FRAMEWORK PILOT REPORT

African-Rooted Frameworks And Tools

By

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary i

CHAPTER 1 1

Pilot Testing Five African-rooted Frameworks and Tools 1

CHAPTER 2 6

Technology Integration across MAE Frameworks 6

CHAPTER THREE 18

Pamoja Safarini Theory Of Practice 18

CHAPTER 4 31

Engagement, Participation, Involvement And Ownership (EPIO) 31

CHAPTER 5 43

People, Environment, Place, Space, and Time (PEPST) Framework 43

CHAPTER 6 55

Cultural Empowerment Tool (Ngwanake) 55

CHAPTER 7 64

Community Based Evaluation Framework 64

Executive Summary

Introduction

This report presents Phase three of the study on **mapping African-rooted frameworks and tools for evaluation**. Phase three included five pilot tested African-rooted frameworks and technology integration across all the frameworks. Prior to the pilot tests, in Phase one, a systematic review was conducted to map African-rooted evaluation frameworks, methods and tools. This was followed by the co-creation and co-design of novel and innovative African-rooted evaluation tools and frameworks in Phase two. The co-created frameworks were then pilot tested for applicability, usability and value added in Malawi, Uganda and Zambia.

The frameworks developed were:

- **Pamoja Safarini Indigenous Theory of Practice** an African-rooted theory of change.
- **People, Environment, Place, Space, Time (PEPST)** a context-responsive evaluation framework.
- **Engagement, Participation, Involvement, and Ownership (EPIO)** a unique Afrocentric framework for planning, managing and evaluating projects that lead to people-centred solutions, ownership and sustainability of projects.
- **Ngwanake, a youth-empowered framework**, that engages youth in merging technology with indigenous knowledge to facilitate better youth participation.
- **Community-Based Language Evaluation Tool** which focuses on the use of proverbs to ground project planning design, implementation and evaluation in community value
- **Tech-integration** an additional framework to guide the integration of technology in future application of African-rooted frameworks in evaluation.

During the pilot exercise, each framework was applied and tested on the four main project cycles of **Initiation**, **Design**, **Implementation**, and **Impact Evaluation.** The pilot testing was conducted in three countries: **Malawi, Uganda and Zambia.** The countries were selected by the Mastercard Foundation as there were ongoing programmes in these countries. In Zambia (Mbarara) and Malawi (Mulanje district), the frameworks were tested on the Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED) programme. In Uganda, the frameworks were tested on the Ripple Effect programme. The project team tested the instruments on three main groups of participants: project designers, project implementers and project recipients. Each group of participants responded to discussion questions, surveys, and simulation prompts directed towards them. Outcomes of the piloting of the frameworks are briefly discussed below.

PAMOJA SAFARINI THEORY OF PRACTICE

Pamoja Safarini is an African-rooted theory of change which has seven principles of which each guides specific stages of the project design and evaluation. The principles are:

1. **Umoja** is centred on collaboration, interconnectedness, and mutual support.
2. **Sankofa** calls for drawing wisdom from the past to inform the present, shape the future, and reimagine it.

3. **Njiani** focuses on the journey of change rather than fixed endpoints.
4. **Holistic outlook** integrates cultural, spiritual, economic, and social dimensions of well-being**.** Cultural norms influence perceptions of ownership and participation, while spiritual beliefs guide relationships within the community and with the land.
5. **Visual depiction** draws on culturally meaningful imagery, symbols, and stories to convey programme intent and foster a shared understanding, including sharing the results among stakeholders.
6. **Dhani** invites evaluators to examine and challenge underlying assumptions embedded in programme design. This includes questioning externally imposed ideas about needs, solutions and success.
7. **Maono** based on the Swahili word maono, meaning “vision”, emphasises forward-thinking, integrated livelihood planning and community-driven innovation. It captures how participants envision sustainable futures as voiced by youth and elders. The framework emphasis community-driven change and local knowledge which ensured that the evaluation process was both culturally grounded and contextually appropriate.

Value Added

The key value added by the application of the Pamoja Safarini are in: cultural relevance; inclusivity and shared vision; sustainability through co-creation and empowerment of local knowledge.

Lessons Learned

It was learned that it is important to have an early engagement with traditional leaders; evaluators can support reimagining success; intergenerational dialogue is key, where young people and elders blend their knowledge and hopes for the future; emphasising the process over fixed outcomes; utilising culturally relevant visual communication; redefining "external expertise": and flexibility of evaluators in evaluation is necessary.

PEOPLE, ENVIRONMENT, PLACE, SPACE, TIME (PEPST)

The PEPST Context Responsive Evaluation Framework is an African-rooted, people-centred and context responsive approach for planning and evaluating development projects. It weaves together five core elements - **People, Environment, Place, Space and Time** - to help evaluators understand that any intervention sits within a complex social, cultural, political, spiritual and ecological systems. It treats knowledge and success as collective and relational achievements rather than individual or purely technical outputs, and it opens space for multiple ways of knowing, including oral and indigenous traditions, to shape how projects are understood and judged.

The **People** element places at the centre early and ongoing conversations among commissioners, designers, implementers, community structures and intended beneficiaries, recognising that each group brings beliefs, values and cultural practices that influence how problems are defined, how projects are implemented and what counts as evidence of change. The **Environment** element attends to the enabling and constraining conditions around the project, including policies, gender norms, socio cultural beliefs, resource allocation and ecological responsibilities, and insists on a do no harm stance toward both people and nature.

Place focuses on the histories, cultures, stories, sayings and songs that characterise the setting; while **Space** considers beliefs about physical locations, including sacred or sensitive sites, and how these shape what can be done, where and with whom. **Time** is treated as a continuum linking past, present and future, and guides evaluators to pay attention to rituals, symbols, seasonal and daily patterns, and to track changes from what was to what is while also documenting communities hopes and dreams for what could be. By integrating these elements across the full project cycle, from design and implementation to monitoring and impact assessment, the framework anchors evaluation in context and relationship.

Value Added

The framework's key value adds are: shifting evaluation away from a narrow fixation on predetermined targets and indicators toward a richer, context aware understanding of success; centring African worldviews and legitimising local knowledge in evaluation theory and practice, broadening the knowledge base beyond written Western texts and valuing indigenous science and community agency; communities supported to define success in their own terms, co-created theories of change and to generated indicators using communities concepts and methods. The framework brings relationships, power and transformation into focus by encouraging evaluators to pay attention to mindset shifts, relationship building, community strategies for adaptation and innovation, responses to power asymmetries and the collective imagining of more just futures. It is designed to complement rather than replace existing tools by adding vital dimensions of interconnectedness, relationality, environmental respect and long-term community well-being.

