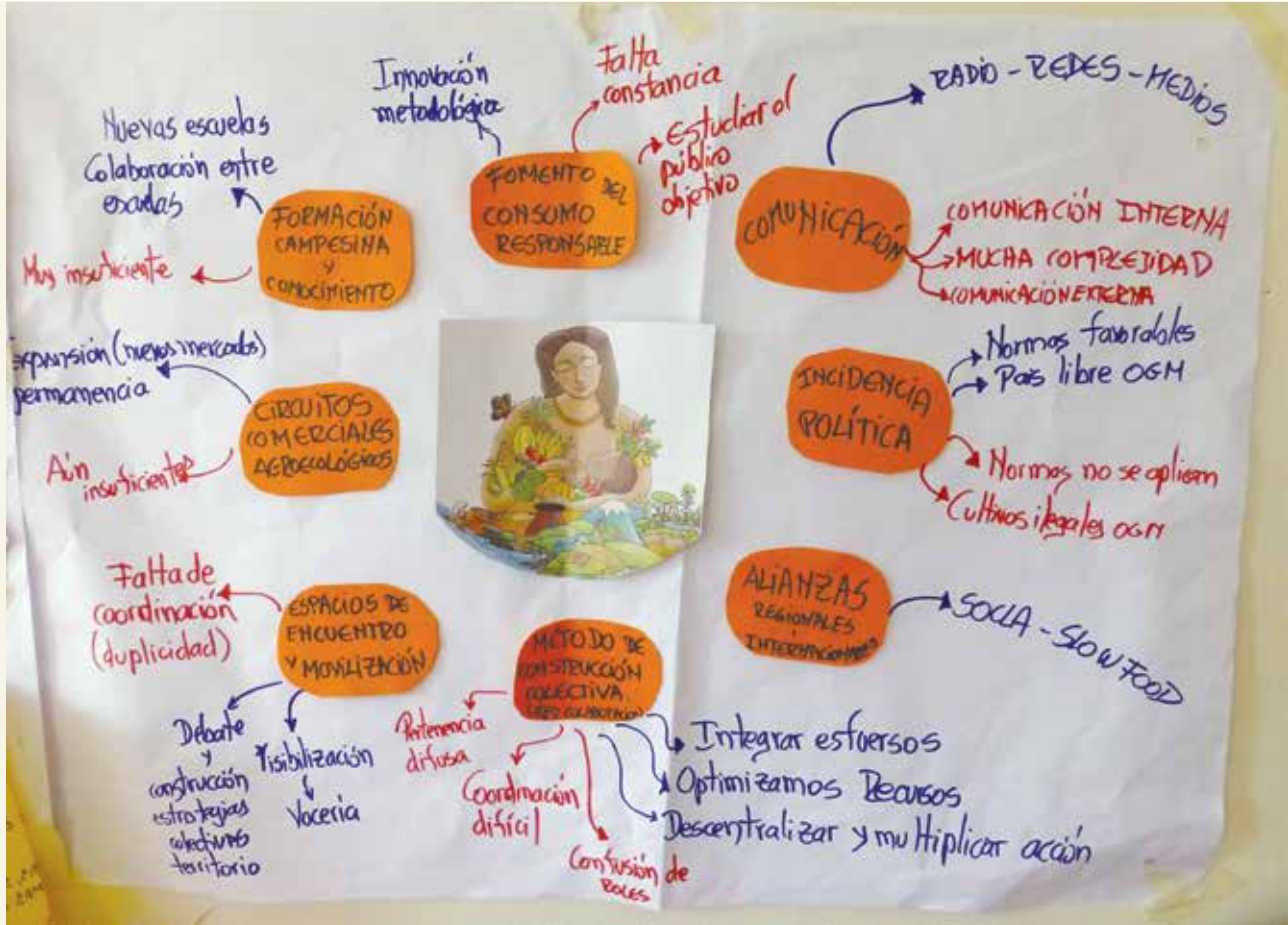
## Colectivo Agroecológico (Ecuador)

The Colectivo Agroecológico consists of approximately 20 organizations that have come together to promote food sovereignty and to regain control over the agricultural system. They have a special focus on reclaiming local sovereignty over water and land. The group is comprised of consumers, producers, NGOs, and communication organizations. Their main strategy is the collective construction of agroecological commercial circuits and

responsible consumption based on regional alliances, linkages, and movement-building.

This group has organized a nation-wide campaign to create ‘community baskets’ that bring healthy foods to low income urban families, who then collectively purchase these baskets. The families involved now spend up to 80% less on their food than they used to, and the food available through this commercial circuit is organic and of top quality.

Collaboration among groups working towards the same goal was more effective when each group put forth their own economic resources.



Furthermore, the farmers get up to 40% more for their produce.

Working with youth through agroecology schools is a vital part of the work. Agroecology schools are spaces where youth and others can talk about issues that concern them, and it is this dialogue which makes them very different from many regular schools. Interest in attending these schools is high as there are many young people who want to return to the rural areas and engage in agroecology.

One of the biggest challenges for the Colectivo is the complexity of working with so many different actors. It was tempting to reduce the structure to a hierarchical model, but the organizations decided to maintain a horizontal collaboration by minimizing institutional interests, logos and egos. One of the lessons learned was that collaboration among groups working towards the same goal was more effective when each group put forth their own economic resources, rather than actions being

dependent on external resources.

A second challenge is the complexity of communication among so many groups and individuals. Attempts are being made to minimize confusion and maximize coordination. A third challenge is the Ecuadorian context of the expansion of monocultures, mining and seed privatization that makes it difficult to keep momentum in the agroecology movement. Legislation in favor of peasant farmers exists, but it is generally not implemented in practice. Nevertheless, one of the more successful strategies used by the Colectivo was to engage in dialogue with local government about existing laws and to educate local people about their rights. Finally, the context sometimes helps, however tragic the circumstances may be. The earthquake in Ecuador in April 2016 was a major tipping point for the group - many people saw that the only way to not be vulnerable to food insecurity was to organize around agroecology.

## Desarrollo Económico y Social de Los Mexicanos Indígenas, A.C. (DESMI, A.C.)

DESMI, A.C. is a church-based, civil society organization in Mexico that supports communities working for food sovereignty. DESMI, A.C. work is rooted in the struggle for indigenous autonomy. They adhere to the indigenous vision of *buen vivir* (living well) and respect for nature.

DESMI, A.C. has created community committees with local coordinators that seek to respond to the needs of the communities with specific actions and projects. Some of these projects include, for example, work with the milpa intercropping system of maize, pumpkin and beans (the basis of the Mexican agroecosystem and diet, also referred to as ‘three sisters’), the establishment of tree nurseries to provide fruit for local consumption, and the production of varieties of mushrooms that are disappearing due to climate change. DESMI, A.C. also organized exchange visits among farmers to increase knowledge-sharing. These visits helped to show the value of indigenous knowledge and have fostered increased appreciation of local food.

In Mexico, a bio-safety and biotechnology bill was passed, which permits experiments with genetically modified organisms. In response, DESMI, A.C. informed communities about these new laws that favor Monsanto and other large transnational companies, and helped farmers get organized to defend their ancestral seeds and ways of producing food.



DESMI, A.C. has learned three main lessons from their work. The first is that broad alliances of communities and civil society organizations are necessary for effective advocacy. Second, that it is better not to be dependent on external funding. While they are appreciative of the funding they have received, they are working to be financially sustainable and independent. And finally, the third lesson learned is that they have affirmed their strategic choice to organize around respect for nature and caring for the earth, and to resist policies that do not protect indigenous peoples' rights.

# OUR LAND OUR BUSINESS!

Land Grabs

Opening developing countries' markets PESTICIDES, FERTILISER, CHEMICAL INPUTS

COMMERCIALIZING SEEDS ... SEED LAWS, HARMONIZATION ...

WORLD BANK'S DOING BUSINESS RANKINGS... SCORING COUNTRIES ON WHAT THEY ARE LIKE TO DO BIZ WITH.

## #WORLDVS BANK

Farmer groups, Trade Unions, CSOs, CBos ... over 280 signatories!

OBJECTIVE: END Doing Biz Rankings & similar Index EBA (ENABLING THE BIZ OF AGRICULTURE) - Create policy space for multi-stake holders to develop a.g. policies

that support small holder farmers, agroecology, land rights, st. to seeds! ...

## Successful Strategies

RESEARCH, COMMUNICATIONS, REFRAMING THE DEBATE, PROVIDE A PLATFORM TO IMPACTED VOICES IN WASHINGTON DC., SIMULTANEOUS MOBILIZATION IN 20 DIFFERENT CITIES, IDENTIFY MULTIPLE PRESSURE POINTS... DONORS OF THE EBA, HIJACK BANK'S ANNUAL MTGS IN PERU !!

### MAIN LESSONS

- DIVERSIFY THE COALITION
- A LOOSE COALITION, UTILIZING SKILLS OF ALL PARTNERS
- ACCOUNTABILITY TO THOSE IMPACTED
- SOCIAL MEDIA #WORLDVS BANK
- RESEARCH TO DEBUNK THE CLAIMS & OFFER ALTERNATIVES! • BETTER STORY TELLING!

Oakland Institute, with CICODEV Africa, CNOP, Green Scenery, Ekta Parishad, SMNE, INSAF (international)

The organizations in this collaborative seek to create political space for multiple actors to engage in agricultural policy development that supports smallholder farmers and favors agroecology, land rights and the right to seeds. The collaborative set up the 'Our Land, Our Business' campaign, which is aimed at ending the World Bank's Doing Business rankings and its Enabling the Business of Agriculture index. These ranking systems reward countries for supporting regulations that have weak labor standards or environmental protection and provide easy access for corporate pillaging and land grabs. The related social media campaign was very successful. The hashtag #WorldVsBank became popular on Twitter.

Some successful strategies for this campaign included carrying out independent research, designing communication interventions, attempting to reframe the debate on the topic, and providing a platform for impacted people to express themselves in Washington D.C. Other successful strategies included simultaneous mobilization of people around the campaign in 20 different cities, and identifying multiple pressure points to try to end the use of these World Bank rankings and directly addressing donors that fund the Enabling Business in Agriculture project. Lastly, the collaborative also found that organizing a meeting parallel to the 2015 World Bank annual meeting was successful in strengthening their campaign because it received overwhelming media attention and made many new people aware of the issue.

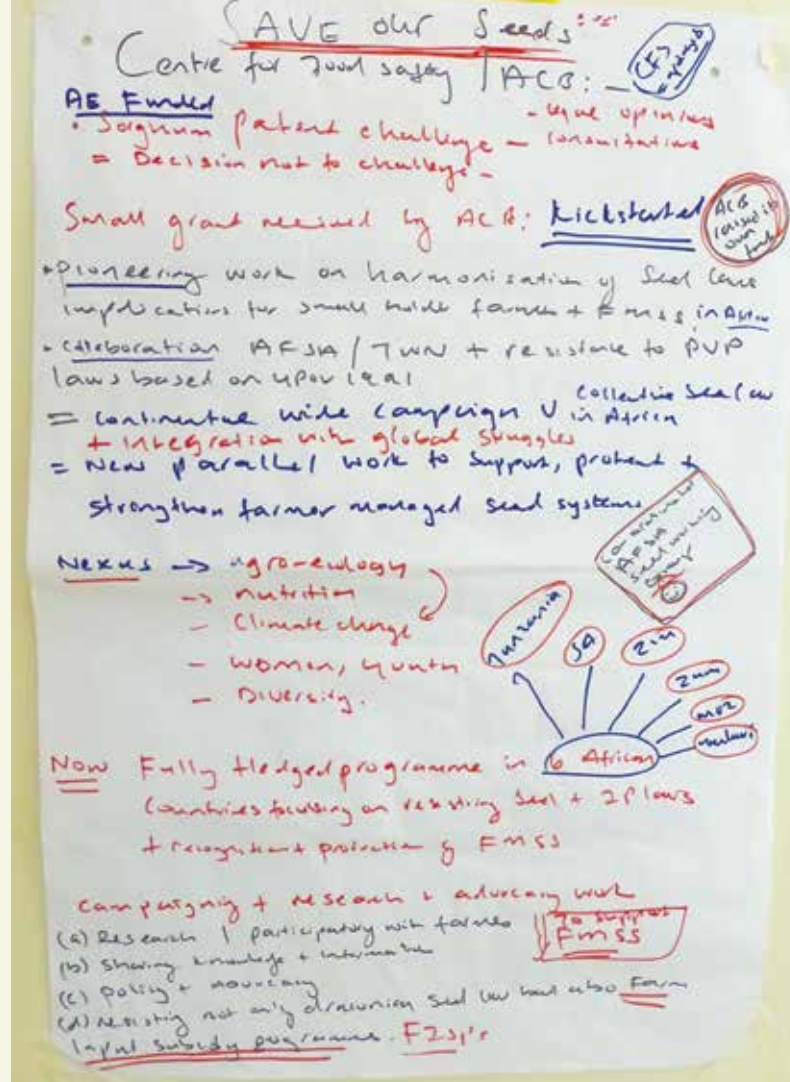
Lessons learned included the importance of 1) diversifying the coalition, 2) having a loosely established coalition, 3) utilizing the skills of all

partners, 4) creating accountability to those impacted, 5) using social media and research to debunk the claims made by agribusiness, and 6) perhaps most importantly, offering alternatives! “We have to drag Dracula into the sunlight, but after we have done that, we need to give solutions. We need to show how it can be done differently,” said Anuradha Mittal of the Oakland Institute.

## Center for Food Safety (CFS), with the African Centre for Biosafety (ACB) (Africa)

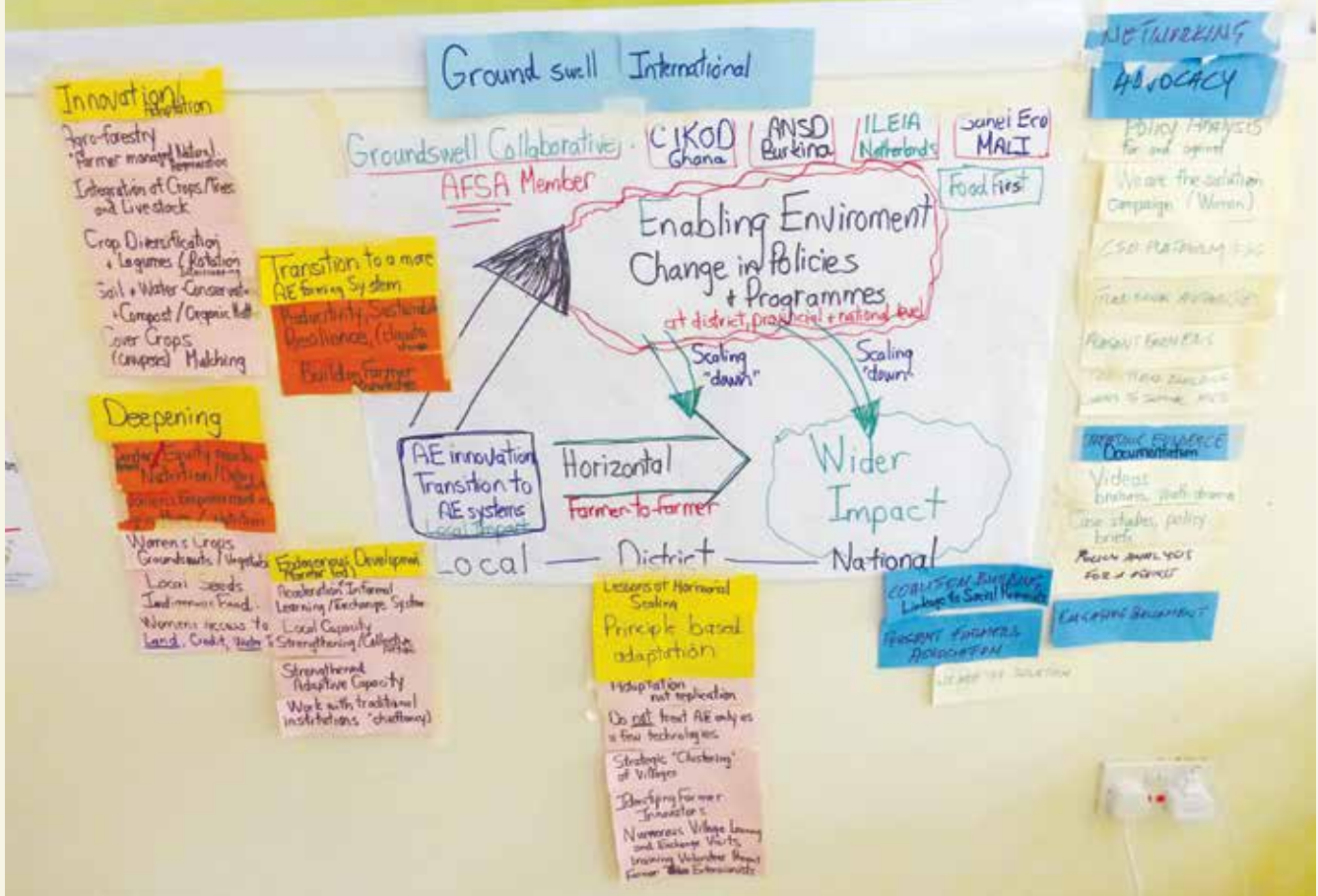
This collaborative focuses on legal challenges to intellectual property rights related to seed and seed patent regimes. The collaborative came together to contest a sorghum patent in the courts, but unfortunately discovered that nothing could actually be done due to a treaty prohibiting the blocking or revoking of the patent. Therefore, the collaborative then shifted focus and started long-term work to oppose the seed policies and plant variety protection laws that have negative implications for smallholder farmers. This shift led to broader work in Africa on farmer-managed seed systems. Together with AFSA and Third World Network (TWN), this collaborative now has full-fledged programs in six African countries: Tanzania, South-Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Mozambique and Malawi. They are engaged in campaigns, research, and advocacy work to resist dangerous seed laws and to recognize and protect farmer-managed seed systems. The work is located in the nexus of agroecology, nutrition, climate change, women and youth.