Lessons Learned

From its application lessons learned are that evaluators, implementers, funders and policymakers need to: reorient their work toward context, understand relationships and indigenous knowledge; use PEPST from the very beginning of project design so that objectives, strategies and evaluation criteria are jointly defined with communities; continuously apply the five elements throughout implementation to adapt projects to real conditions on the ground; promote the inclusion of community defined indicators of success; cultural preservation and revitalise traditional knowledge and systems level changes in assessments of impact. Embedding PEPST alongside existing planning and evaluation tools in organisational guidelines, terms of reference and standards can make African evaluations more contextualised, transformative, culturally responsive and sustainable, while strengthening community voice and ensuring that no useful knowledge is left out when judging the value and effects of development projects.

ENGAGEMENT, PARTICIPATION, INVOLVEMENT AND OWNERSHIP (EPIO)

The framework consists of four interconnected elements namely: **Engagement**, **Participation**, **Involvement** **and** **Ownership**. The **Engagement** element demonstrates the value of pre-engagement with the community to understand the community's social, cultural, and historical context. The **Participation** element focuses on community participation that shows a pivotal role played by community leaders in facilitating inclusive gatherings. The **Involvement** element is indicative of the community members involvement as shown from both Zambia and Malawi which demonstrated the importance of the people-to-people level of

involvement and organization. The **Ownership** element is shown as a marker of collective success that demonstrated that the community's full support and deep connection to the project led to true sustainability and the sense of community ownership.

Value Added

The EPIO framework is Afrocentric, inclusive and community centred. The four elements of the framework are focal in many African communities as it enabled participants and project leadership to recognise and incorporate community specific cultural values and principles in the evaluation ecosystem. Its distinctive value lies in its ability to serve both as a participatory framework and an evaluative tool that assesses the quality of engagement through culturally resonant indicators, including social responsibility, dignity, and interconnectedness. It supports communities to highlight and report community's specific cultural practices that inform the implementation of projects such as the use of community languages, incorporating community leadership into the inception and implementation of the project including using cultural nuances to ensure project success. The framework further provides an opportunity for project leaderships to acknowledge, highlight and promote their role in the success of the project.

Lesson Learned

The framework indicates that the community is critical for the sustainability and overall success of the project. It effectively highlights that engagement is not a one-time consultation, but a continuous, relational process that respects cultural knowledge, affirms community agency, and enhances both participation and outcomes. It further, indicates that participation, when grounded in cultural practices and built on reciprocal learning, has the power to transform development initiatives into truly community-owned efforts. On another dimension it demonstrates that meaningful community involvement rooted in mutual support, cultural relevance, and shared agency is essential for the sustainability and long-term success of development initiatives as community participation is not simply a methodological preference but a foundational pillar for sustainable development in African contexts.

Across all the four elements, the tool facilitated meaningful dialogue, fostered inclusivity, empowered local actors, and supported sustainable outcomes rooted in Ubuntu values. In sum, the EPIO tool demonstrated strong applicability and usability in Malawi, Uganda and Zambia, adapting effectively to each context's cultural norms and community structures.

THE NGWANAKE CULTURAL EMPOWERMENT FRAMEWORK

The Ngwanake Cultural Empowerment Framework is an Afro-centric, youth-focused evaluation model developed to strengthen the integration of cultural knowledge, community values and technology in the design, implementation, and assessment of development interventions. The framework provides a structured pathway to promote cultural consciousness, innovation and autonomy throughout the evaluation cycle. Its purpose is to enhance youth participation, reinforce cultural identity and ensure that evaluation processes reflect the lived experiences, traditions and aspirations of African communities.

The framework consists of three interconnected constructs: **Cultural Integration, Cultural Innovation, and Autonomy (Jitegemee**), each

guiding specific stages of project design and evaluation. **Cultural Integration** empowers communities to bring their cultural knowledge, values, and practices into the inception and planning phases. **Cultural Innovation** facilitates the co-creation and adaptation of culturally relevant solutions during implementation and monitoring, leveraging on commonly used technologies such as WhatsApp, Facebook, TikTok, and other digital tools. **Autonomy** focuses on sustaining interventions, promoting community ownership, and amplifying outcomes using cultural expressions (songs, proverbs, folklore) and digital platforms.

The framework's comprehensive application across the inception, design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and sustainability phases ensures active participation from youth, elders, leaders, and other stakeholders. It emphasises relational values such as communalism, dignity, interdependence, humility, and cooperation, while advancing technological adaptability to enhance engagement and impact. By grounding evaluation in African epistemologies, the Ngwanake Framework promotes inclusive decision-making, strengthens cultural resilience, and supports the creation of culturally rooted innovations and value chains.

Value Added

The framework's unique value-adds are based on the youth-centric design; the integration of community science with technology; the potential to drive job creation; cultural entrepreneurship, and sustainable development. Through these strengths, the Ngwanake Cultural Empowerment Framework provides a transformative tool for culturally responsive, technologically enabled and community-owned evaluation practices across Africa.

Lessons Learned

Key lessons from applying the framework highlight the potential to foster intergenerational collaboration, address power dynamics, enhance local problem-solving, and protect Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS), including considerations of intellectual property rights.

COMMUNITY LANGUAGE BASED EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Community Language Based Evaluation Framework (CoLABEV) promotes evaluation grounded in African values and methodologies to decolonize evaluation. It provides an African Indigenous Knowledge System (IKS) encompassing proverbs, songs, idioms, storytelling, folktales, myths and taboos which communities use in evaluation of daily and developmental issues concerning agriculture, health, education, environment, etc. The CoLABEV use in evaluation is aligned with the African people indigenized values and realities thus making projects to be impactful and sustainable in Africa.

CoLABEV is a four-stage model that enables evaluators to undertake project evaluation from design and initiation, data collection, reporting and communication that cover the entire evaluation life. The first phase aims at determining if the community context and needs of stakeholders were integrated in the project initiation and if the elements of CoLABEV such as proverbs, storytelling and idioms are selected and agreed upon to contribute to the understanding of the project evaluation design. The second phase aims to bring together key stakeholders to co-create in the project design using appropriate proverbs. The third phase establishes evaluative insights from proverbs, riddles and idioms that evaluators can engage

communities meaningfully in data collection, analysis, and processing to ensure ethics and integrity in all the processes, while respecting local contexts and project evaluation reporting. The fourth phase also uses relevant proverbs, riddles and idioms that have insights into the most appropriate ways of reporting and communicating evaluation findings to communities and key stakeholders.