One lesson learned was that these activities were possible thanks to the flexible attitude on the part of the



donors, who had worked with them during the shift in the program’s focus from the original lawsuit to longer-term, broader work. From the collaborative’s perspective, donors shouldn’t focus too much on quantitative results, but instead focus on developing a trust-based relationship with the collaboratives.

These activities were possible thanks to the flexible attitude on the part of the donors.



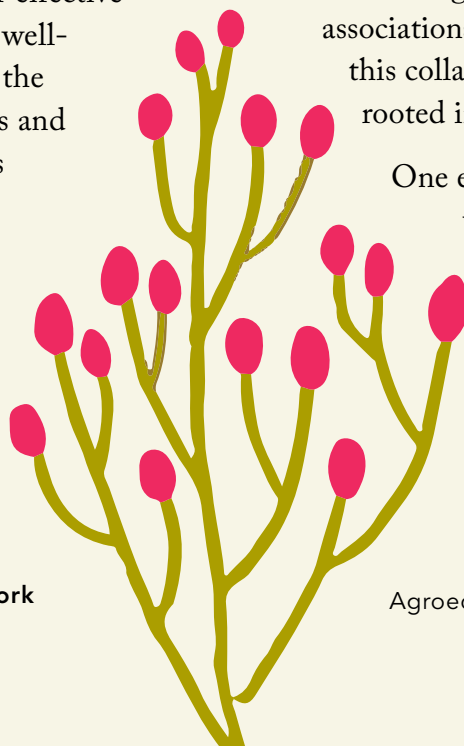
## Groundswell International with CIKOD, Sahel Eco, ANSD, Food First, ILEIA (West Africa)

This collaborative brings together groups that work on local and agroecological solutions for farming systems challenges in the West African region, with international groups who work on documentation and advocacy. The strategic starting point is that it is important to have practical, relatively well-scaled experiences to demonstrate that agroecology works. Peter Gubbels said, “For effective amplification, we need to have well-documented practical work on the ground, support farmer systems and learn from them, and find ways to leverage for wider systems change. Many campaigns are based on resistance, which is necessary, but must go forward and present well-evidenced alternatives.”

The collaborative works on

three levels. At the local level, they are engaged in innovation of agroecological practices and transitioning towards agroecological production systems. They do this by increasing productivity, sustainability, resilience to climate change and farmer-to-farmer learning. At the district and provincial level, they work to create an environment that enables change in policies and programs. At the national level, they aim to have a broader impact by networking, advocacy, documentation, legislative engagement, coalition building and the strengthening of peasant farmer associations. An important principle for this collaborative is that change must be rooted in the local context.

One example of their work is a video for national television in which peasants spoke about agroecological practices, and in which farmers, women and scientists are interviewed. The journalist who made the video won a





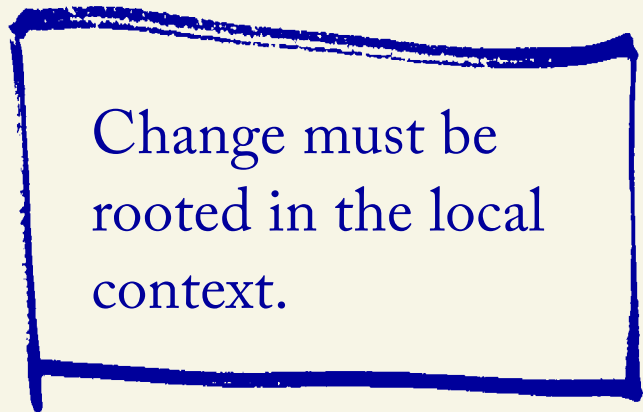
national prize and the government took notice. Through an ILEIA-facilitated training in systematization of their field experience, the collaborative **documented** what made their past strategies to amplify agroecology successful. They also established seed banks to ensure the availability of local seeds and eliminate the demand for GM seeds. Another strategy is to not only talk about indigenous foods, but also to organize around thematic gatherings, such as food festivals, to promote these foods.

One lesson learned from this work includes that to spread agroecological practices, practitioners must not fall into the same scaling strategies that have always been used; agroecological practices have to be adapted to different types of knowledge, communities, and environments. It is not enough to take a successful example and replicate it. Farmers can, instead, be encouraged to adapt successful practices according to their own needs and ambitions.

In addition to horizontal and vertical spreading of agroecology, this collaborative has realized that the agroecological transition also requires a *deepening* of agroecology, or going a step further. Two examples were provided:

- Gender equity: implementing new practices does not automatically mean that the position of women is improved, so the practices need to be accompanied by strengthened access to and control over resources, and rights for women. Therefore, the collaborative supports the women-led, 'We are the Solution' campaign.
- Nutrition: at least one third of children in the Sahel are malnourished; in Niger, this figure is one half. Nutrition merits special focus and goes beyond productivity or hunger. For this reason, the collaborative emphasizes nutrition in most of its work on agroecology.

This collaborative sees two major policy windows as opportunities for agroecology to gain support. First, that agroecology can be part of the solution to climate change, and second, that widespread adoption of agroecology could significantly reduce humanitarian aid expenses (currently at 1.8 billion USD per year).



## Asociación de Trabajadores del Campo (ATC) Nicaragua, CLOC-La Vía Campesina

The Association of Rural Workers (La Asociación de Trabajadores del Campo, ATC) is an organization that is made up of labor unions and cooperatives, including both small scale farmers with home gardens for their own consumption and farmers who produce crops like tobacco and are more integrated into markets. The union part of ATC is made up of men and women who work for companies in agribusiness. ATC facilitates the organization of these workers in the union, including trainings to empower their rights as workers. The cooperative part of the association is composed of small farmers who have home gardens for their own consumption, and engage in sale of surplus production. In addition to these two aspects, the organization also includes youth and women through the Rural Youth Movement and Rural Women's Movement, thus ensuring the continuity of the



peasant struggle through the next generation of peasant farmers, as well as through the empowerment of rural women.

For many years, ATC has trained its members through technical and vocational courses. Through this process they have produced lawyers, agricultural technicians, technicians in organizational management, cooperative management, labor certification and other training programs that aim to strengthen the organization. In addition to technical training, the ATC runs political formations (including leadership training) for the ATC base and the CLOC-Vía Campesina Central American region. These educational activities are carried out in either the Francisco Morazan School located in the capital

Managua, or the Rodolfo Sánchez Bustos School located in Matagalpa, in the northern region of Nicaragua. Both of these schools were initiated by ATC over 38 years ago with the support of the Sandinista Revolution.

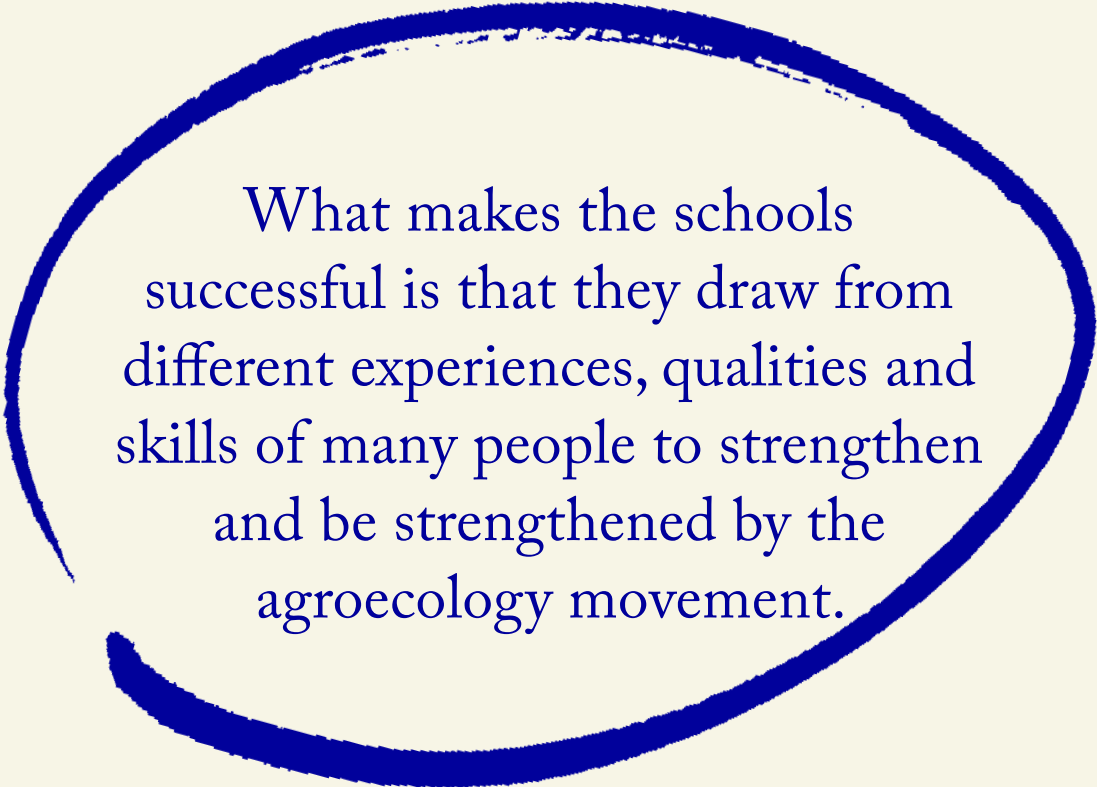
As a founding member of La Vía Campesina, ATC has been actively involved with agroecology and food sovereignty movements at the international level for multiple decades. To strengthen the movement, the organization proposed the creation of the Latin American Agroecology Institute (IALA) in Santo Tomás, Chontales. This school is part of a network of agroecology schools in Latin America promoted by the Coordinadora Latinoamericana de Organizaciones

del Campo (CLOC, translated as: Latin American Coordinator of Rural Organizations) of La Via Campesina as a way to popularize agroecology from a holistic perspective, in a way that responds to the interests of peasants. The school provides information on issues such as access to land, native seeds, and food system policies. It raises discussions on 'green capitalism' and other false solutions. ATC also works to amplify agroecology by promoting horizontal, farmer-to-farmer training.

ATC strives to be an inclusive organization that incorporates young people and women in the coordination, facilitation, and promotion of agroecology. What makes the schools successful is that they draw from different experiences, qualities and skills of many people to strengthen and be strengthened by the agroecology movement.

## Indigenous Partnership for Agrobiodiversity and Food Sovereignty, with NESFAS (India)

This collaborative works with indigenous peoples in India on agroecology. Besides the Indigenous Partnership and NESFAS, other collaborating partners include Slow Food International, Bioversity International, CINE, McGill University, Vanuatu Cultural Center, IKAP and IMPECT. The work is based on principles of respect for indigenous views and knowledge systems, as well as their unique traditions, culture and values. With the support of a number of national and international partners, including the AgroEcology Fund, the collaborative organized a five-day event called Indigenous Terra Madre (ITM), in November 2015. This event was a celebration of biocultural diversity, a forum for reflection on indigenous



What makes the schools successful is that they draw from different experiences, qualities and skills of many people to strengthen and be strengthened by the agroecology movement.

# THE CONTEXT

## NE INDIA (NE):

- 235 TRIBES
- 76% BIODIVERSITY OF INDIA
- 11% WATER
- MAJORITY OF POPULATION LIVING IN SYNC WITH NATURE (UNIQUE CULTURE, TRADITIONS & IDENTITY)



## INDIGENOUS TERRA MADRE 2015

- Shillong, 3-7 Nov 2015
- 606 delegates
- 62 countries
- 170 indigenous communities
- Six plenary sessions
- 14 thematic sessions
- Taste workshops
- Compos program
- Field visit a
- Food festival & ABD fair
- 70,000 footfall

CELEBRATION OF BIOCULTURAL DIVERSITY  
 REFLECTION ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES AT LOCAL & GLOBAL L  
 SHOWCASE DIVERSITY IN FOOD & CULTURE, esp NE INDIA  
 PARTICIPATION OF MARGINALISED GROUPS

MOVEMENT LED BY THE COMMUNITIES → 41 ITM VILLAGES  
 SUPPORTED BY GOVERNMENT AND INT'L PARTNERS  
 MOBILISED BY NESTAS, INDIGENOUS PARTNERSHIP, SLOW FOOD INT'L

issues at the local and global level, and a showcase for the diverse foods and cultures of India and abroad.

A total of 606 delegates from 62 countries participated in the ITM 2015, which was co-hosted by 41 indigenous communities. This gathering highlighted the power of indigenous communities and professionals when they work together. It resulted in a declaration calling upon governments to support agroecology, and the Indian government stating that they are, in principle, committed to agroecology. The declaration specifically strengthened the Indian government's intent to create agroecology schools and agroecology departments in universities. Follow-up will be needed to ensure that these plans come to fruition.

The interaction between researchers, communities and activists was very useful; these different sectors all had valuable contributions to the dialogue. The researchers provided scientific insight and credibility, the communities brought knowledge from practice, and the activists raised public awareness. One of the obstacles faced by the collaborative was that the terminology used in agroecology is not always well understood by the indigenous people. Also, it appeared that donors' perspectives were different from the reality on the ground. The collaborative identified the need to: 1) understand different cultures in order to strengthen agroecological management of natural resources, 2) create tools for problem solving, such as dialogue, in order to harmonize science and practice, 3) involve youth and women, and 4) create a research group for further, in-depth research.

## OUTCOMES

- DECLARATION CALLING UPON GOV. TO SUPPORT AE
- GOVT in principle committed towards AE  
→ Organic State
- PLAN TO DEVELOP AE schools with support of Govt } support needed
- OFFER TO CREATE UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT (NETU) }

## STRATEGY

ITM AS LEVERAGE POINT TO BRING TOGETHER DIFFERENT PLAYERS:



### CHALLENGES

- Terminology
- Time, patience, resources
- Livelihood
- Conversion to organic

### INSIGHTS

- Deeper insight into indigenous culture is needed
- Tools for problem solving are needed → science & dialogue
- Involvement of youth & women
- Research group needed. (Itim?)

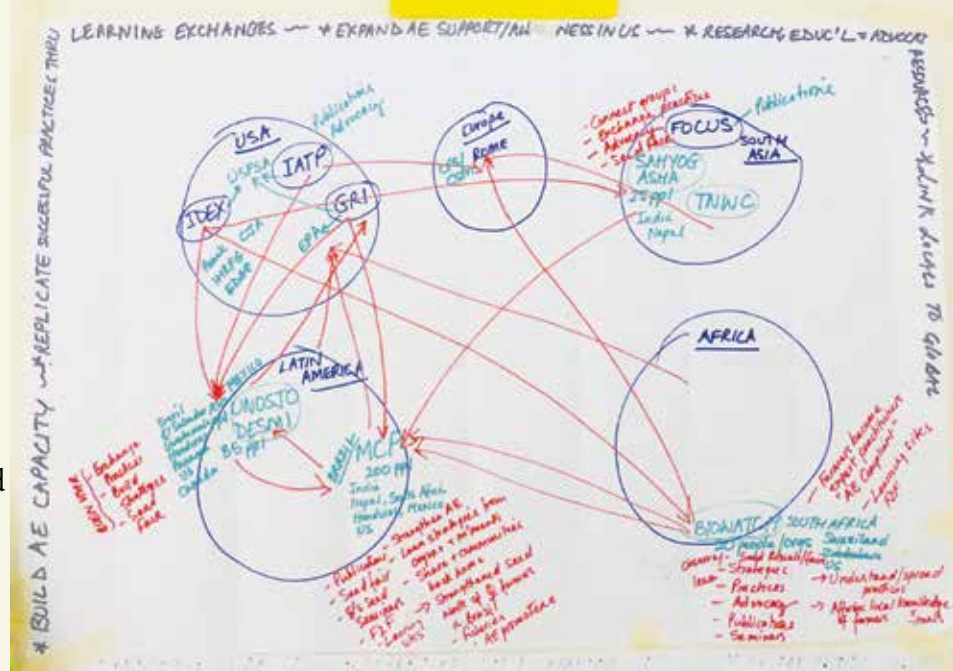


## Grassroots International, with IDEX, IATP, Focus on the Global South (USA/ international)

This collaborative grant was awarded to Grassroots International, which supports community-led solutions and movements worldwide. Grassroots International worked with IDEX (International Development Exchange), IATP (Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy) and Focus on the Global South and to amplify agroecology in multiple locations. The main strategies of this collaborative were capacity-building, replicating successful practices, awareness-raising in the USA, research, education, and advocacy. Activities organized and implemented by them included interactions such as seed fairs and farmer-to-farmer exchange visits on farms.

The challenges faced by this collaborative were associated with climate change effects on food production, politics that favor commercial farmers and undermine indigenous knowledge, a lack of technical resources, disinterest among the younger generations in agroecology and farming, and loss of seed diversity.

The collaborative has been able to raise visibility and awareness of the importance and potential of agroecology by showcasing best practices to government officials. They also set up traditional seed exhibitions, built a campaign against transnational seed companies with peasants at the forefront, and disseminated information on agroecology. Through training and practice and the creation of relevant spaces, farmers were also empowered to lobby parliamentarians.

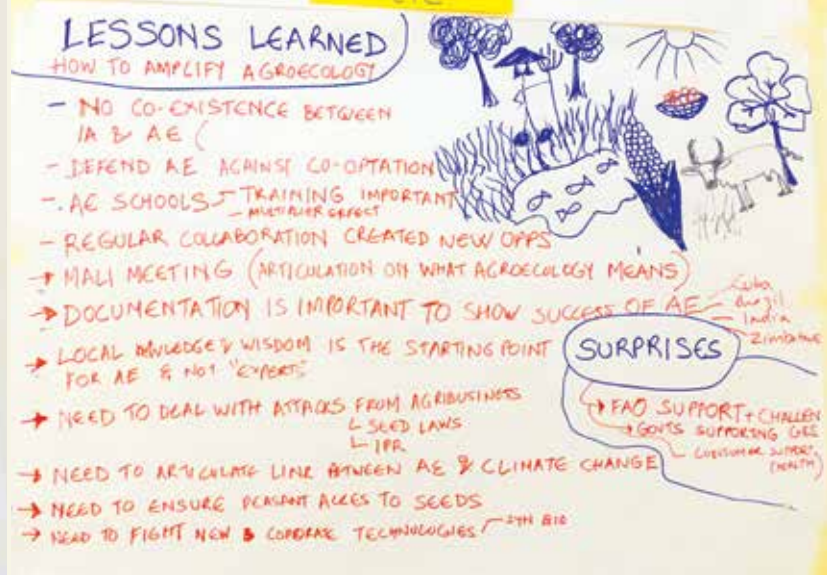


- CHALLENGES / LESSONS**
- How to continue imp. exchanges
  - Climate change/drought
  - Lack of political will
  - More support to big indusl. farmers
  - Undermining indig. traditional knowledge
  - Capacity
  - Resources
  - Youth interest
  - W's Resp. to put food on the table
  - Patriarchy
  - Men only participate in income-generating project
  - Loss of seed diversity
  - Public policies going backwards
  - Less support for farmers
- Learning exchanges highly effective**
- Seed rituals/fairs are good tools for showcasing good AE practices to Govt. officials
  - AE Practice influences politicians/officials
  - Builds public policies
  - LXs → puts peasant farmers' knowledge at forefront
  - Invite Parliamentarians to visit/see AE in a different way.
  - Highly effective to learn political context of diff. coun
  - Brings marginal groups to the Center
  - Media learns from LXs/practices/fairs
  - Profiles/dissemination
- Advocacy**
- Learning legislation in Country; defend local to build campaigns vs. seed Corporations
  - Annual March vs. Movements - organized by W farmers
  - W farmers lobby Parliament; give radio intervi
  - Lobby for right-based resources
  - CSEA/CPS - deep learning @ aggressiveness of Corps influencing FAO/UN; important to have Civil Society engagement to Counter. that forces

## La Via Campesina with GRAIN and ETC Group (international)

Although the organizations had informally worked together for years, this project, funded by the AgroEcology Fund, was the first time that La Via Campesina (LVC), GRAIN and ETC Group had an institutional commitment together.

The collaborative uses documentation to show the success of agroecology. For example, they produced a book on Cuba, and studies in Brazil, India, and Zimbabwe. Local knowledge and wisdom is the starting point of this work, not 'expert knowledge'. Strategically, this collaborative proposes to not just defend



agroecology, but also fight the industrial food system by resisting agribusiness, seed laws and intellectual property rights.

The collaborative considers training and pedagogical processes vital when strengthening the foundation of agroecology. The agroecology schools of LVC build consciousness and equip people to be activists in the agroecology movement. Many youth participants that have gone to agroecology schools have become facilitators afterwards.

Two examples of joint work were shared. Firstly, their work on seed law was presented. In many countries there is a push for new laws that criminalize seed saving by farmers while increasing the power of agribusiness corporations. GRAIN and LVC produced a booklet that highlights how the struggles to resist these laws and protect farmer seed systems are being fought in different countries. This booklet has been widely distributed in many languages and has become a mobilizing tool.

Another area of joint work was around food and climate change. The collaborative sought solid evidence that supports the idea that ‘farmers cool the world’. Through joint research, together with members of LVC, they concluded that if you count all the steps in food production, between 44% and 57% of all global emissions come from the industrial food system. These figures were tested and approved by academics.

The collaborative made a poster out of this, asking the world: Why is this not discussed? The back of the poster presents 5 steps to cool the planet and feed its people. As a result of this research the collaborative engaged in a series of meetings with other organizations addressing climate change, such as Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace, and discussed how to combine messages strategically.

There were also various unexpected outcomes. One was the support of FAO for agroecology and for LVC. This was a positive outcome, but also brought forth new challenges, for example the potential co-optation of the term ‘agroecology’. In addition, there was also surprising support for agroecology both from governments and from consumer organizations.

Through this project, many lessons were learned. It became clear to all that there can be no co-existence between industrial agriculture and agroecology. Therefore, activists must defend agroecology against co-optation because it should be a way to transform, rather than repair, the industrialized food system. The Nyéléni Declaration of the International Forum on Agroecology articulated this clearly, and described what agroecology means for peasants. Henk Hobbelink of GRAIN said, “Seed laws and land grabbing show that co-existence is not possible. It is more like a state of war. We have to develop a narrative around this, and use the Nyéléni framework as a starting point.”

## The Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience with BEDE, GRAIN, FIRAB, LWA, Agronauten and ECVC (Europe/ international)

This collaborative was coordinated by the Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience (CAWR) of Coventry University. Their three main strategies were 1) research, learning exchanges and knowledge building, 2) supporting social movements and awareness-raising, and 3) collaboration and network building. They have been working on a number of initiatives and programs.

The collaborative worked to reshape narratives and frameworks around the 2015 COP21 climate negotiations in Paris, led by GRAIN. The Landworkers Alliance in the UK initiated a project to look at small farm productivity, particularly at vegetable farming, mixed farming and livestock farming. A research project explored the impact of overseas aid on agroecology and found that DFID,

Activists must defend agroecology against co-optation because it should be a way to transform, rather than repair, the industrialized food system.



the British Department for International Development, has spent less than 0.5% of their funding on agroecology.

One of the members of the collaborative, - AGRONAUTEN - worked with other actors such as URGENCI, the global network for Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), and did research about the current realities of CSAs in Europe. This co-inquiry was led by food producers and food consumers involved in different CSAs and findings have now been published in a [book](#) available on the web site of the collaborative.

In response to the way the concept of agroecology is being co-opted and changed by powerful actors, the collaborative produced a [film](#) on the contested meanings of agroecology, presenting farmers' voices and their views on agroecology. With ILEIA, the collaborative produced a [companion document](#) that highlights people in the global south sharing their perspectives on agroecology .

With the European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC) the collaborative engages in high level policy dialogues about the challenges of amplifying agroecology approaches within the European Union. The collaborative also engages in popular education and awareness-raising work on the importance of agricultural biodiversity for agroecology and the resilience of family farms to climate change. For example, the work of BEDE included the production of a film about the importance of millets (finger millet, foxtail millet, pearl millet...) in peasant cultures and food sovereignty in West Africa and South Asia.

This collaborative learned that for effective amplification it is necessary to: 1) have a strong network of partners promoting a transformative type of agroecology, not one that conforms to the status quo, 2) provide evidence of uptake, spread and benefits of agroecological innovations, 3) create a transnational community of practice for research and movement-building for an agroecology committed to food sovereignty, and 4) emphasize videos and multimedia as a strong mobilization strategy designed to reach out to many different people and places.

The collaborative reported that the flexibility of the donor was very positive in their experience. A framework was agreed upon by the AgroEcology Fund in which the organizations had the space to work independently. A challenge that still remains for this collaborative is the need for more money to finalize video films and also publish, in print and multimedia formats, powerful mobilization tools and lessons learned.

## AFSA with COPAGEN, PROPAC, COMPAS Africa, PELUM, ESAFF (Africa)

This presentation was introduced with an analogy of AFSA as a termite mound, which is a key feature of African landscapes, particularly in dry areas. John Wilson of AFSA described the termite mound. “Imagine yourself in a house, and there’s lot of thunder and lightning, and it’s getting increasingly more intense. You have a tin roof onto which the rain is pounding and getting heavier. The storm continues for 45 minutes or so. Then, as quickly as it started, it stops. You walk outside, you smell the fresh air, there are birds darting about, animals running around, people dashing here and there; creatures everywhere catching flying ants, termites! People gather them and cook them in their kitchens.

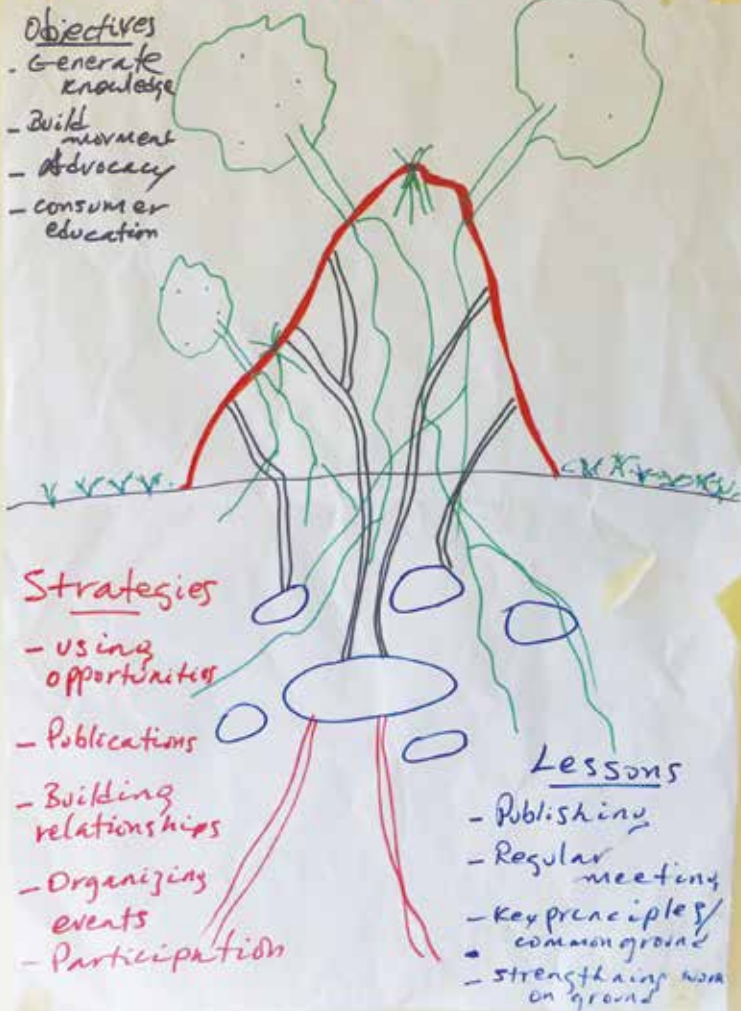
However, one or two of these termites manage to escape from this myriad of predators. They go underground; it is a king and a queen. The first thing they do is breed lots of worker termites so that they can make a garden. They send the termites to dig deep down to collect water and



For effective amplification it is necessary to create a transnational community of practice for research and movement-building for an agroecology committed to food sovereignty.



# AFSA



to bring up minerals, and to collect organic matter for compost. Through all these foraging activities they create lots of channels, which enable excellent air circulation and constant temperature. A bird flies past and drops its manure which hides a seed of a fruit it has eaten. The seed germinates and the plant grows. Grass seeds blow in, germinate and grow. Everything flourishes on the fertile, well-aerated ground they have created. And slowly but surely, the termite mound develops this incredible diversity. If you walk the landscapes of dryland Africa, you will see these mounds, full of biodiversity and abundant growth. If you have ever been flying and look at areas that have been cleared, the darker spots are where the mounds used to be.”

AFSA believes that, like the work of the termites, there is a need to bring together experiences as one solid voice and thus create a coherent foundation of evidence that validates agroecological knowledge. Their objectives are to generate knowledge, build a movement, advocate, and provide consumer education. AFSA has multiple strategies to achieve these objectives. First, they identify and use opportunities when they arise. For example, they have already produced several case studies in booklet form and presented them at FAO’s Regional Agroecology Symposium for Africa. AFSA has put a lot of effort into building relationships. Like termites, as alluded to above in the analogy, AFSA wants to create ‘fertile ground’ for a thriving constellation of networks that spans from grassroots to continental levels. AFSA has a set of core principles to provide the common ground that facilitates working well together. AFSA finds that it is important to have regular meetings to build trust within the collaborative.

Another lesson learned was that if they speak to politicians about the culture of foods, about the food they grew up with, and about the food their mother cooked for them, then they can

Grass seeds blow in, germinate and grow. Everything flourishes on the fertile, well-aerated ground they have created. And slowly but surely, the termite mound develops this incredible diversity.

create a point of entry from which to begin to converse about agroecology.

## Reflections

At the end of the first day, participants reflected on what they learned about the amplification of agroecology. The reflections revealed that the poster sessions generated a renewed sense of the importance of context. Each collaborative is working in the way that makes most sense for their own place, people and focus. Another insight that emerged was that flexibility, both on the side of the grantees and of donors, was crucial for facilitating successful amplification of agroecology. Since agroecology itself is a continuous transition, adapting to context and circumstance, it makes sense that effective funding of agroecology also must also be adaptable.