Value Added

The value added by the CoLABEV framework are that it gives convening space to the targeted beneficiaries, project designers and implementers and funders to discuss the applicable proverbs songs and riddles that are relevant in shaping the project intended purpose, projected outcomes and indicators of success. It also improves the relevance and impact of the project interventions through informing the design, implementation, monitoring and communication of evaluation findings. Furthermore, it encourages people to work in partnership, to be resilient and give feed-back to project funders, implementers and the community.

Lessons Learned

Some lessons learned are that application of the CoLABEV framework is usable across all PAIEC developed tools and frameworks as it enabled CAMFED young girls to express their cultural beliefs on taboos and how they have adapted them and changed. The cooperation between all stakeholders centres around clear understandable language by all which will lead to sustainable projects.

TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION IN AFRICAN-ROOTED EVALUATION

The purpose of integrating technology into African-rooted evaluation is to enhance the quality, depth, and accessibility of culturally grounded evidence while maintaining the integrity of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS). Technology is used across three core functions within the evaluation process: **data collection, facilitation, and communication.** In data collection, digital tools (WhatsApp, KoboCollect) enable the capture of multimodal evidence, including voice, video, photographs, and text, which are essential for documenting oral traditions, gestures, symbolism, and lived experiences that are central to African-rooted practices. In facilitation, technology supports participatory processes through the use of visual and audio prompts, digital storytelling (e.g. AI-generated imagery), and structured digital tools that enhance dialogue, reflection, and collective meaning-making. In communication, digital platforms and media allow evaluation findings, stories, and lessons to be shared in formats that are more engaging, accessible, and relevant, particularly for youth and digitally connected audiences.

Value Added

The value added by technology integration lies in its ability to expand inclusion, improve evidentiary depth, and increase the relevance of evaluation processes. Digital tools make it possible to preserve otherwise intangible cultural elements such as tone, gesture, performance, and symbolism. Offline-capable data collection platforms improve feasibility in low-connectivity settings and reduce data loss, while multimedia capture strengthens the

credibility and richness of qualitative findings. Technology also increases youth participation by aligning evaluation methods with platforms and tools already embedded in their daily lives, such as mobile applications and social media. Furthermore, digital storytelling and visualisation tools enable consistent communication of complex ideas across diverse contexts, supporting both local learning and broader dissemination.

Lessons Learned

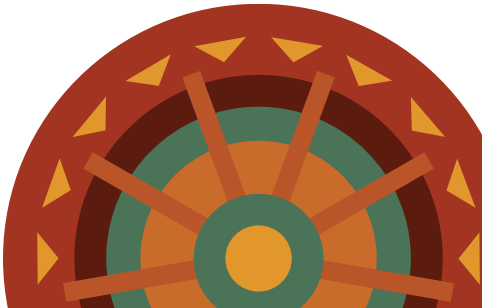
Key lessons from the pilot integration of technology highlight the importance of contextual appropriateness and practical feasibility. Offline-capable tools proved most effective in low-connectivity environments, whereas solutions reliant on continuous internet access were often unusable. The piloting demonstrated that digital video, audio, and photographic capture is highly valuable for documenting African-rooted expressions, but only when sufficient attention is given to recording quality, informed consent, and data management. Automated transcription and AI-based translation tools were found to be unreliable for local languages and dialects, requiring manual review and cultural mediation. Social media–style content creation proved highly engaging for youth and effective for eliciting stories and proverbs, but raised considerations around data costs, privacy, and cultural ownership. Overall, the pilots confirmed that technology adds significant value when it is deliberately selected, ethically governed, and adapted to local realities rather than imposed as a uniform solution.

Conclusion

It is evident from the piloting that the five frameworks - **Pamoja Safarini Indigenous Theory of Practice; People, Environment, Place, Space, Time (PEPST)**; **Engagement, Participation, Involvement, and Ownership**; **Ngwanake, a youth-empowered framework**, **Community-Based Language Evaluation Tool** - are critical in Made in Africa Evaluation with the support of tech-integrations.

During the pilot exercise, each framework was applied and tested on the four main project cycles of **Initiation**, **Design**, **Implementation**, and **Impact Evaluation and the outcomes indicate.** These frameworks are **applicable, usable**; and have been used to measure the **impact;** to evaluate the **process of initiation**; to assess the **value added** and simulate parts of, or all aspects of them in Malawi, Uganda and Zambia settings.

Embedding the above alongside existing planning and evaluation tools in organisational guidelines, terms of reference and standards can make African evaluations more contextualised, transformative, culturally responsive and sustainable, while strengthening community voice and ensuring that no useful knowledge is left out when judging the value and effects of development projects in the African contexts.



CHAPTER 1

Pilot Testing Five African-rooted Frameworks and Tools

Introduction

This report presents Phase three of the study on **mapping African-rooted frameworks and tools** – five pilot tested African-rooted frameworks. In Phase one of the project, Mastercard Foundation commissioned **the University of Botswana in partnership with the University of Ghana, Africa Nazarene University, African Evaluation Association (AfrEA), Tiyimele Consultants and Data Innovators which formed the Pan African Indigenous Evaluation Consortium (PAIEC)** to conduct a systematic review to map African-rooted evaluation frameworks, methods and tools, as well as to co-create and co-design novel and innovative African-rooted evaluation tools and frameworks, and pilot test them for applicability, usability and value added.

Mastercard Foundation works with private sectors, donors, young people, women, and people living with disabilities, to create effective systems and infrastructure, supportive policies, and an environment where young people can find decent work and/or become entrepreneurs. The Mastercard Foundation has interest in participatory people-centric and context appropriate evaluation frameworks and tools that can support the Foundation's mission to enable young people in Africa to access dignified and fulfilling work. One of the findings of the systematic review was the limited visibility and use of African-rooted evaluation tools and frameworks in development projects in Africa. Existing frameworks and tools were not always applied in planning and evaluation due the lack of guidelines or clarity around questions of application.

In the second phase of the project, the consortium team conducted a workshop to co-create, co-design African-rooted evaluation frameworks, tools and protocols that address power asymmetries and elevate



Photo: Participants during project pilot

The objectives of the co-creation and co-design workshop were as follows:

1. Co-create and adapt African-rooted Frameworks, Tools, Methods and Protocols to address power asymmetries and elevate voices of the marginalized. The workshop aimed at reducing the over-reliance on Western evaluation methodologies and develop evaluation frameworks, tools and guidelines that are more contextually relevant for Africa.
2. Develop comprehensive MAE (Made in Africa Evaluation) guidelines for the application of existing frameworks and tools which is currently lacking, as well as integrating Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) into evaluation theory, practice and process.
3. Encourage youth-led African-rooted evaluations and integrate technology in MEL systems to suit local cultures and experiences.
4. Explore ways to influence approaches that funders and commissioners take in project design and evaluation, to encourage practices that align with more inclusive and sustainable methodologies.
5. Adapt and co-create frameworks, including tools that facilitate community involvement from project initiation to impact evaluation and dissemination of findings.