Other reflections about amplifying agroecology were that various poster presentations showed it is crucial to have a two pronged strategy; on one side working to stop developments

### Learn more

Click here to see the complete list of collaboratives funded by the AgroEcology Fund in [Round 1 \(2012\)](#), [Round 2 \(2014\)](#) and [Round 3 \(2016\)](#).



Each collaborative is working in the way that makes most sense for their own place, people and focus.

that hinder agroecology, and on the other side building positive examples, practices, and trainings to amplify agroecology. Finally, as agroecology is based on a completely different set of values about food, nature and people than that of the industrial food system, framing and messaging emerged as central elements in amplifying agroecology.

Various speakers remarked that the group needed to spend time developing a shared concept of what agroecology is and what 'amplifying' agroecology truly means. Time was created on day three to respond to this request.

# 3 DAY TWO, MAY 11: Learning from the field



Joining forces with Ugandan farmers in defense of agroecology. Photo: Rucha Chitnis

## 3.1 Objectives and process

The objectives of the second day were to explore what amplifying agroecology looks like in practice, to participate in a shared experience, and to get to know the on-the-ground reality of Uganda. First, Agnes Mirembe and Hakim Baliraine from the Eastern and Southern Africa Small Scale Farmers Forum (ESAFF) gave us background information about agroecology in Uganda. The group then explored St. Jude Family Projects, and went on a field trip to visit three additional farms. The day concluded with presentations by four farmers about their initiatives to amplify agroecology and with reflections by the group. An engaging morning *mística* was led by La Via Campesina.

## 3.2 Field visits

### Presentation of St. Jude Family Projects

Josephine Kiiza, the co-founder of St. Jude Family Projects and its Agroecology Centre, presented the history of the center. Born in times of violent conflict, the idea for the center came to Josephine after she and her husband fled from the city of Kampala to a piece of family land. They started farming with one pig and lived in a very small house with their children. They learned to make compost with manure and quickly began to teach other people. This initiative grew in to the demonstration center that St. Jude's is today, which serves as a catalyst for agroecological change.



Josephine Kiiza: "More investment is needed in agroecological education". Photo: Rucha Chitnis

The farm covers about twenty acres of land featuring different activities, including biogas production systems, crop production of different species, animal rearing, apiary, and fish farming using agroecological practices. The family organizes seed production and management projects, gives trainings on agroecological practices, guides farmer groups through the process of seed production and varietal improvement, supports the establishment and operationalization of community seed banks at group level and community level, and, lastly, encourages farmers in utilizing indigenous, traditional and local knowledge.

What the Kiiza family has learned over the years is that there is a need for strong institutions to invest in the integration of agroecology in education. Josephine emphasized that farmers have a lot of useful information that can be used to amplify agroecology, and it is important to find a way to tap into that knowledge.

## Field visit to Senfilio Mutebi

Mr. Mutebi owns five acres of land that he and his family use for crop production, animal rearing, fish ponds, and tree planting. In order to maintain soil fertility and food security, Mr. Mutebi draws on the indigenous knowledge of his ancestors and on traditional practices such as intercropping and mulching. Beyond crops for consumption, Mr. Mutebi also plants fruit trees and multipurpose trees. This practice helps protect crops from pest damage and overexposure to the sun while strengthening their root system. In the last 30 years he has had enough food for his family, as well as money to cover other expenses such as school fees.

One of the obstacles to amplifying agroecology encountered by Mr. Mutebi is how to pass his knowledge onto the next generation. He sees that there is little interest in the younger generation to learn about farming practices. Furthermore, there is no documentation of the practices that he uses and he thinks that it would be helpful to have that in order to transfer knowledge more effectively.

Farmers have a lot of useful information that can be used to amplify agroecology, so it is important to find a way to tap into that.

This Ugandan farmer demonstrates to the group that trees not only serve as food but also provide material for clothing.

Photo: ILEIA



## Field visit to Fred Gwayambade Mukasa

After Mr. Gwayambade retired from his job in the city, he came back to his family farm to transform it into a living example of agroecological practices and principles. With his family, he intercropped banana, coffee, pumpkin, yam, beans, sugar cane, and various multipurpose trees. They also keep bees and harvest honey, store and filter water, make biogas from the manure of one cow, compost, and make organic pesticides and herbicides from local plants.

By carefully maximizing the efficiency of water and soil nutrients, this family farm outshines the productivity of his more conventional neighbors, who initially thought he was crazy to try to farm in this way. This changed when Mr. Gwayambade's practices proved to be effective, particularly when he managed to significantly improve the quality of the originally poor soil.

The family highlighted the importance of local trees and crops both for balancing the agroecosystem as well as preserving cultural heritage.

The family highlighted the importance of local trees and crops both for balancing the agroecosystem as well as preserving cultural heritage. One example was a tree from which bark is harvested and pounded into a supple fabric used for ceremonial purposes. The transfer of the knowledge about harvesting and processing to younger generations is important to keep the tradition alive. Another approach which Mr. Gwayambade and his family strongly emphasized was the importance of adding value by processing raw goods. Unlike others, this family not only grows coffee, but also roasts, grinds and sells the processed product. The difference in income received by the producer between the raw and processed coffee is significant.

A Ugandan farmer explains his strategies.

Photo: Scott Fitzmorris



## 3.3 Presentations

### Presentation by Joseph Ssuuna (PELUM)

Back at St Jude's, farmer Joseph Ssuuna talked about the challenges he observed in Uganda to meet the the food needs of a growing population with limited and degraded farmland that is increasingly dominated by industrial monocultures. Many people go hungry due to the extreme difficulty in overcoming these challenges. All of this, he argued, points to the need for agricultural systems that can sustainably feed a growing population and conserve natural resources.

Joseph was introduced to agroecology by PELUM Association (Participatory Ecological Land Use Management), which gave him the opportunity to learn how to apply ecological principles and concepts to the design and management of sustainable agroecosystems. By working with PELUM, he learned how to apply ecology in agriculture so that his farm works as a system that combines several other sub-systems. He creates partnerships between the crops so that they exchange energy instead of competing for it. In summary, he promotes diversity in the farming system.

There are many challenges faced by Joseph and other PELUM farmers: 1) his two full time workers have had limited exposure to agroecological best practices, and he himself is not full-time on the farm, 2) the initial stages of agroecology, for example soil management, are very labor intensive, 3) pest and disease management is problematic, especially for the major cash crops, bananas



and coffee, and 4) there is limited support from government and no effective extension services.

Joseph did comment, however, that he and his family have more food from the farm than before. Adopting agroecological practices, especially diversification, has improved total farm output. Joseph is convinced that agroecology is crucial in the fight against hunger and malnutrition at the household, community and global levels. He recommended that more research and documentation be done on agroecological best practices and to increase lobbying for government support of agroecology. There should be a promotion of participatory, farmer-led approaches that integrate both new and traditional knowledge.

Planting a tree with Ugandan farmers. Photo: ILEIA



## Presentation by Catherine Kiwuka (NARO)

The National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO) engages in activities to ensure conservation, management and sustainable use of Uganda's plant genetic resources. They have set up community seed banks to preserve traditional bean varieties that were under threat. They found demand for these seed banks, but faced obstacles due to a low technical capacity to produce high quality seeds, as well as what seemed a lack of appreciation for the value of biodiversity.

The seed banks are community-driven efforts to improve on-farm conservation and sustainable usage of plant genetic resources. They aim to conserve crop genetic diversity in ways that increase food security and improve the health of the ecosystem. Furthermore, they empower farmer communities, as well as local and national institutions, to employ diversity-rich options to improve crop productivity and livelihoods. Their key activities are developing methods for assessing and securing local crop genetic diversity and enhancing farmers' and other stakeholders' capacity to manage on-farm diversity.

Questions that emerged from this presentation included doubts about how truly community-driven these initiatives truly are, the role of the government, and the relationship between the government and seed companies. Furthermore, concerns were raised about whether the current seed laws in Uganda actually help farmers and whether Uganda protects farmers' rights. Ms. Kiwuka responded that they try to empower farmers and that the seed banks are under the control of the government.





Farmer Jowelia Mukiibi: "We handle our husbands gently."  
Photo: ILEIA

## Presentation by John Kaganga (KEO)

Mr Kaganga, who works for the NGO, Kikandwa Environmental Organization (KEO), explained that the government in Uganda has begun to recognize agroecology. However, from his perspective, the problem is that not many people fully understand the concept of agroecology, and because of this lack of clarity, many individuals, corporations and government agencies are still focusing on production at the expense of sustainability. "We are trying to let the local farmer take the lead," Mr Kaganga said. He also expressed the problem that agroecology can be more expensive for the producer than conventional agriculture. His presentation raised objection to the latter point.

## Presentation by Jowelia Mukiibi, farmer

The fourth presentation was from a small-scale woman farmer whose family farm is located on the Masaka-Kampala road. Her family owns two cows, two calves, goats, chickens and ducks. They intercrop a variety of crops with bananas on quite barren land. Being on a hill, it is difficult to make terraces, but she made them anyway in order to avoid soil erosion. She also has many trees to retain soil and water. Ms. Mukiibi spoke of her experience with climate change, which has caused long droughts and sometimes very heavy rain. Her family set up systems to harvest and store water.

One notable question from the audience was in regard to how she works together with her husband. She answered that women in Uganda are slowly persuading their husbands to practice agroecology. Ms. Mukiibi said, "We handle our husbands gently. If what we are doing is effective, and the husbands see that, we can work well together." She also discussed the roles of men and women in the decision-making process. She stated that in the beginning of the year, she and her husband plan together about what they will produce and what they will sell. They work together in the fields, but in the end she is the accountant of the family.

Women in Uganda are slowly persuading their husbands to practice agroecology.

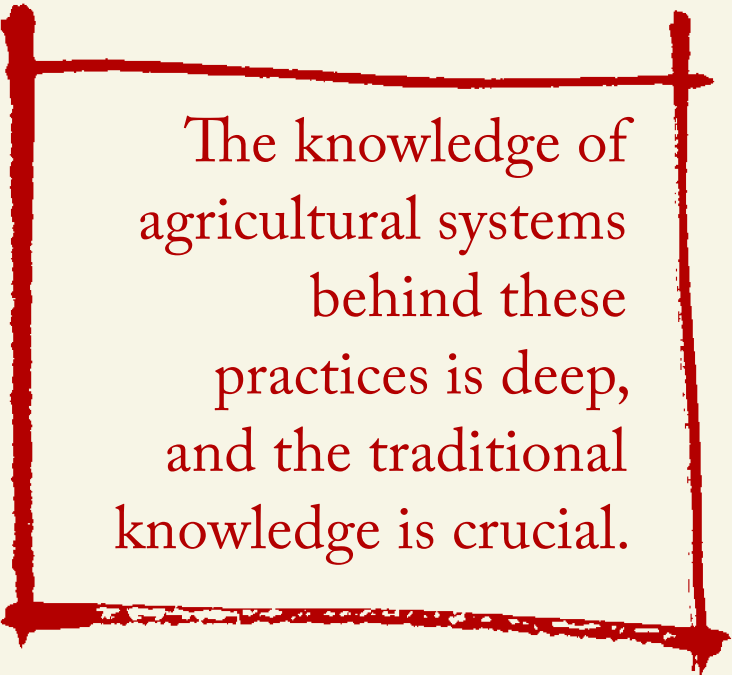


Finally, Ms. Mukiibi commented on seed laws in Uganda. She is concerned that the seeds that the government hands out are not adequate for her needs. She stated that it is very important to organize and defend the rights to say no to those seeds, and equally, to conserve the seeds that are adapted by the farmers to meet their needs. She said, “Agroecology is a process. You cannot expect a process to be perfect immediately. But once you make a step, you are moving.”

### 3.4 Reflections

Reflections on the field visits were rich and extensive. Many comments were made about the central role of knowledge in agroecology. Participants observed that some of the practices on the farms were very innovative, that the knowledge of agricultural systems behind these practices is deep, and the traditional knowledge is crucial. It was noted that women demonstrated a lot of knowledge as well, which is something that must be kept at the forefront of amplification. However, there is still a lot of room for improvement of practices.

The field visits also brought up the question of



The knowledge of agricultural systems behind these practices is deep, and the traditional knowledge is crucial.

how to retain value on the farm. Making cloth from bark, biogas, and roasting coffee were all relevant examples of how farmers can make more money from their agroecological farm products.

Some comments touched on what agroecology is. The group saw the way that one family was recuperating traditional clothing, employing an intercropping strategy with coffee and banana, and extracting biogas from the manure of a cow. It was clear to some participants that agroecology provides people with an opportunity to strengthen their identity. All this indicates that agroecology goes beyond production and is in fact, as Pat Mooney stated, a holistic system that goes, “from fuck to fart.”

Other comments referred to the challenges of amplifying agroecology. During the farm visits, participants saw an abundance of food and nutrition derived from agroecological practices. So why is agroecology still considered an alternative when it should be mainstream? One participant said, “The challenge for each of us is to take on the industrial agriculture that is destroying so many things.” The involvement of youth is a major challenge for agroecology. At the Agroecology Learning Exchange, only 6 out of 70 people were under 30. A household that the group visited was dealing with the same problem; they are losing their agroecological knowledge because there are no young people to take over.

A number of commenters noted how inspirational St. Jude center is and the impact Josephine Kiiza has had. This tells us something about the potential of individuals for amplifying agroecology. “With persistence, action and time, look what can happen. It is in our hands to make an impact,” Ms Kiiza said.

# 4 DAY THREE, MAY 12: Deeper learning on amplification

## 4.1 Objectives and process

The objective of the third day was to deepen the group's learning about strategies to amplify agroecology. The morning session was opened with a reflection about what amplification of agroecology is. A series of 'open sessions' were held in which participants proposed topics that they wanted to discuss in more depth. After the open sessions, participants then explored in further detail amplification strategies that worked for them. The day concluded with theatre sketches about the practice, science, and movement of agroecology and the way that these are interconnected. The morning *mística* was carried out by members of Navdanya from India.



Lighting candles and celebrating farmer seeds started day 3.  
Photo: ILEIA

## 4.2 What is amplification of agroecology?

After seeing and hearing about the examples of agroecology from Uganda, the participants were asked to think about what amplification of agroecology means to them. Here is a selection.

### Amplification of agroecology...

- \* is about the transformation of food systems rather than just production;
- \* is a long-term process;
- \* is led by social movements and starts by strengthening local farmers, food producers and their organizations and federations;
- \* needs to take into account the role of consumers and all other actors in the concentric circle of agroecology;
- \* makes the practice and science of agroecology known to young people through creative activities;
- \* is a way to strengthen indigenous peoples' rights;
- \* has training and education as essential elements, including training of teachers in agroecology and formation, as well as consciousness-raising, especially amongst women and youth;
- \* is about improving communication and bridge-building;
- \* should have the struggle for land, seed and local knowledge at the center of the change process;
- \* puts agrobiodiversity into the discussion;
- \* promotes other forms of economic exchange;
- \* is mainstreaming agroecology into government programs and building momentum in policy and in philanthropy;
- \* needs investment in research into the 'right' type of agroecology;
- \* is rebranding agroecology (e.g. to encompass food forests);
- \* is evidence building;
- \* addresses not only the agroecological farming system, but also applies intentional strategies to address key issues that strongly intersect with agriculture, such as nutrition, food processing, social equity, women's empowerment, climate change and the local economy.
- \* includes amplifying the narrative;
- \* needs to be based on the assumptions that: 1) agroecology has the potential to grow and 2) something stops it from growing.



## 4.3 Open session presentation summaries

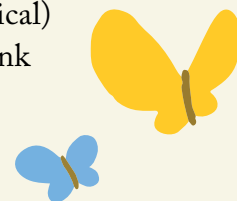
### Agroecology schools and strengthening farmers' organizations

To amplify agroecology it is critical to strengthen farmers' organizations. These organizations are essential to building grassroots movements that have the potential to influence mindsets and policy. La Via Campesina, for example, unites many farmers' organizations and strengthens the global movement for agroecology. Organized farmers also share ideas through farmer-to-farmer learning and exchanges. Such communities of practice can build evidence that agroecology is the modern way of farming, especially in the face of climate change.

Agroecology schools are fantastic mechanisms to strengthen agroecology and share ideas and strategies. These schools aim to strengthen

farmer organizations through capacity building of key people, who can then train their farmer groups and pass on the information to younger generations. These schools involve trainings for farmers, especially youth and the aged in practices of agroecology.

Learning at the agroecology schools happens in many ways. One participant emphasized the importance of curriculum development and documentation for sharing local knowledge. Another participant stressed the value of education received from established local institutions/universities, such as permaculture and organics institutes or departments. Others pointed at the need to learn from lived experiences to properly understand, and thus promote, agroecological traditions. In Brazil, the agroecology schools teach farmers about their rights and the fight for seed sovereignty. Some schools also work with (technical) universities and youth groups, and link up with social movements.



Presenting principles for successful agroecology schools. Photo: ILEIA



One challenge is to create a global network of schools. It was agreed that the schools should be directed by the local community. Six principles for agroecology schools to abide by were discussed: 1) responding to a specific need, 2) utilization of existing formal education, 3) creation of cultural curriculum where art and music play an important role, 4) creation of two-way learning between policy makers and farmer groups, 5) the integration of different kinds of demonstration farms, and 6) usage of peer-to-peer learning methodologies.

Several recommendations were also made for the operations of the schools: 1) create feedback mechanisms to keep the school up-to-date, 2) establish autonomy from government and universities, 3) take a holistic approach that involves all stakeholders, 4) ensure sustainability and ownership by a farmer organization, 5) have strong targets for learning and exchange visits, 6) work with youth, 7) increase visibility through links with media and government, and 8) have good facilitators that can forge bonds with a social movement.

Finally, the group noted that farmers' organizations have repeatedly been represented by NGOs and governments in decision-

making spaces about topics that are relevant to them. Yet farmers learn more from each other and are better able to represent their issues themselves, especially with some training.



#### 4. Deeper learning on amplification

## Designing an agroecology project on the ground

This group was requested by Million Belay to help him think about how an agroecological strategy could be developed in Telecho village in Ethiopia, a project for which funding is already available. The group watched and discussed a video that showed how the community had worked with participatory maps to learn about past land use practices, which helped them realize how and why their land had reached the present state of degradation. This process enabled the community to learn about their social, cultural and ecological history, and created a common understanding from which to work together.

The community had worked to revive their traditional seeds, rehabilitate their land, and organize communal work more efficiently. Women started to get involved in income-generating activities and participate in the recovery of their seeds. Youth are now more actively engaged in building the future of the community. The question is then what should



Small group sessions allowed for dynamic conversations. Photo: ILEIA

be the next step of the agroecological transition process. The group proposed that it would be wise for the community to share experiences with other communities that are involved in similar processes. There is a need for sound methodologies to engage the community, spark their interest, and be provocative, as well as include follow-up processes. The group concurred that agroecology projects work better or are more effective with an income-generating component. Any initiative should be built on local and indigenous knowledge and resources, including social resources. From that foundation, the community can seek appropriate external resources. The group's final recommendation was that practice is evidence, and good evidence can influence the behavior of both communities and external actors.

## Climate information application in agroecology

Farmers have a lot of information about which plants grow well, where, and under what conditions, so the group encouraged everyone to use this valuable information for understanding climate change. The group recommended advocating for broader awareness of farmer-led initiatives through the Regional Network of Farmers in Africa (RENOFASA). They concluded that work must be done to disseminate climate science to farmers, such as meteorological projections, and to encourage a broad application of climate information tools.

### #AgroecologyVoices

“ We have a **SOLUTION** to the climate crisis. Agroecology has been scientifically proven & tested by indigenous knowledge. It converges science, practice, social movements and compelling stories of people living in **HARMONY** with nature and each other.

Rajasvini Bhansali,  
Executive Director, Thousand Currents

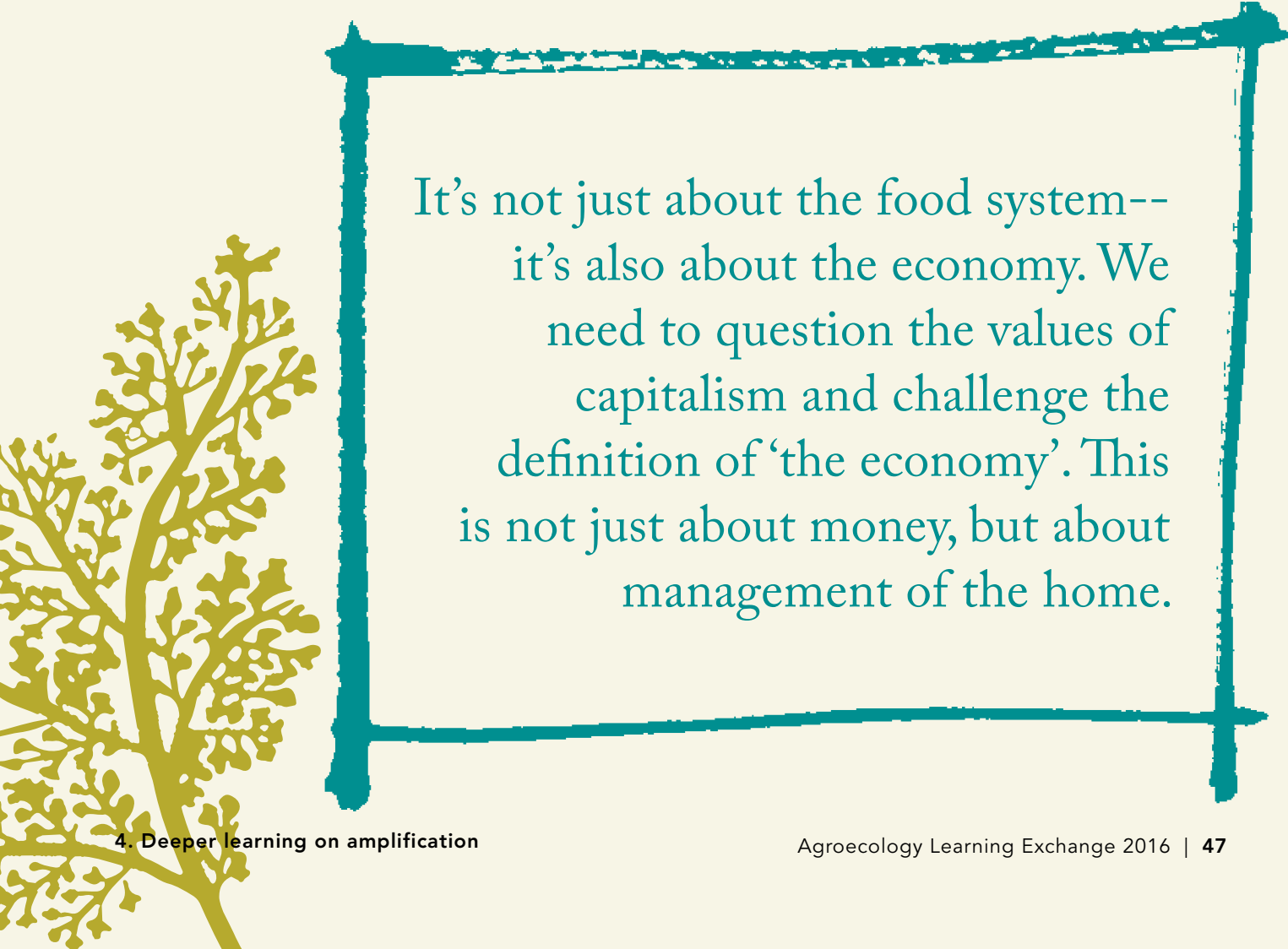
AFSA  
Agroecology Fund

Photo: Rucha Chitnis

## Agroecology and the industrial agricultural system: Co-existence or cold war? The politics of the food system.

Participants explored two opposing positions - the idea that co-existence was not a possibility and the idea that they are already co-existing one way or the other. Arguments were presented for both positions, but there were more arguments supporting the idea that coexistence is not possible. At the moment the two systems co-exist, but because of the great differences in resources like investment, land, political pressure, agricultural education based on green revolution in conventional universities, and the role of transnational companies, there is a power issue which places agroecology at a disadvantage. Therefore, the group concluded that co-existence is not possible in the long-term.

Agroecology, as a movement and a practice, can impact food production and social organization. But a much more proactive strategy is necessary, such as planning and coordinating activities between farmers and NGOs, exchange of experiences, promoting confidence in traditional knowledge, exchanging seeds and knowledge, and working with universities to improve yields in sustainable ways. Because agroecology is a transformative movement, science and practice must address not only the agricultural system, but all systems that intersect with agriculture, such as the economy and nutrition. One participant said, “It’s not just about the food system-- it’s also about the economy. We need to question the values of capitalism and challenge the definition of ‘the economy’. This is not just about money, but the about management of the home.” In this respect, the agroecology movement needs to be better integrated with other movements seeking a regenerative economy.



It’s not just about the food system--  
it’s also about the economy. We  
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definition of ‘the economy’. This  
is not just about money, but about  
management of the home.



Billions are invested in an industrial food system that has compromised the ecology and livelihoods. Philanthropy can amplify a growing agroecological movement that is transforming the rot in our food system.

Daniel Moss  
The Agroecology Fund

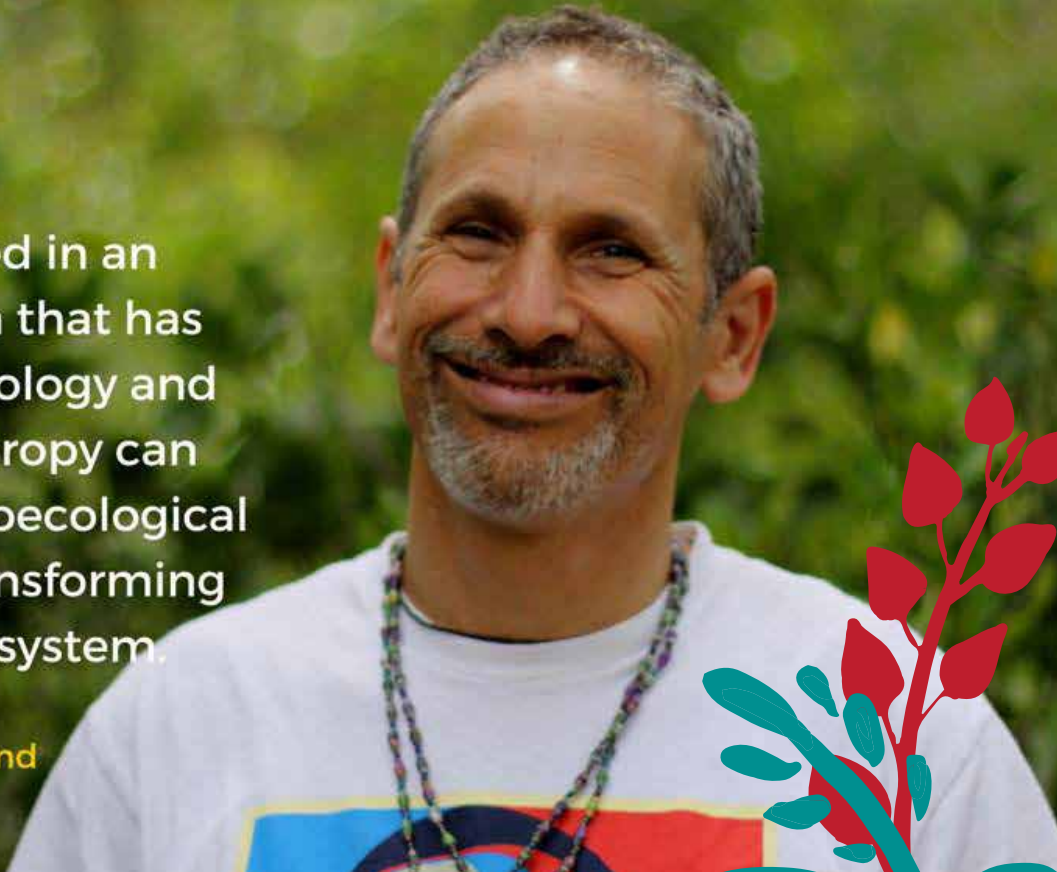


Photo: Rucha Chitnis

It was noted that there is a ‘war’ going on where governments side with multinationals, who have the bulk of money and power and threaten farmers’ access to land, seeds, resources, and health. Indeed for many people, and cultures, it is a life-and-death struggle. But the consensus in the group was that the ‘cold war’ language was unhelpful in producing an inclusive and engaging narrative that can be sustained for the long haul. It was agreed that it would be more productive to not use the terminology of ‘war’ or ‘fighting back’, but rather to redefine our movement as offering solutions. “Last year, the multinational agribusinesses were losing money because people are increasingly purchasing from farmers’ markets. We are winning. We can’t fight the battle on every front, because we don’t have the resources, but we have to find our strengths,” said one participant.

The group concluded that there is a need to have a two-tiered approach to

#### 4. Deeper learning on amplification

change: on the one hand exposing the flaws of the existing industrial agricultural system, and on the other hand building up agroecology as a new agricultural system through education, science, culture and policy.

The group formulated three recommendations:

1. Since industrial agriculture is not going to sustain the world, and is not a sustainable system, it needs to be challenged and changed for the common good.
2. It is important to build an agroecology constituency worldwide through knowledge sharing, education and research.
3. It is imperative to develop a new narrative that shows agroecology is sustainable and socioeconomically viable, while deconstructing the narrative of industrial agriculture.





Presenting ideas for a new 'style' of funding. Photo: ILEIA

## Developing a different 'style' of funding

The core direction of this group's discussion was how to build a new style, or way, of funding. As one participant expressed it, "Some funding helps the work on the ground, but other funding really stifles it. The funders in this room are fine, they are energizing, but other funders seem to play a numbers game and they end up repressing the amazing work that people do on the ground. A key question is: What makes funding exciting and energizing?" The participants agreed that a very different style of funding than the type currently seen in the mainstream is needed, especially when it comes to supporting the development and spread of agroecology.

There is a need for flexible, core funding for grassroots organizations over a long-term period. To give this approach credibility, it is important to describe examples of how this funding is effective.

The group recommended finding ways to mobilize substantial funds for agroecology by progressive funders and partners, grantees

and CSOs. Key openings for advocacy may be large international NGOs (if they can be persuaded to drop the implementation of work themselves and rather support local organizations that are implementing agroecology), government funding, microfinance and impact investment organizations. It is crucial that the AgroEcology Fund continue to dialogue with other funders.

There is a need for flexible, core funding for the grassroots over a long-term period.

## Underlying values of agroecology and creating a new narrative

The AEF has an established mission and vision, but not established values. As a starting point, Jen Astone suggested discussing the six values adopted by the Global Alliance for the Future of Food (GAFF). What AEF is doing is complementary to the work of GAFF, but the following values of GAFF could be adopted:

**Renewability:** Address the integrity of the natural and social resources that form the foundation of a healthy planet and future generations in the face of changing global and local demands;

**Resilience:** Support regenerative, durable, and economically adaptive systems in the face of a changing planet;

**Equity:** Promote sustainable livelihoods and access to nutritious and just food systems;

**Diversity:** Value our rich and diverse agricultural, ecological, and cultural heritage;

**Healthfulness:** Advance the health and well-being of people, animals, the environment, and the societies that depend on them;

**Interconnectedness:** Understand the implications of the interdependence of food, people, and the planet in a transition to more sustainable food and agricultural systems.

The AEF could look at these values and think about how to frame them for themselves. In the ensuing conversation about values, some people pointed out that food is also related to values of identity and social relations. Others added the value of rights, especially indigenous rights, as well as the processes of democratic liberation and the right of people to determine their own values. The latter links with cultural diversity and the right to food. The rights of nature were also mentioned. Another important element was the context-specific nature of agroecology, which, in Indonesia, is referred to as the value of 'localism'. The notion of peace as a value is also powerful. As one participant mentioned, "People see us as warriors, we have to show that we value peace." For a lot of people, spirituality is an important value, as they see food as a way

Celebrating a fruitful discussion. Photo: ILEIA



to address the spiritual world. 'Sensuality' was also suggested as a value because of how food permits the life-affirming forces of experiencing our senses. It was mentioned that 'radical', when conceptualized in its original definition of 'going back to the roots', could be a good value. However, it's quite a contentious word and would probably be misinterpreted if communicated. In summary, additional values included: cognitive justice, sensuality, spirituality, rights of nature, peace, identity, and democratizing deliberation/agency.