This chapter outlines the methodology of the pilot testing. It is followed by a chapter on the integration of technology in the frameworks. The insights from each of the tested frameworks is then reported in subsequent chapters.

Purpose of the Pilot

The purpose of the pilot was to test the tools' applicability to real-world programme planning and evaluation, their usefulness, and their value added to evaluation theory and practice from an African perspective. The pilot also identified challenges and gaps in applying the frameworks and tools, which were used to modify the frameworks.

During the pilot exercise, each framework was applied and tested on the four main project cycles of **Initiation**, **Design**, **Implementation**, and **Impact Evaluation.** The following general aims guided the pilot exercise:

1. Test the **applicability** of the five frameworks. For example, is it possible to use some of these frameworks to initiate and develop the objectives goals of a development programme?
2. Determine the usability of each of the five frameworks. For example, how user friendly are the frameworks? Are the frameworks easy to use to guide **implementation, monitoring and impact evaluation of** development programmes? Are the frameworks **adaptable** to different contexts?
3. Evaluate if the frameworks can be used to measure the **impact** of the development programmes on the intended recipients. For example, can **PEPST** be used to mediate project success, community ownership, and sustainability of projects? Does context matters in the real world?
4. Use the frameworks to evaluate the **process of initiation**. For example, are all stakeholders were consulted?
5. Assess the **value added** by the frameworks. For instance, what difference do these frameworks bring when compared to mainstream evaluation frameworks?

6. Simulate parts of, or all aspects of these frameworks to have first-hand experience in real life situation application of the frameworks.

The five frameworks that were pilot tested are as follows:

i. **Pamoja Safarini Indigenous Theory of Practice**, an African-rooted theory of change presented in chapter 3.
ii. **People, Environment, Place, Space, Time (PEPST)**, a context-responsive evaluation framework presented in chapter 4.
iii. **Engagement, Participation, Involvement, and Ownership (EPIO)**, a unique Afrocentric framework for planning, managing and evaluating projects that lead to people-centred solutions, ownership and sustainability of projects is presented in chapter 5.
iv. **Ngwanake, a youth-empowered framework** that engages youth in merging Technology with Indigenous knowledge to facilitate better youth participation is presented in chapter 6.
v. **Community-Based Language Evaluation Tool** which focuses on the use of proverbs to ground project planning design, implementation and evaluation in community values presented in chapter 6.

These are the tools that emerged out of the co-creation workshop during Phase two of the project. After pilot testing the frameworks, in Phase three, they were reviewed to incorporate what was learned from the field.

Pilot Test Sites

The pilot testing was conducted in three countries: **Malawi, Uganda and Zambia**. The sites were selected by the Mastercard Foundation as there were ongoing programmes in these countries.

In Zambia and Malawi, the frameworks were tested on the Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED) programme**.** The pilot team collaborated in pilot testing the frameworks and tools with the Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED), which is a Pan-African organisation that is working in partnership with Mastercard Foundation to revolutionize how girls education is delivered, through a model that radically improved girls' prospects of becoming independent influential women; thus, creating an association of young women to accelerate their path to livelihoods and leadership. It catalysed the power of the most vulnerable girls and young women to create the future they imagine for themselves, for their communities, and for Africa. CAMFED programme thrives through a grassroots-led approach that involves the communities in taking responsibility for the welfare and success of their most vulnerable girls, matching international donor contributions with resources generated locally. The frameworks were tested on CAMFED's programme on Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA). In this programme, CAMFED collaborates with (CSA) experts and partners to build community resilience and outreach through skilling and entrepreneurship. In Malawi the pilot tests were conducted in the Mulanje district, while in Zambia the pilot test was in Mbarara.

In Uganda, the frameworks were tested on the Ripple Effect programme. The Ripple effect in partnership with Mastercard Foundation is implementing a five-year Youth Inclusive Diary Market Systems Project effective 1st October 2022 to 28th February 2027. The project aims to

empower 63,400 young women and men (70% women, 10% refugees, and 5% youth with disabilities) to access dignified and fulfilling employment in the dairy value chain. The project goal is “Improved socio-economic wellbeing of young people in the diary value chain in Southwestern Uganda by 2027”. The project outcomes revolve around increased access to quality skilling and skills utilization in the dairy value chain by youth, including increased growth of business enterprises for the young people in the dairy value chain. The skills training is augmented by a mentorship and apprenticeship programme to enable young people to gain additional hands-on experience and confidence in managing their own businesses. The pilot test was conducted in Mbarara district.

Approach to Pilot Testing

The team tested its instruments on three main groups of participants: project designers, project implementers and project recipients. Each group of participants responded to questions directed towards them. The three main evaluation questions were on:

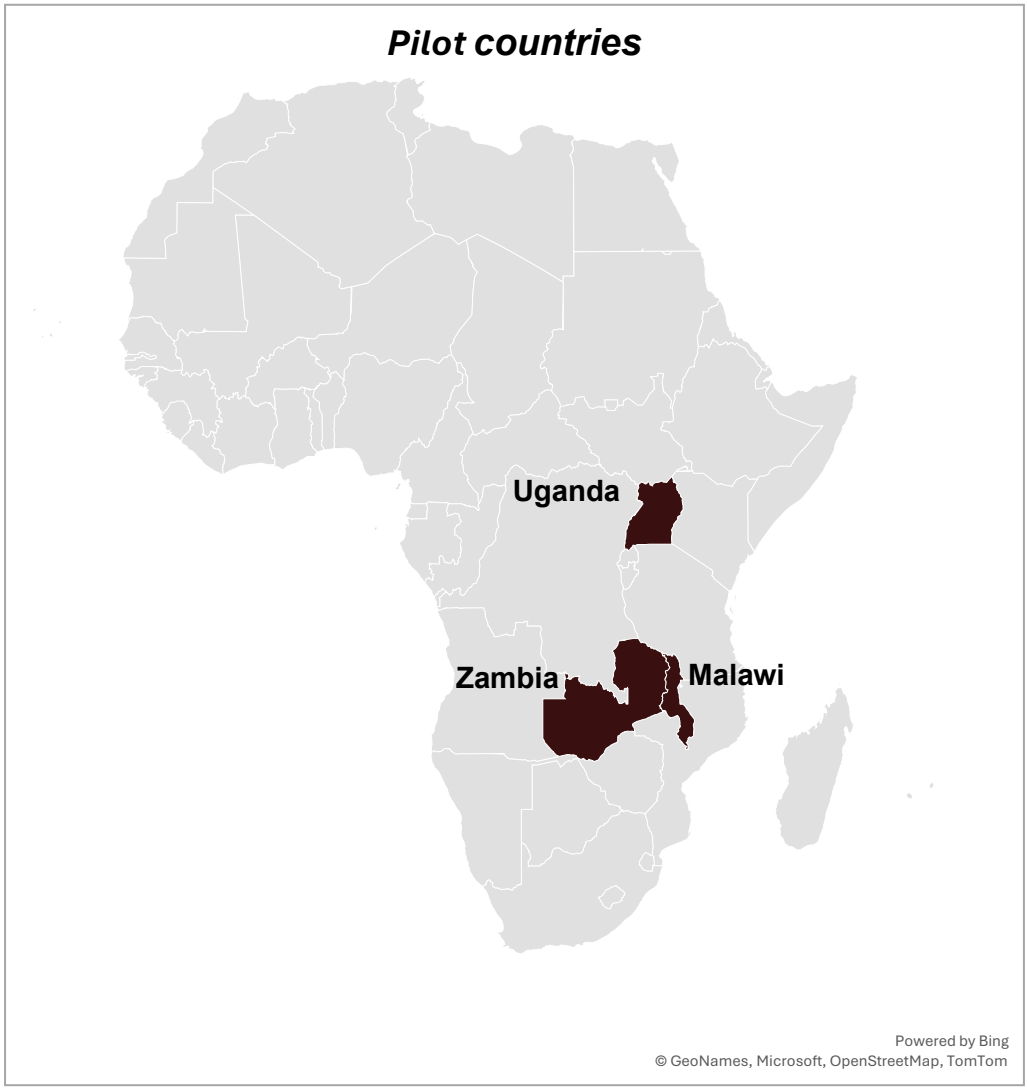
1. Project designers’ experiences in the initiation and design aimed at measuring applicability and usability of the frameworks to the initiation of the project.
2. Implementers’ experiences with the delivery of the projects aimed at measuring the applicability and usability of tools to the implementation process.
3. Project recipients’ views on project success and impact aimed at applying the tools to measuring success and impact.

The team held conversations with recruited participants. They were requested to consent to take part in the testing of the framework. The pilot was conducted through one-day workshops, lasting not more than six hours. One-hour conversations were held with each group of the participants on each of the frameworks. Observations, audiotapes, videotapes recordings, photographing and social media methods were used to collect data. Table 1 shows the number of participants by group in each country.

Table 1. Participants by country, Programme Designers, Implementers, and Project Recipients

Country	Programme Designers	Implementers	Project Recipients
Zambia	5	13	19
Malawi	6	18	9
Uganda	4	8	41

Each framework had prototype questions to guide the data collection. Each framework was aligned to the most appropriate tech tools. Technology was integrated throughout the process of each pilot. This included the implementation of the framework in data collection, facilitation, and communication steps. Integration within the framework implementation is described in detail in chapter 2. In addition, the consortium integrated the use of technology in its approach to project management, data management, analysis and and communication using tools such as Google Services, Canva, KoboCollect, and WhatsApp. Chapter 2 presents the integration of technology in the pilot testing methodology.


Pilot countries
Uganda
Zambia
Malawi
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CHAPTER 2

Technology Integration across MAE Frameworks

Introduction

The integration of technology was an important step in the pilot methodology design. It is clear that one must understand how technology may support MAE implementation. However, issues of connectivity, mobile access and digital literacy must also be considered in MAE, such as opting for tools and approaches which allow for offline use of technology, provision of hardware and Wi-Fi, translating of tools. While ensuring tools fit the context, it is valuable to integrate approaches of emerging interest and growing usage, e.g. TikTok.

The lessons on tech-enabled MAE from the systematic review and understanding of the varied contexts of digital inclusion was incorporated in the pilot of all frameworks. This chapter details the design of tech-integration, tools tested, and the findings as it pertains to implementation of the MAE frameworks.



Photo: Youth developing TikTok content

The Approach: Stages of Tech Integration

Technology was integrated into the pilot process in three-stage/aspects of each pilot - **data collection, facilitation, collation and communication** - using eight tools or approaches. By testing the integration of technology, the extent to which integrating technology was applicable to the piloted MAE frameworks was assessed; the extent to which the selected technology was relevant and usable in the pilot contexts; and the value add of integrating technology with MAE frameworks was evaluated. Tables 2 lists the tech planned for each framework and the associated simulation activity and evaluation stage.

Table 2. Integration of tech for each framework, per pilot stage

Framework	Data Collection	Process/ Facilitation tool	Collate & Communicate
EPIO	Digital elicitation survey Otter Transcription software	Tablet video and voice recordings	Canva voice-over stories and AI generated images
Pamoja Safarini	Digital elicitation survey Otter Transcription software Photographs of drawings	Tablet video and voice recordings	AI generated images depicting symbols and narrative as conveyed by community
PEPST	Digital elicitation survey Otter Transcription software Photographs of drawings	Tablet video and voice recordings Animation of proverbs	Canva voice-over stories and AI generated images
Ngwanake	Digital elicitation survey Otter Transcription software	Tablet video and voice recordings AI generated image prompts	Canva voice-over stories and AI generated images Tik Tock video recordings and WhatsApp group sharing

Survey Data Collection

Participant data was collected to document demographic information or additional qualitative data in the implementation of all the frameworks. Digital data collection tools were used in the administering of the elicitation survey. Three potential solutions with consideration of relevance to the communities based on were identified: digital accessibility, translation, useability and offline functionality.

The use of technology in data collection was assessed for its useability to streamline processes in implementing African-rooted practices and adaptability of evaluators to local contexts.

Given adequate mobile penetration in the pilot communities, it was anticipated that many participants would have a smartphone. If some participants did not have a smartphone, four

tablets were provided for data collection. The elicitation survey was designed in three platforms: WhatsApp Chat Bot, Fatima App and KoboCollect. As summarised in the following table, each application presented different benefits in ease of use, translation of content and integrating of alternative media. The three tools were designed to collect the same data, including binary response, multiple choice, and open-ended voice recorded questions. The surveys were tested the day before administering to assess any challenges with connectivity or user experience.

The KoboCollect tool was selected for use in Zambia, Malawi and Uganda due to poor connectivity settings, and was administered at the beginning of the pilot session. The consent information was presented in English and more commonly spoken local language in each pilot area (e.g. Tonga in Zambia), followed by participant questions, and administering the survey using the roaming tablets. The survey was accessible in English or the selected local language, and a translator available for other languages or to assist individuals with poor literacy. This required about 45 minutes for all 15-20 participants to complete the survey each day.

Applicability and useability: Digital data collection tools with offline functionality and voice recording capability are most applicable and useable in low connectivity contexts. They allow for recording quantitative and qualitative info in multiple formats relevant to contexts where an MAE framework is implemented in an evaluation. However, tools that require significant data and online functioning only, like Whatsapp Chat bots, are not useable in the same contexts. The integration of AI translation in these tools is applicable, to adapt surveys in local languages, but was found not to be useable for some local languages and dialects. Additionally, the digital tool requires the relevant skills to adapt and deploy the technology which may limit the usability amongst teams with limited digital skills.

Figure 1. Sample views of three digital solutions pilot tested (a) WhatsApp, (b) Fatima, (c) KoboCollect

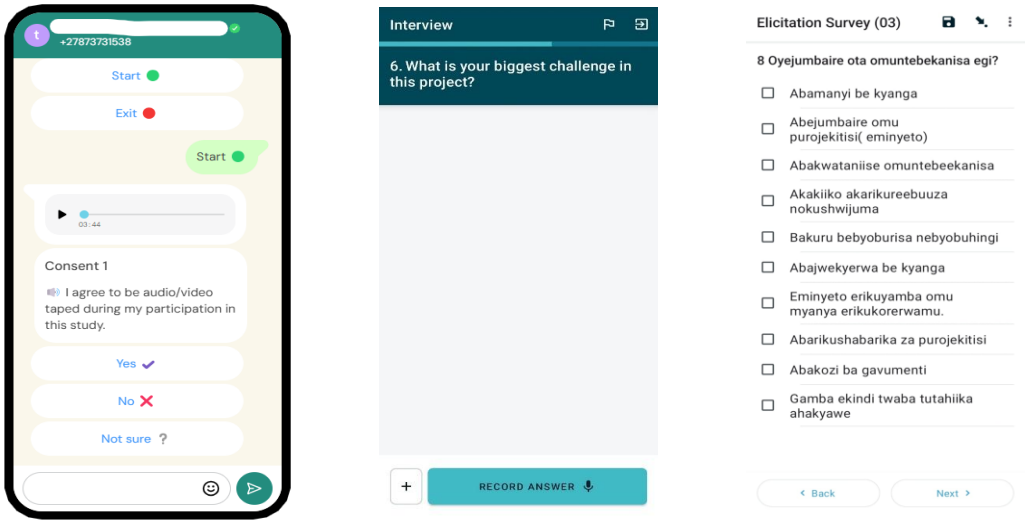


Table 3. Digital data collection tool comparison

Tool/ approach	Purpose	Benefits	Limitations	Requirements
1. WhatsApp Chat Bot (Turn.io)	Remote elicitation survey data collection, multimedia capture	Ease of use and user familiarity, multi-media to assist with communication and capture, AI translation integration	Requires connectivity; requires proof of company and Meta account, inflated cost	Mobile devices, tablets, Local sim cards, data
2. Fatima	Buck-up for remote elicitation survey data collection in low connectivity	Ease of use, offline functionality, AI translation integration	Limited use of multi-media, moderate cost	Mobile devices, tablets, Local sim cards, data
3. KoboCollect	Buck-up for remote elicitation survey data collection in low connectivity	No subscription fee, Ease of use, offline functionality, Manual translation integration	Limited use of multi-media	Mobile devices, tablets, Local sim cards, data

Video and Photographic Data Capture

Common approaches to document knowledge have not recorded visual aspects in gesture or intonation in sound which are not well captured in literature and other forms of data. Hence, the pilot team intended to test the capture of video and photographic content and identify any evidence/indication of the usefulness of capturing this visual information as part of implementing African-rooted frameworks.

All group discussions testing the frameworks were video, audio and photographically recorded. The content was reviewed and codified to assess applicability of the frameworks. In addition, the team reviewed the content for additional visual evidence which may be relevant or useful for noting in application of African-rooted practices.



Figure 2. Excerpt from video demonstrating gesture capture

Two tablets were set up in each group session. One was positioned using a stand for stabilised video recording, and another used as a roaming mic to voice record.

An example is depicted in the image in figure 2, as a participant describes his experience of working with young women. He gestures and describes figuratively our limitations in being able to see behind us/our back and that these women play a supporting role in agribusinesses through knowledge and awareness.

Table 4. Visual recording tool comparison

Tool/ approach	Purpose	Benefits	Limitations	Requirements
1. Video recording – qualitative data capture	Video capture of pilot process and engagements	Digital capture gestures, audio, dance, role play	Requires consent, intensive editing, and synthesis	Mobile devices, tablets, tripods
2. Photography – qualitative data capture	Photographic capture of drawing and art content	Digital capture of symbolic and visual elements	Requires context and consent	Mobile devices, tablets
3. Sound – qualitative data capture	Sound capture of drawing and art content	Digital voice, sound, and intonation	Requires context and consent	Mobile devices, tablets, microphones

Applicability and useability: Video, sound and photographic recording was applicable for the capture of stories, drawings and proverb explanations as relevant to all frameworks. It was useable only in instance where the capture was of adequate quality. This required the use of a migrating microphone which was not always practical to disburse around a discussion group. In addition, the use of transcription software was found not useable due to the varied quality of recordings, and the poor translation quality. This required manual processes to transcribe and translate.

Social Media

The use of social media was first explored as a tool to increase engagement of youth with MAE frameworks and to potentially increase reach through live streaming and online content creation challenge. Furthermore, the team tested approaches using technology that may support MAE framework uptake/interaction amongst youth.

During the process of design, several limitations in integrating social media in the pilot was identified. Live streaming or any content creating required access to a social media profile and having an existing user follower base; and live streaming did not restrict who joined or shared content. Hence, in Zambia, the team opted to simulate a TikTok challenge, whereby pilot participates created video content in the format of a TikTok challenge and shared the content via a private WhatsApp group.

The participants worked in groups and were each provided with a tablet and stand. They were given the instruction to discuss a folktale or proverb which holds meaning to them and relates to a situation they experienced and learned from as an agripreneur. The participants assisted each other to record, access the WhatsApp group via a QR code and share their posts.



Figure 3. WhatsApp group for sharing Proverb 'TikTok Challenge'

During facilitated conversations in Zambia, Malawi and Uganda, participants shared that social media is an important tool for marketing their products. Participants in Zambia and Uganda shared that using their WhatsApp status, they are able to regularly promote their products by showcasing videos and images of their items for sale. One participant in Uganda reported that YouTube was a useful tool for learning. Educational content enabled her/him to respond to a request for a new product, springrolls. She was able to find recipes, learn new skills and improve her sales with her new product.

Applicability and useability: The use of social media is applicable to capturing and conveying stories, experiences, and proverbs in novel formats. It useable and amongst youth who were highly engaged with the process of producing content and willingness to share. The useability is lower amongst participants who are less tech and social media savvy, and can incur significant data costs.