The second part of the conversation focused on reframing the narrative. In the discussion, a participant identified and addressed the narrative of having to feed 9 billion people by 2050, therefore needing to produce more food by that time. She said, "This is a misleading and self-serving narrative that has to be countered with an equally powerful narrative." If the AEF wants to adopt different values, she suggested, they should counter the existing narratives. The group then posed a question: What is the best approach to get skeptics excited about these values? The group agreed that the narrative of agroecology should not be defensive but instead present what the movement believes in. Main elements of this new narrative must include:

\* Agroecology is mainstream, socio-economically viable and scientific. The world faces a distribution problem instead of a production problem. Family farmers can and do feed the world and we need more of them. Contrary to this, the reality is that industrial agriculture can cause hunger because it squeezes out family

Agroecology must be presented as a continuous process: as a dialogue among people and between Mother Earth and people. This process is inclusive and participatory.

farmers. In the long term, agroecology and industrial agriculture cannot co-exist.

\* Agroecology is a knowledge system in its own right. There has to be cognitive justice because many knowledge systems exist that are valid. There shouldn't be a competition between urban science at universities and the knowledge of farmers; they should work together.

\* Agroecology must be presented as a continuous process: as a dialogue among people and between Mother Earth and people. This process is inclusive and participatory.

Handwritten notes on a piece of paper:

- Renewability
- Resilience
- Equity
- Diversity
- Healthfulness
- Interconnectedness

Under the heading "Additions":

- + Identity / Cultural Diversity
- + Rights (broad) to food, etc.
- + Democratic Deliberation / Participatory Agency
- + Local (localization)
- + Peace
- + Rights of Nature
- + Spirituality
- + Cognitive Justice

## GMO banana and seed sovereignty

The discussion in this group on seed sovereignty resulted in four recommendations. First, it is necessary to change the narrative that seeds are the property of corporations into one that identifies seeds as the property of local farmers. While farmers do still have diverse seeds, this

Seed is life and is at the core of agroecology. Without seeds nothing else exists.

biodiversity should be increased. Second, seed is life and is at the core of agroecology. Without seeds nothing else exists. Third, seed diversity is a strategy against the seed and agrochemical industry monopoly. And fourth, it is important to integrate efforts of various actors and form a global alliance of combined initiatives to save farmer seeds.

The second part was about the GM banana, and on the larger bio-fortification debate. How does the GM banana affect our nutrition and health? The group identified the need for an integrated campaign on GMOs that would aim to 'hijack' the current nutrition debate and turn it in favor of agroecology. The group stated they are against any law to protect patents on seeds.

Photo: Rucha Chitnis

## The role of women and youth

A key outcome of this session was the recommendation to make the role of women in agriculture more visible. One of the ways to do this is to facilitate women's technical, political and economic education in order to enable them to assume leadership roles in campaigns related to food and agroecology. In many places, women are taking the lead in movement-building.

For youth, it's important to make agroecology exciting. Many young people are currently not involved with agroecology because conventional schools often frame farming as a failure in society, suggesting that if you don't work hard and you don't study hard, you are going to become a farmer. The group suggested making agroecology a viable vocation and countering the notion that farming and agroecology are the outcome of failure at school. Instead it needs to be communicated that agroecological farming can bring employment and income. To achieve this, it will be crucial to deconstruct the norms, habits, cultures and policies that are working against women and youth.



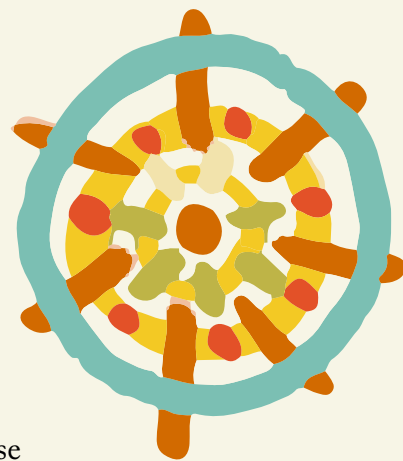


Fertile exchanges in the field. Photo: ILEIA

## 'High risk' agroecology

This group reached five recommendations for the future of the agroecology movement.

First, there is a need to use the AgroEcology Fund and other spaces (e.g. the Global Alliance for the Future of Food) as leverage for funds, policy and partnerships. The group called upon the donors to engage proactively in supporting and mainstreaming the agroecology movement, because there is no future for agroecology if the movement stays small. Second, the group proposed thinking about the role of consumers as agents of change. This means learning more from successful consumer campaigns. The third point was to develop a strategy to engage proactively with the public and influence public opinion. Here it is important to consider



In many places,  
women are  
taking the lead in  
movement-building.

evidence of effective behavior change such as, for example, influencing social norms; behavior often needs to change before attitudes. Fourth, impact investment in agroecology has begun, and will continue to expand, and it is important to develop solid investment plans in agroecology businesses that avoid the negative impacts of the mainstream economy. Lastly, it is crucial to ensure control over genetic resources.

## 4.4 Strategies to amplify agroecology work well when...

In this session, participants were asked to look at their notes and reflect on the week so far and their own experiences in working to amplify agroecology. Based on this, participants were asked to write a statement that said, “The specific strategy [name the strategy] to amplify agroecology works [when, where, why, with whom and how].” This helped participants define what the underlying factors of success for a specific strategy are, and then through this analysis, gain a deeper understanding of how to amplify agroecology in a specific context. After small group discussions, participants reassessed their statement and made amendments where necessary. What emerged only scratches the surface of the collective knowledge held in this group. The aggregated list of statements is as follows:

Photo: Rucha Chirnis

### Strengthening farmer/grassroots organizations works well when:

- it is based on farmer to farmer (or group to group) learning
- it allows farmers to learn confidently from experience
- organizations are supported to grow organically
- organizations are supported to plan and act strategically
- farmers can advocate for their own rights
- it aims to mainstream agroecology in national policy frameworks through a bottom up process
- it enables people to act on the basis of shared values and purpose, mutual respect, active listening, and shared responsibility.

### Farmer to farmer training works well when:

- it is based on showcasing living examples of amplifying agroecology as opposed to reading theories
- the knowledge shared is part of ancestral wisdom
- it respects the values and principles of the community
- it responds to concrete needs





Soaking up fresh air while discussing the practice, science and movement of agroecology. Photo: ILEIA

### Agroecology schools work well when:

- they are established at the regional or national level; after which they can spread locally and include previously trained farmers as trainers
- they build on exchanges of farmers' local knowledge and innovations
- they include demonstration farms in local communities

### Market linkages work well when:

- farmers are organized to form community-based markets
  - farmers are able to sell a diversity of products directly to consumers
  - farmers can talk to their consumers, who can provide vital feedback on the quality of products
- they are embedded in a 'taste education' strategy, emphasizing and regaining consumer's right to pleasure and enjoyment of food as a strategy to encourage

- consumption of agroecological products
- producers are linked to consumers as co-producers in a process that is embedded in culture and traditional knowledge to save seeds, conserve biodiversity and protect farmers' rights

### Working with women works well when:

- it incorporates entire households, since both genders occupy different but complementary social spaces

### Spreading of practices ('horizontal amplification') works well when:

- it enables communities to diagnose and prioritize problems; to identify, test and adapt agroecological principles and to engage in vigorous farmer-to-farmer and village-to-village learning networks
- it is done through strengthening the capacities of community/ farmer organizations
- it fosters vibrant, effective, localized examples on a larger scale to demonstrate the power and success of agroecology to influence others

### Farmer training and learning works well when:

- it combines technical and practical knowledge
- it creates awareness at learning sites in different cropping seasons

### Community seed banks work well when:

- they give farmers access to varieties they prefer because of taste, climate adaptation or other characteristics





### International conferences and large gatherings work well when:

- they include international institutions and global partners who can influence policy makers through their credibility

### Food hubs work well when:

- they are run as a cooperative with shared values
- they are a joint initiative between the community and producers
- they include awareness-raising efforts

### Media strategies work well when:

- agroecology is presented as the future, and linked with humor and culture
- they use solid data and research
- content is created in partnership with others
- outreach is well planned and done in a participatory manner

### Funding agroecology works well when:

- it goes directly to a grassroots group
- it is multi-year
- it happens through a flexible, healthy process
- it is based on shared values
- it is regenerative
- it supports social transformation and policy shifts
- it happens at a landscape level
- it is used to organize well planned learning exchanges cross-regionally for 2-3 years

### Policy advocacy works well when:

- based in broad collaborations with farmers, women, indigenous people, researchers, CSOs, etc.
- based on documentation of successful agroecological practices
- based on large data sets through rigorous research
- embedded in a multi-pronged pressure strategy
- the truth is brought into the light
- farmer capacity to advocate is enhanced through meeting and dialogues
- farmers are enabled to participate in multi-lateral spaces to promote agroecology

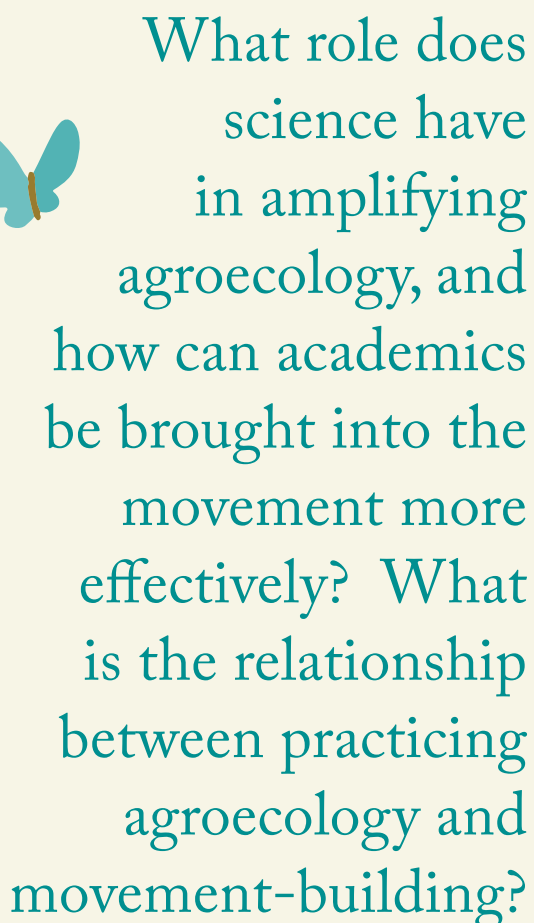
### Agroecology is amplified when:

- farmers realize the negative aspects of the conventional agricultural package
- farmers have access to traditional seeds
- farmers can share their knowledge in safe spaces
- consumers and producers are connected
- farmers are prepared for a crisis or for a window of opportunity
- an integral strategy is used, including strengthening organizations, rigorous training, solidarity markets, fostering collaboration and consolidating social movements
- there is a group of committed people able to network with farmers, scientists, and governments around the world



## 4.5 Skits: the science, practice and movement of agroecology

After a full, inspiring day, the last session of day 3 offered a creative and fun learning experience: theatre. First, the participants distributed themselves among three trees according to how they identify themselves and their work: in the practice, science, or movement realms of agroecology, depicted as a triangle. There was only one person at the 'science' tree, many people in the 'movement' tree, a handful at the 'practice' tree and another handful in the middle, who identified themselves as doing all three activities. Four mixed groups were created. Their task was to depict the relationship between practice, science and movement in agroecology. The performances naturally varied in their details, but all four groups created similar narratives for their sketches.



What role does science have in amplifying agroecology, and how can academics be brought into the movement more effectively? What is the relationship between practicing agroecology and movement-building?

All four of the skits portrayed large corporations, referred to in one sketch as 'Mongenta', as the villain putting profits before farmer wellbeing and take control of their land and seeds. Most incorporated an environmental or economic crisis caused by Green Revolution agriculture. This crisis convinced people to turn to agroecology. Most of the skits portrayed the government collaborating with the agrochemical corporations, incentivizing and subsidizing conventional agriculture including the corporation's (i.e. Monsanto's) seeds and products, and enabling land grabs.

A number highlighted the importance of elders' traditional knowledge as the key to combating this crisis. Another common theme in the sketches was working with agroecological practices to chase the corporation out of the community and take back control. At the heart of many of the sketches was the idea that a group of organized people can protect the environment, ancestral knowledge, biodiversity, and food heritage through working for food sovereignty. All ended with a major role for the movement: the mobilization of farmers and coordinated advocacy to resist agrochemical corporations. A couple included a helpful scholar or, alternatively, a company-hired researcher.

These skits brought forth interesting elements about the theory of change for this particular group. Does the group see movement-building as the primary and, therefore, the most important activity? What role does science have in amplifying agroecology, and how can academics be brought into the movement more effectively? What is the relationship between practicing agroecology and movement-building? Can movement-building happen without practice? How do the different parts of the triangle connect and build on each other? Is there an end goal?

# 5 DAY FOUR, MAY 13: Recommendations for the AEF



The press conference with Exchange participants and a member of Ugandan parliament. Photo: Rucha Chitnis

## 5.1 Objectives and process

The objective of the last day of the Agroecology Learning Exchange was to provide feedback to the AEF. The morning was dedicated to a session for the AgroEcology Fund to present its strategy and answer questions from the group. The second part of the day consisted of a press conference about the Learning Exchange and the potential implications of the Biosafety and Biotechnology Bill under consideration by the Ugandan parliament. Afterwards, the group came together for a final session to close the Learning Exchange. The *mística* in the morning was organized outside by the Latin American partners, and a closing *mística* was held by the Ugandan women from the group.

## 5.2 Feedback for the AgroEcology Fund

In this session, representatives of the donor members of the AEF presented themselves and their organizations to the group and shared a brief history of how the AEF began. The idea for the fund emerged from a conversation among a group of funders asking themselves how to make their sustainable agriculture funding more strategic for indigenous peoples, rural women, and smaller communities. The Fund was created based on a few central concepts that came out of a group brainstorm. First, support should be offered to groups of organizations that collaborate to add value to individual organizations' efforts. Secondly, the

Fund should focus on increasing the visibility of agroecology as a solution to climate change. Third, the decision-making in the Fund should, as much as possible, be decentralized and shared with on-the-ground advisors who should play a central role. Fourth, non-grant spending should be kept within the 10-15% range. Fifth, the Fund money should be housed and administered by an independent institution that is not a participating institution or NGO. Since its inception, with four funders, the AgroEcology Fund has grown to include fourteen contributing donors from three continents and has funded 24 collaboratives including 100 organizations in 40 countries.

The Swift Foundation decided to join because the Fund allowed them to work in geographically diverse areas (Asia, Europe, Mexico) in topic areas that they don't have a mandate for (in education, for example), as well as giving them a chance to fund bigger

initiatives through supporting collaboratives. Kyra Busch from the Christensen Fund described the collaboration opportunities that were opened up by joining AEF, and cautioned that funders are part of solutions but can also

Funders are part of solutions  
but can also be part of the  
problem.

be part of the problem when their strategies are not aligned with social movements. John Fellowes spoke for another funder, stating that they are an environmental funder and work on conservation led mainly by indigenous communities. They recognize that conservation occurs in a matrix of human food systems, and can only succeed if these are in tune with the ecology. Katy Scholfield from Synchronicity

Earth said her organization is quite small and focuses on biodiversity conservation, saying, "We're such a small foundation that if we wanted to get into agroecology by ourselves, we'd be only supporting one farmer somewhere. The Fund enables us to support many people around the world. It's helping us as well by learning how working with food systems can provide us with the solutions to the challenges." Finally, Rajasvini Bhansali, who works as an advisor for the Fund, spoke about her experiences. She explained how all of the advisors are deeply committed to solidarity and movement-building, and have connections with grassroots initiatives and social movements.

Afterwards, the participants wrote down questions, wishes, dreams or



Providing feedback for the AgroEcology Fund.

Photo: Scott Fitzmorris



“ Agroecology is the mainstream food system in West Africa. It's about working with nature, and this is the natural way people have lived for centuries. Agroecology heals the environment and produces enough food to feed our communities.

Bern Guri, Ghana  
Center for Indigenous Knowledge &  
Organizational Development

am one of the ambassadors working against this bill. I want to move with you, and the rest of the farmers. I want to see all of us coming out to use all platforms to educate, to share, and to bring out these issues.”

## 5.4 Final reflections: what was learned?

As a closing activity, the participants were asked to reflect on everything that happened during the

Agroecology Learning Exchange, and what this would mean for their own work. There were many enthusiastic, positive and critical messages, some of which are summarized here. There was a unanimous agreement that the meeting had been fruitful, rich and rewarding and that it should be repeated.

Some suggestions for the AEF's future work were also made. One participant recommended that the AEF document the projects it supports more thoroughly. A further suggestion was reserve more funding for unexpected policy advocacy work when new laws are proposed.

Many ideas for collaboration among participants emerged during the course of the Learning Exchange. In the short term, the following efforts have been set in motion: a global internet-based community radio, an agroecology school information exchange, and the sharing of reports and updates about synthetic biology in agriculture.

recommendations for the AEF. The notes were grouped by topic and answered by members of AEF in a plenary session, during which there was also an opportunity for the participants to engage in debate.

## 5.3 Press conference

The press conference was attended by both national and international journalists, as well as a Ugandan parliamentarian, and coordinated by Ugandan journalist Patrick Luganda. Jen Astone of the AgroEcology Fund opened with a statement about the issues that family farmers in the global south face today and how agroecology can provide the means to tackle these issues. This statement was followed by brief presentations by Pat Mooney (ETC Group), Henk Hobbelink (GRAIN), Josephine Kiiza (St. Jude's), Bern Guri (AFSA), Bridget Mugambe (AFSA) and Neha Raj Singh (Navdanya).

Parliamentarian Florence Namayanja then showed her support for the agroecology movement and her rejection of the impending seed bill in Uganda. She said, “Everybody now gets to know that there are Ugandans who are against the GMO bill, and we speak loudly. I

## A selection of final reflections about the AgroEcology Learning Exchange



“What was brought home to us was the importance of information sharing and education, especially for youth who are key to mainstreaming agroecology.”

“We are working on so many topics - seeds, land - and everything has to work together.”

“In our country, peasant farmers are already organized. But we heard from our African peers that there's very little movement-building among farmers. So agroecology has to be done in various ways depending on the local realities.”

“I learned about some practices that in my country have actually failed but that work here. It makes me eager to go back to my community and review these practices.”

“We are quite an aged group. Many of us have been around quite a long time. This was a very new experience for all of us. Especially the feedback session with the AEF was very new and positive, it was very self-critiquing.”

“Some people came to this meeting burnt out, tired, not connected to a global movement, but now they are feeling much different.”

“The process of this Learning Exchange was amazing; we are now connected. The process itself is an outcome, often we forget that. This process was a wonderful outcome.”

“Every time I look, more people are joining the movement. It's not just the peasants, it's academia, foundations, donors. It makes me wonder how we can transcend our vision on agroecology beyond the local level and challenge the entire notion of industrial agriculture.”

“We now have this body of knowledge. How can we spread what we have created here? How do we bring it out in a substantial way? How do we transmit the enthusiasm? I want to ask you to really think about how you will share what happened here with your colleagues, and please do so! We really need to circulate this out into our networks.”

# 6 Synthesis of insights



Applauding an entertaining contribution. Photo: Rucha Chitnis

The objectives of the Learning Exchange were to build relationships, find synergies among groups and individuals, and catalyze new ways of thinking to strengthen the global movement for agroecology. Indeed, participants generated many ideas, and they shared valuable knowledge and unique experiences, but the intention was not to collect an exhaustive list of ideas as an output of this exchange. Nonetheless, the insights that emerged as a collective product of this unique gathering of great minds were incredibly rich and deserve to be highlighted. In this section, a compilation of the insights shared over the four days of the learning exchange are presented in the form of a synthesis. This synthesis has been compiled from the notes of the meeting: it was not built by consensus and it is by no means a complete overview of all existing ways to amplify agroecology.

## What is amplification of agroecology?

Amplification of agroecology is about the transformation of food systems, rather than just a technique for food production. It is about the spreading of practices, but also about social change. Amplification of agroecology encompasses all of the actors in the food system, including the consumers. It promotes alternative forms of economic exchange and places agrobiodiversity, the struggle for land, control over seed and local knowledge at the center of the process of change. Amplification of agroecology strengthens people's rights, and increases their autonomy. It is a long-term process that is led by social movements.

## Lessons learned about amplification

### Strengthen farmer organizations

Strengthening farmers' organizations is critical for amplification because together these organizations can create a grassroots movement capable of influencing mindsets and policy. Moreover, organized farmers help to build evidence that supports agroecology as a modern way of farming in the face of climate change and other challenges. Insights about how best to strengthen farmers' organizations center on farmer-to-farmer learning. This kind of learning enables farmers to confidently build knowledge from experience. Furthermore, effective support of these organizations helps farmers' organizations to plan and act strategically. Facilitating opportunities for farmers to advocate for their own rights is more effective than representing them. After all, no one can represent farmers' interests better than the farmers themselves, especially with some training.



Agroecology is about dignified livelihoods and families. The beauty of the world is in the diversity, and food represents the soul of this diversity. It's sacred and deeply personal, because it also connects us with our ancestors.

Anuradha Mittal  
Founder, Oakland Institute



### Put women at the forefront

Women are an important source of agroecological knowledge. Valuing and promoting their knowledge and their leadership must therefore be a central element of any amplification strategy. There are many ways to achieve this; one way is by seeking women's leadership in campaigns and supporting their own struggles, even if the relevance to agroecology of the issues at hand is not evident.

To be effective, strategies to target women's participation in agroecology should incorporate entire households. It is important that women gain confidence in their ability to work with agroecology. One way to do so is to enable them to learn from other women farmers and to provide them with technical, political and economic education. In this respect, the promotion of agroecological gardening near women's homes or in communal spaces has also proven to be an effective way to engage women in agroecology.

Organized farmers help to build evidence that supports agroecology as a modern way of farming in the face of climate change and other challenges.

## Create direct relations with consumers

One of the central agents of change in the agroecological transition are the consumers. Therefore, strategies for amplification of agroecology should prioritize connecting farmers and consumers or, in other words, producers and co-producers. Direct relations between farmers and consumers, for example, in the form of community-based markets or

Strategies for the amplification of agroecology should prioritize connecting farmers and consumers

food hubs, enable farmers to sell a diversity of products directly to consumers. This direct contact allows for dialogue between producers and consumers about the quality of their products or the nature of their services to further tailor arrangements to the needs of each group. Such connections are particularly effective when they are embedded in local culture, or when they are run as a joint initiative built on shared values between consumers and producers. Awareness-raising efforts are often a central element in building these connections. For example, an effective connection can be made around a 'taste education' strategy, a celebration of flavors and recipes aimed at reclaiming consumers' right to pleasure and enjoyment of food that is produced in an agroecological way.

## Strengthen agroecology schools

Agroecology schools are a way to make farming attractive, especially to youth. They create spaces where youth can talk about issues that are of concern to them. In many of these schools, culture and music play an important role in conveying messages. Agroecology schools, moreover, rely greatly on the principle of peer-to-peer learning between farmers, but often also include two-way learning processes between policy makers and farmer groups. Therefore, demonstration farms are a central element of agroecology schools, and so are learning and exchange visits that bring farmers' knowledge and innovations into the spotlight. One of the lessons learned for effective agroecology schools is that

the schools must establish autonomy from government and universities. In addition, good facilitators that understand how to support a social movement and an effective feedback mechanism for students are crucial. Many successful schools started at the regional or



The Learning Exchange strengthened old and new friendships.

Photo: Rucha Chitnis



Educating people about existing laws and ways to demand that local government protect their rights is another useful advocacy strategy.

national level, after which they were replicated at the local level by trained farmers.

### Advocate

To amplify agroecology, engaging in dialogue with local government authorities can be very effective. Also, educating people about existing laws and ways to demand that local government protect their rights is another useful advocacy strategy. Policy advocacy for agroecology generally works well when it is embedded in broad collaborations between farmers, women, indigenous people, researchers, and CSOs. It is also effective when it is based on the documentation of successful agroecological practices and supported by a large data set through rigorous research. Moreover, advocacy can garner public support for agroecology through awareness-raising. Farmers' capacity to advocate is enhanced through meeting and dialogues, and advocacy, in turn, is more effective when farmers are enabled to participate in multi-lateral spaces to promote agroecology. For long-lasting change, it is

Triumphant after a long discussion.  
Photo: ILEIA



necessary to mainstream agroecology in national policy frameworks in a bottom up process.

### Work on the ground

Strengthening the work on the ground is an effective way to amplify agroecology when it enables communities to diagnose and prioritize problems, to identify,

test and adapt agroecological principles, and to engage in vigorous farmer-to-farmer and village-to-village learning networks. It fosters vibrant, effective localized examples on a larger scale to demonstrate the power and success of agroecology which can help to influence others. It is best done through strengthening the capacities of community and farmer organizations.

### Document evidence

In order to achieve systemic change, it is necessary to document practical work on the ground, to learn from this work, and find ways to leverage these lessons. Documentation of successful agroecological alternatives not only

strengthens the agroecology movement, but it also provides evidence that can lead to further spreading of agroecological innovations that can be used to advocate for policy change.

### Communicate and reach out

Communication and outreach is fundamental for amplifying agroecology and for presenting agroecology as the agroecological system of the future. Communication often works best when humor and cultural references are employed, and when it is based on solid data. It is important that the content is created in partnership with key actors (such as farmers), and that outreach is well-planned and implemented in a participatory manner. Research can help to debunk the claims made by agribusiness and to raise awareness about alternatives to industrial agriculture. Multimedia, including documentary films and social media are a strong mobilization strategy and can help the dissemination of knowledge. Curriculum development, not commonly thought of as an outreach tool, can also be powerful for communicating the benefits of agroecology.

### Share knowledge

Sharing knowledge is an important strategy for the spread of agroecology, as it is inherently knowledge-intensive. It is an especially effective way to spread practices when the knowledge is based on ancestral knowledge, when practices respect the values and principles of the community and when the activities respond to concrete needs. Farmer-to-farmer training is one way to share knowledge, which works best when it is based on showcasing living

examples as opposed to relying on theoretical assumptions. Furthermore, knowledge sharing is most effective for agroecology when technical and political knowledge exchange takes place simultaneously.

Resistance is necessary but it must be accompanied by well-evidenced alternatives.

### Resist *and* transform

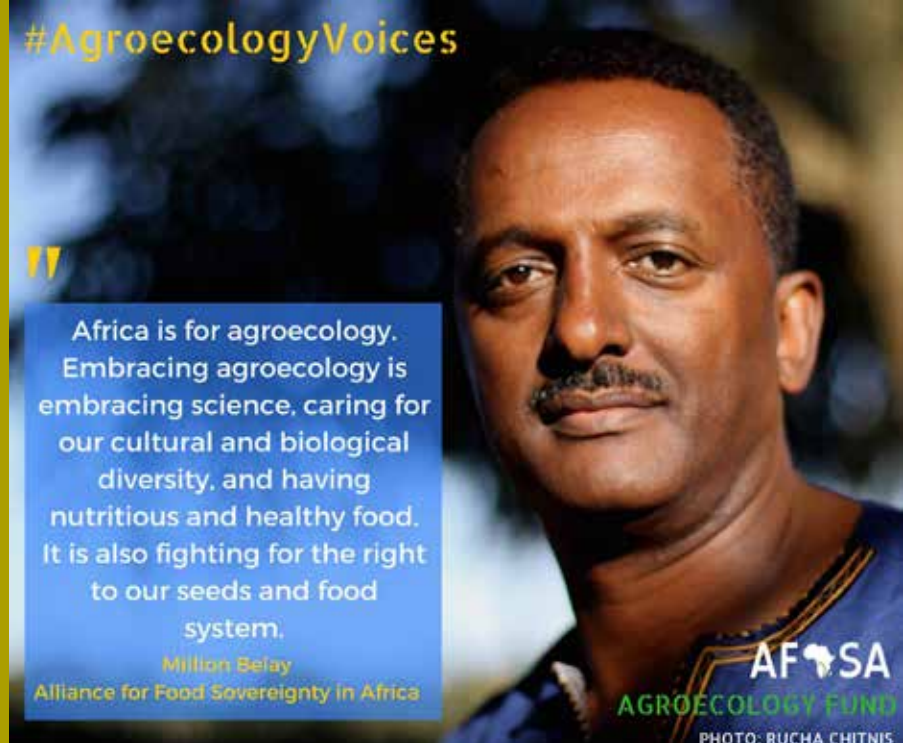
Many campaigns are based on resisting the industrial agriculture model, corporate control over productive resources, and policies that marginalize small scale farmers. It is necessary to work to stop developments that limit agroecology and to expose the flaws of the existing industrial agricultural system. However, it is crucial to also build up agroecology as a new agricultural system, through education, science, culture and policy. Resistance is necessary but it must be accompanied by presenting well-evidenced alternatives. For this purpose, it is important to have a strong network of partners committed to the promotion of a transformative type of agroecology, as opposed to a type of agroecology that conforms to the status quo.



## Create a new narrative

Framing and messaging emerged as central elements in amplifying agroecology because agroecology is based on a completely different set of values about food, nature and people. For this reason, it is necessary to develop a new narrative that is not defensive but rather presents the principles of agroecology. The new narrative must include a reevaluation of agroecology as a viable vocation. It is important to get rid of the notion that farming and agroecology are activities that reflect failure in society, but rather that they can bring employment, income emphasize and wellbeing. To achieve this it will be crucial to deconstruct the norms, habits, cultures and policies that are working against women and youth. Values of agroecology that should be part of a new narrative were identified at the Learning Exchange as: identity, human rights, democratizing deliberation/agency, localization, peace, rights of nature, spirituality.

It should be clear that seed diversity is a strategy against engineered seeds and the agrochemical monopoly.



A new narrative should include the following elements: 1) Agroecology is mainstream, it is scientific. Family farmers are feeding the world and we need more of them, while industrial agriculture causes hunger because it dismantles family farming. 2) Agroecology is a knowledge system in its own right. There should not be a competition between knowledge generated through science carried out at universities and knowledge generated and kept by farmers because these two types of knowledge are

compatible and complementary. 3) Agroecology must be presented as a continuous process of transition, as a dialogue between people, and between mother earth and people, that is inclusive and participatory.

It is also necessary to change the narrative of seeds from one in which they are represented as being in the hands of corporations into one in which seeds are in the hands of local farmers.



Sowing seeds as a symbol of future collaboration. Photo: ILEIA

The narrative should include the idea that seed is life; it is the core of agroecology. Without seeds nothing else exists. It should be clear that seed diversity is a strategy against engineered seeds and the agrochemical monopoly.

### Develop effective ways to work together

Participants in the Agroecology Learning Exchange shared many lessons drawn from work undertaken together. In this respect, a major recommendation was to maintain a horizontal collaboration by minimizing institutional interests, logos and egos. For agroecological amplification, it is important to work within a loosely established, broad coalition. A variety of people can bring different experiences and knowledge of agroecology to the table. For example, researchers provide scientific insight and credibility, communities bring knowledge from practice, and activists can raise awareness. Working with young people was specifically recommended as it can ensure the continuity of the work.

In such broad coalitions it is necessary to clarify the role of each partner, to develop a set of core principles to help different partners work well together, and to create tools for problem solving. Moreover, upholding accountability to those impacted is another fundamental necessity. Regular meetings can help to build trust within any coalition. Additionally, institutional commitment strengthens relationships and creates space for unexpected additional activities. In this context, an important lesson is to avoid economic dependence among the different partners in a coalition. Initiatives should be built on knowledge and resources that are already available among partners, including social resources. From that foundation, a coalition can seek external resources where needed and appropriate.