Tech-Assisted Storytelling

Storytelling was identified as a key approach in implementing all frameworks. Storytelling allows participants to engage with sensitive and/or complex topics conveyed through characters, lessons, and experiences. Visual and sound aids further allow participants to immerse themselves in the story elements, providing the facilitator a basis for posing questions and probing.

Stories were generated using existing folktales or real-life examples shared by participants. Stories were augmented using Canva Pro, creating AI generated images, animation and voice over recordings. During the process of developing the stories we also assessed the technology relevance and potential bias in image generation and sound that may not be rooted in African principles (e.g. stereotypical depictions, lack of African accents in AI voice overs). In addition, we generated symbols based on the key elements of the Pamoja Saforini principles.

Images and stories were used during all framework sessions. They were presented using the tablets or projected. If voice over stories were included, the story was played followed by translation. The facilitator then posed questions related to the image story, as aligned to the framework being piloted. For example, during the Pamoja Saforini session, participants were shared a story of a young maize farmer. Using the story and images as prompts, the facilitator posed questions to clarify their views and definitions of success, such as "*Do you see yourself in the picture?* ", and "*Why would you say she is successful*?".

Applicability and useability: Tech-assisted storytelling is applicable in the cases where visual aids assist communication and prompting engagement with stories. It was useable amongst team members familiar with the software, which may be a limiting factor for broader implementation.

Figure 4. Sample of AI generated images used in developing stories





Lessons learned

Digital data collection

Kobo Collect proved to be the most useful in contexts of poor connectivity. Where a translator was available, the process of fully translating the survey and consent was simple. We also found that limiting questions to categorical or binary and voice recorded responses allowed participants the opportunity to share detailed feedback and in their own language. Most participants were comfortable in capturing data using a the KoboCollect App on a tablet, and some support was needed to community members who were not familiar with smart devices.

WhatsApp was useful in allowing for posing questions and responding to questions in varied formats that may allow for more flexible and accessible survey design – e.g. video recordings, images, voice record of consent and so forth. In comparison to KoboCollect, the chatbot was easier to access as many participants already have the WhatsApp application. They only required Wi-Fi connection and sharing of the chatbot contract through cell number or QR code. However, the chatbot does not have offline functionality and could not be used due to poor connectivity in the pilot areas.

The Fatima application proved potentially relevant for offline data collection and coordinating remote interviews. The standard consent process and additional ethics risk flagging functionality may be useful in contexts where there is a need to increase measures for of consent. The AI integration also assisted in immediate transcription and translation of audio content into local languages. We found the AI translation required significant review of content, given poor quality of translation and transcription of recordings in Bemba and Tonga.

The use of the tables had an added value of videographic capture of the use of gesture as individuals express in conveying stories, proverbs and folk tales. In some cases, the verbal or written description provided through KoboCollect sufficiently captures the content. However, in other contexts movement, dance and gesture are key parts of conveying meaning and are aligned with the approaches described in the PEPST, Pamoja frameworks.



Figure 5. Participants briefed (left) and voice recording (right) on data collection using KoboCollect App on tablets

Young people are eager to create and share content, and all feel more comfortable sharing in their own language

The TikTok Challenge was well received by young people. They were eager to record and share content and found the process easier and more engaging in discussing proverbs and sharing personal experiences. This approach may be adapted for different MAE frameworks, with a particular focus on youth. Excerpts below depict the challenge and a folk tale shared by youth during the Zambian pilot.

During discussion participants indicated that they currently do not share content about their African-rooted practices and much of their cultural knowledge is shared by word of mouth. The indicated interest in sharing such knowledge via social media.

The benefits and risks of sharing such content via social media should be further assessed. However, we did find that creating private social media spaces (e.g. WhatsApp Group, Facebook page) does create a safer space for participants to share and discuss in asynchronously and in a format which motivates them to speak openly.

"I didn't have good harvest last year. So, I take my proverb as – "Sjoki munsi" - I don't go back and regret everything I had."



“Once upon a time, in the jungle, there were many animals were living together as a community and the king was the lion. He had a daughter who was at the marriage stage. All the other animals wanted to marry her because she was cute. He therefore called for a race to identify the best suitor for his daughter. All the animals took part and then hare, and tortoise came out as number one, hence a tie. They needed to break the tie so that only one of the two would be the winner.



The two, hare and tortoise were made to run so that one would be victorious. As they started running hare teased tortoise, “Do you think you can surpass me when I am the fastest runner in this jungle?” Tortoise remained silent. Because he demeaned tortoise, hare decide to take a nap. He overslept and the competitor walked across the finish line and was crowned the winner. He married the king’s daughter, and by the time hare woke up it was over. He had lost to tortoise.

Youth use multiple social media platforms and digital tools that can be considered in innovative ways in facilitating and communicating African-rooted practices

In all the pilot sites, young people involved in agriculture and dairy marketing are embracing technology in dynamic and creative ways to grow their businesses and connect with their communities. Social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and Telegram are widely used to promote their agricultural products and share updates, as well as for research. For example, WhatsApp status updates are a popular tool for advertising, and individuals monitor viewership trends to tailor content that resonates most with their audience. Influencers like Olivier Tutu serve as sources of inspiration, offering practical tips and entrepreneurial insights. Video content—often edited using the CapCut video editor—is frequently shared, alongside photos, to visually showcase farming processes, harvests, and product quality. Despite challenges with network coverage, many overcome this by keeping multiple SIM cards from different providers to ensure consistent connectivity.



Figure 6. Participants recording TikTok challenge videos

Beyond social media, these young entrepreneurs use technology for business operations. Tools like the Mytalu app help them manage their finances, while Meta AI is used to support report writing and refine grammar. Familiarity with ODK data capture is also common, especially for submitting regular reports to CAMFED. Smartphones and tablets serve as vital tools not only for communication—coordinating meetings, conducting surveys, and handling emails—but also for bridging knowledge gaps through online learning and peer exchange. Although privacy concerns amongst youth are minimal, there is a general practice of maintaining separate personal and business accounts. While youth do not rely heavily on traditional media, they acknowledge that radio remains a crucial educational medium, particularly for older community members.

Digitising stories in images, animation and audio are enablers in implementing all MAE frameworks

Using the AI generated images and voice recorded stories helped ensure consistency in stories across pilot locations. The visual aspects did allow participants to interact with the story and visualise aspects that were not explicit in the verbal elements of the story. How facilitators utilise the images for probing and facilitate using the stories is varied amongst facilitators and an area which requires specific guidance and briefing. Designing the stories and set up of digital tools does require some technical expertise, but does not require advanced training or high costs.