## Fund flexibly

A key strategy to achieve the amplification of agroecology relates to funding. Flexibility on the side of both grantees and donors is necessary. Funding schemes should include long-term core funding that is directed to and reaches grassroots organizations. With regard to results, donors should not focus too much on quantitative results, but rather develop a different kind of flexible, trust-based relationship with grantees. Funding agroecology is effective when it is based on shared values, it is regenerative, it supports social transformation and policy shifts, and when it happens at a landscape level. Participants recommend that funding be set aside to organize well-planned learning exchanges cross-regionally at least every two or three years.

## Closing remarks

Every participant in the Learning Exchange had two things in common: a deep commitment to creating change in the world, and a conviction that the work that each organization is doing is a necessary piece of the greater puzzle in building a strong and effective agroecology movement. Many elements of this exchange were cultivated over coffee breaks, meals and late night chats. Some of seeds sown at this Exchange are now awaiting the ideal conditions for germination. Yet some have already germinated, and there are now fast-growing plants which will soon be harvested. Regardless, the true value of the work that took place at the Agroecology Learning Exchange is not entirely visible in this report. The unique dynamics that were created in the Exchange, the personal connections, and the creation of a sense of a global community will surely continue to have impact for a long time to come.



Funding agroecology is effective when it is based on shared values, it is regenerative, it supports social transformation and policy shifts, and when it happens at a landscape level.

# 7 A final word from the AEF



In a unique session, donors of the AgroEcology Fund answered questions from grantees and invited their recommendations.

Photo: ILEIA

The AgroEcology Fund is honored to have been able to co-host the Learning Exchange in Uganda with the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA). It was a remarkable – and highly productive – gathering during which new relationships, collaborations and ideas were sown. Our greatest hope is that the conversations and learnings yield fruits to strengthen the agroecology movement for years to come.

For the funders, it was humbling and instructive to hear participants' perspectives on how the AgroEcology Fund can be most effective in supporting a wide range of agroecological solutions to many of our planet's woes. We look forward to incorporating those insights into our funding, communications and learning strategies. We emerge from the learning exchange with a renewed sense of commitment and urgency to mobilize ever-more resources for this dynamic movement.

At the center of the AgroEcology Fund's principles is a commitment to collaboration. This is as true for the type of funding we provide – to collaborative efforts – as for the way we run the Fund. One AgroEcology Fund donor, Scott Fitzmorris, of the SWF Foundation, captured this sentiment in a recent blog:

"This past spring I was fortunate to participate in the AgroEcology Fund's learning convening in Masaka, Uganda. I saw how, through careful collaboration,

philanthropy can benefit from, and perhaps help, solve some fundamental problems. Like a small-scale, mixed-crop, agroecological Ugandan farmer, the AgroEcology Fund seeks to put into practice within its own operations the principles of diversity, symbiosis and collaboration."

We are indebted to so many people for making the Learning Exchange a success. Josephine Kizza and her team at St Jude's Family Projects provided us with an amazing work setting. ILEIA's facilitation and documentation team creatively guided us through a complex learning process and captured the nuances of our conversations in this report. Rucha Chitnis shot beautiful photos and conducted in-depth interviews, which have since been published as high-quality communication materials to spread the word about the power and potential of the agroecology movement. We could not have asked for a better partner in co-producing this event than the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa. Our biggest thanks go out to our grantees and advisors who came from all corners of the globe – some traveling for two days – to share their experience and knowledge.

With this report, we invite the broader philanthropic community to join us in developing strategies to support the global agroecology movement.

*– The foundations connected to the AgroEcology Fund*

## ANNEX 1: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

First	Last	Organization	Country
Caroline	Adoch	American Jewish World Service	Uganda
Rigoverto	Albores Serrano	DESMI	Mexico
Sandra	Alves	Movimento Camponês Popular – MCP	Brazil
Jen	Astone	Swift Foundation	USA
Hakim	Baliraine	Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa	Uganda
Maria Estela	Barco Huerta	DESMI	Mexico
Million	Belay	Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa	Ethiopia
Rajasvini	Bhansali	International Development Exchange (IDEX) / AEF Advisor	India/USA
Vinod	Bhatt	Navadanya	India
Janneke	Bruil	ILEIA	Netherlands
Kyra	Busch	Christensen Fund	USA
Rucha	Chitnis	Journalist	USA
Lynne	Davis	Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience (CAWR)	UK
Rustam	Efendi Saran	SPI/La Via Campesina	Indonesia
Yael	Falicov	Global Alliance for the Future of Food	USA
John	Fellowes	Full Circle Foundation	UK
Linda	Fitzgerald	i2i Institute	USA
Scott	Fitzmorris	SWF Immersion Foundation	USA
Claudia Sofia	Garcia Becerra	Colectivo Agroecologico	Ecuador
Roberto	Gortaire Amézcuca	Colectivo Agroecologico	Ecuador
Peter	Gubbels	Groundswell International	Ghana
Bern	Guri	Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Organisational Development (CIKOD)	Ghana
Lorenzo	Herrera	Justice Matters	USA
Henk	Hobbelink	GRAIN	Netherlands/ Spain
Sarah	Hobson	Global Fund for Women	USA
Richard Scott	Intriago Barreno	Colectivo Agroecologico	Ecuador
Margaret	Kagole	National Association of Professional Environmentalists	Uganda
Ashlesha	Khadse	KRRS/La Via Campesina	India
Byungsu	Kim	Korean Women Peasant Association	South Korea
Hwan	Kyungsan	Korean Women Peasant Association	South Korea

André	Leu	IFOAM	Australia
Patrick	Luganda	Journalist	Uganda
Daniel	Maingi	ILEIA	Kenya
Sara	Manetto	Indigenous Partnership/ Biodiversity International	Italy
Romee	Marchand	ILEIA	Netherlands
Melissa	Marin	Asociación de Trabajadores Campesinos	Nicaragua/France
Mariam	Mayet	African Centre for Biodiversity	South Africa
Gathuru	Mburu	Kivulini Trust/AEF Advisor	Kenya
Jessica	Milgroom	ILEIA	Spain
Agnes	Mirembe	Action for Rural Women's Empowerment (ARUWE)	Uganda
Anuradha	Mittal	Oakland Institute/ Our Land Our Business	USA
Lawrence	Mkhaliphi	Biowatch	South Africa
Pat	Mooney	ETC Group	Canada
Marah	Moore	i2i Institute	USA
Daniel	Moss	AgroEcology Fund	USA
Sabina	Moss-Haaren	AgroEcology Fund	USA
Nelson	Mudzingwa	La Via Campesina	Zimbabwe
Bridget	Mugambe	Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa	Uganda
Edie	Mukiibi	Slow Food/AEF Advisor	Uganda
Tabara	Ndiaye	New Field Foundation	Senegal
Mariann	Orovwuje-Bassey	Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa	Nigeria
Michel	Pimbert	Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience (CAWR)	UK
Neha	Raj Singh	Navadanya	India
Carl	Rangad	Indigenous Partnership	India
Sarojeni	Rengam	Pesticide Action Network Asia Pacific/AEF Advisor	Malaysia
Francisco	Rosado May	Universidad Intercultural Maya/AEF Advisor	Mexico
Marlen	Sánchez	Asociación de Trabajadores Campesinos	Nicaragua
Katy	Scholfield	Synchronicity Earth	UK
Anita	Sutha	Groundswell International	Ghana
John	Swift	Swift Foundation	USA
Faustin	Vuningoma	Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa	
Inga	Wachsmann	Foundation Charles Léopold Mayer FPH	France
Yeshica	Weerasekera	International Development Exchange (IDEX)	USA
John	Wilson	Tudor Trust	Zimbabwe
Katherine	Zavala	Interpreter	USA



## ANNEX 2: FULL AGENDA OF MEETING

### DAY 1, May 10, Building trust and learning about the work of each collaborative

- Mística Morning ritual by AFSA.
- Welcome and icebreakers
- Establishment of objectives, agenda and expectations
- Poster making session for the collaboratives

*The different collaboratives work together on a poster to explain which organization their collaborative consists of and the aim of their project.*
- Poster presentations by the collaboratives
- Reflection on posters presentations

### DAY 2, May 11, What does amplifying agroecology look like?

- Mística

*Morning ritual by La Via Campesina.*
- Field visits

*Visit to three agroecological farms.*
- Presentations by farmers

*Presentations by four farmers engaged with agroecology.*
- Reflection

### DAY 3, May 12, Deepening our learning about strategies for amplifying agroecology

- Mística

*Morning ritual by Navdanya.*
- Pitches by the participants for the open sessions

*Participants are invited to pitch ideas that they want to discuss during this meeting. The different*

*itches then form the basis for workshops during the open sessions.*

- Open sessions
- Deeper learning: Agroecology works well when...
- Agroecology as a science, movement and practice: Theatre sketches

*The group is divided in smaller groups. Each group makes a sketch of ten minutes to demonstrate agroecology as a science, practice and movement.*

### DAY 4, May 13, Opportunities for the AgroEcology Fund to strengthen agroecology

- Mística

*Morning ritual by representatives from Latin America*
- Presentations of open sessions
- AgroEcology Fund session

*The AgroEcology Fund and the individual organizations introduce themselves and a space is created for questions and remarks for the AgroEcology Fund.*
- Press conference

*The press conference invites journalists to St. Jude's Family Farming to learn about the Agroecology Learning Exchange, agroecology in a broader sense and the impending seed law in Uganda. The press conference is attended by a member of the Ugandan Parliament.*
- Synthesis of insights on amplifying agroecology
- Closure

# ANNEX 3: PRESS STATEMENT

## International Learning Exchange in Uganda Proposes Agroecological Solutions

### Press Statement

May 13, 201

The [AgroEcology Fund](#) and the [Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa](#) have hosted a 4 day learning exchange among farmers and farmer advocates here in Masaka to propose agroecological solutions to world hunger, rural poverty and environmental degradation. Participants gathered from over 20 countries to strengthen the agroecology movement around the globe.

We chose to hold the learning exchange here at the St. Jude Rural Training Centre because it is an internationally-recognized center where farmers from Uganda and around the world learn techniques such as organic farming, soil conservation, and biodiverse gardening.

We organized the learning exchange to encourage alternatives to an increasingly corporate-controlled and globalized food system that contributes to malnutrition, inadequate farmer income, fossil fuel dependency and massive migration from the countryside to cities. Leaders from a global agroecology movement have gathered to share knowledge and experiences and debate strategies to feed the world through healthy and sustainable food systems based in agroecology.

The AgroEcology Fund is a multi-donor fund from the US, Europe and Asia supporting agroecological practices and policies. We have extended over \$2.7 million in grants to alliances supporting viable food systems, the economic rights of small farmers and their communities, and the mitigation of climate change through low-input and ecological agriculture. We help link organizations and movements that advance agroecological solutions locally, regionally and globally.

We have partnered with the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) to co host this learning exchange. AFSA is a pan-African platform composed of food producers, youth, women, consumer and faith based organizations to co-host this learning exchange. AFSA influences policy for community rights, family farming, promotion of traditional knowledge, environmental protection and sustainable natural

resource management. AFSA advocates for family farming based on agroecological and indigenous approaches and opposes land grabs and destruction of indigenous biodiversity, livelihoods and cultures. We are proud to support AFSA in their work for African-driven solutions based on the richness of biological and cultural diversity across the continent.

The Agroecology Learning Exchange occurs during an unprecedented moment globally. A broad social movement has moved agroecology onto the international stage in forums such as the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, providing evidence of how it can solve the world's hunger crisis and reverse climate change.

This vibrant movement rejects the introduction of genetically modified seeds and food, finding them both dangerous and unnecessary. We are gravely concerned about the current Bio-technology and Bio-safety bill being proposed here in Uganda. We find it troubling that a country which is fourth in the production of organic foods in the world and first in Africa opts for the unknown. Instead of opening Uganda to GMOs, we urge policy makers to support small farmers, such as the families we have had the privilege of visiting here in the Masaka district, to produce food for their families, local markets and international organic markets. From our experience in the AgroEcology Fund, we have seen that with support, these farmers can feed the world and live in dignity and prosperity. Around the world, we have seen how grassroots organizations, NGOs, consumers, universities, and public agencies work hand-in-hand with farmers to construct sustainable and nutritious food systems. This gathering is an example of that collaboration. It is our sincere hope that this exchange will deepen the public's growing interest and commitment to work with small farmers to build healthy and just food systems based on agroecology. Thank you.

For more information, please contact:

Million Belay – [millionbelay@gmail.com](mailto:millionbelay@gmail.com)

Daniel Moss – [danielmoss9@gmail.com](mailto:danielmoss9@gmail.com)



## ANNEX 2: LIST OF ACRONYMS

### **ACB**

African Centre for Biosafety

### **AE**

Agroecology

### **AEF**

AgroEcology Fund

### **AFSA**

Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa

### **ANSD**

Africa Network on Sustainable Development

### **ARUWE**

Action for Rural Women's Empowerment

### **ATC Nicaragua**

Asociación del Trabajadores del Campo Nicaragua

### **BEDE**

Biodiversity Exchange and Dissemination of Experience

### **BT Cotton**

A genetically modified cotton variety which produces an insecticide to bollworm, produced by Monsanto

### **CAWR**

Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience

### **CFS**

Center for Food Safety

### **CICODEV Africa**

Pan-African Institute for research, training and action for Citizenship, Consumer and Development in Africa

### **CIKOD**

Center for Indigenous Knowledge and Organisational Development

### **CLOC-La Vía Campesina**

Coordinadora Latinoamericana de Organizaciones del Campo- La Vía Campesina

### **COMPAS Africa**

Comparing and Supporting Endogenous Development

### **COPAGEN**

Coalition for the Protection of Africa's Genetic Heritage

### **CSA**

Community Supported Agriculture

### **CSO**

Civil Society Organization

### **DESMI**

Desarrollo Socio Económico para los Mexicanos Indígenas

### **DIE AGRONAUTEN**

The Agronauts

### **DFID**

Department for International Development

### **ECVC**

European Coordination Via Campesina

### **ESAFF**

Eastern and Southern Africa Farmers' Forum

### **ETC Group**

Action group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration

### **AO**

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

### **FIRAB**

Fondazione Italiana per la Ricerca in Agricoltura Biologica e Biodinamica

### **GI**

Grassroots International

### **GM**

Genetically Modified

### **GMO**

Genetically Modified Organism

### **IALA**

Latin American Institute of Agroecology for Central America

### **IATP**

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy

### **IDEX**

International Development Exchange

### **INSAF**

Indian Social Action Forum

### **ITM**

Indigenous Terra Madre

### **KWPA**

Korean Women and Peasant Association

### **LWA**

Land Workers Alliance

### **MCP**

Movimento Camponês Popular

### **NARO**

National Agricultural Research Organization

### **NEFAS**

North East Slow Food & Agrobiodiversity Society

### **NGO**

Non-Governmental Organization

### **PELUM**

Participatory Ecological Land Use Management

### **PROPAC**

Plate-forme Sous Régionale des Organisations Paysannes d'Afrique Centrale

### **RENOFASA**

Regional Network of Farmers in Africa

### **SMNE**

Solidarity Movement for a New Ethiopia

### **TWN**

Third World Network





The Agroecology Learning Exchange was hosted in Uganda between May 10 and 13, 2016 by the AgroEcology Fund (AEF) and the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa. This report aims to capture the proceedings as well as the rich and valuable sharing that took place at the Exchange. The editorial team is grateful to all participants in the Exchange and the AgroEcology Fund for the time, effort, creativity and other resources put into the Exchange. We look forward to continuing to grow the movement for agroecology together.



[www.agroecologyfund.org](http://www.agroecologyfund.org)



[www.afsafrica.org](http://www.afsafrica.org)



[www.ileia.org](http://www.ileia.org)

**Editorial team**

This report has been compiled by Janneke Bruil, Jessica Milgroom, Romée Marchand (all from ILEIA) with support from Daniel Moss (AEF).

**Layout**

Angie Vanessita  
Esy Casey

**Photos**

Rucha Chitnis, Scott Fitzmorris,  
ILEIA