Conclusion

The findings confirm that technology, when contextually selected, significantly enhances the applicability and usability of African-rooted evaluation practices. Its integration into facilitation, data collection, analysis, and communication enables richer, more authentic capture of cultural expressions, such as gestures, proverbs, and storytelling, while streamlining processes across diverse settings.

For youth in particular, technology adds distinct value by aligning evaluation methods with tools and platforms they already use in their daily lives - social media, mobile apps, and AI-assisted content creation. This alignment increases engagement, fosters ownership, and provides avenues for youth to express perspectives in formats that are familiar, creative, and shareable, thereby amplifying their role in shaping and communicating evaluation findings.

In the African evaluation context, technology represents more than just efficiency, it is a bridge between tradition and innovation. It enables the preservation and dissemination of Indigenous knowledge systems in dynamic, accessible ways while ensuring evaluations remain relevant in an increasingly digital world. **By embedding technology into African-rooted frameworks, practitioners can ensure that both cultural integrity and modern capabilities are harnessed** to produce inclusive, credible, and transformative evaluation outcomes.



CHAPTER THREE

Pamoja Safarini Theory Of Practice

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the pilot phase of the Pamoja Safarini Theory Of Practice, following the rigorous methodology outlined in chapter 1. Subsequently, evidence on each component of the framework is discussed, followed by a section on its value-added benefits. It is worth noting that stakeholder consultations were aligned with the seven core elements of the framework.

These are: Umoja, Sankofa, Njiani, Holistic Outlook, Visual Depiction, Dhani, and Maono and their implications on the project cycle.

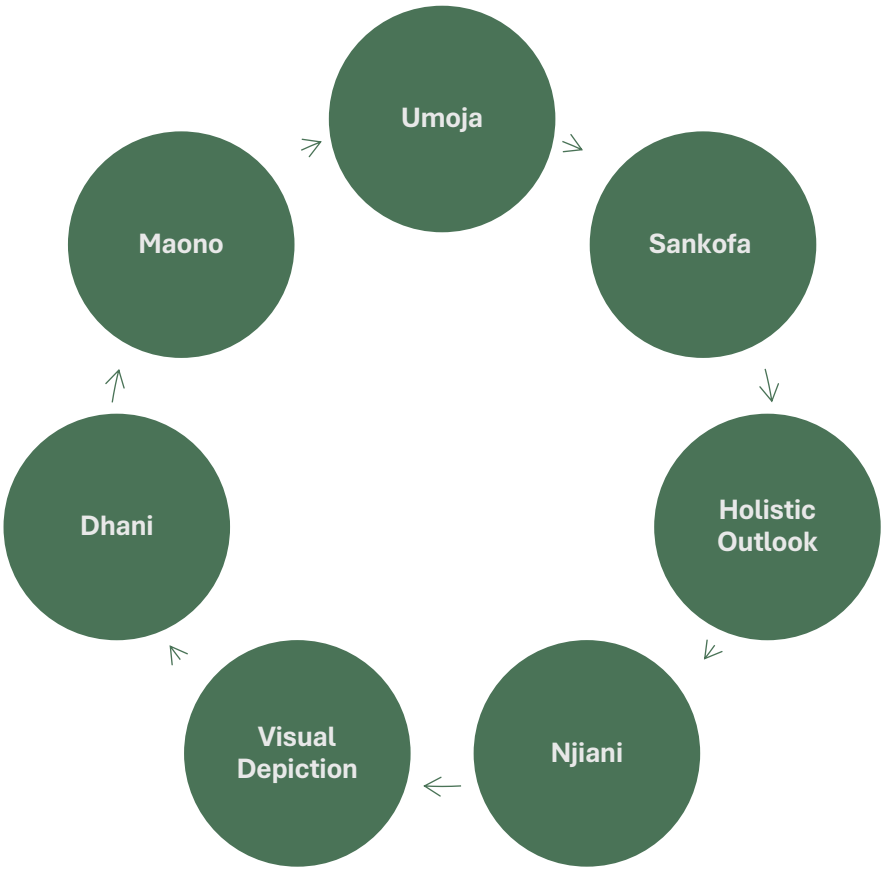


Figure 7. Components of the PSTP framework

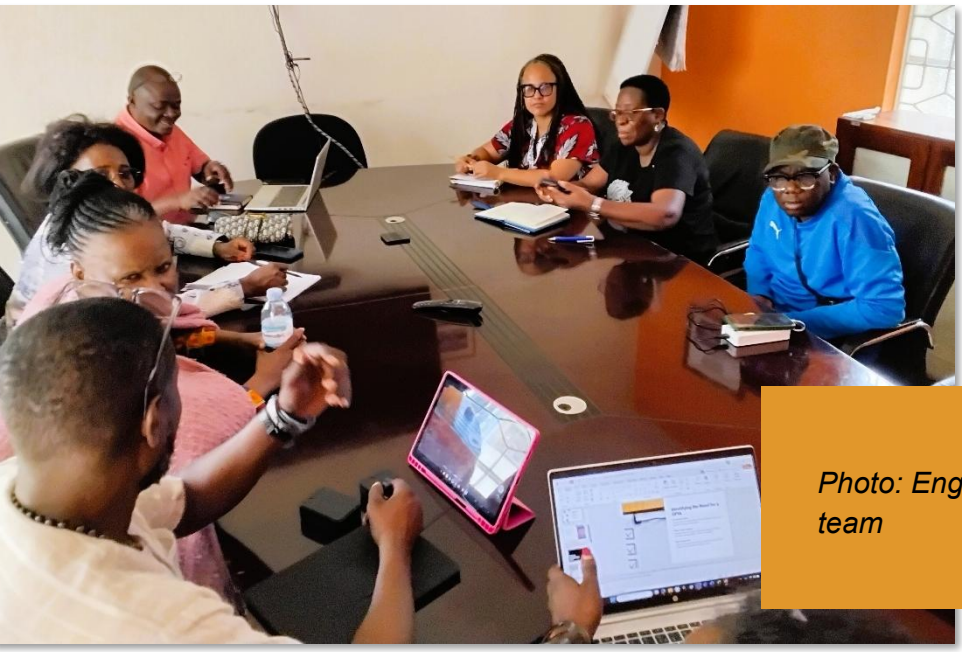


Photo: Engaging with the Ripple Effects team

Findings

Findings for each principle of the tool, coupled with evidence (examples) solicited from the pilot project, are presented below.

Umoja (Unity and Collective Diversity)

This principle emphasises inclusion, shared ownership, and community-rooted leadership. The participation of diverse community groups, including youth, elders, women, and marginalised populations, underscores the importance of representing multiple voices in shaping development trajectories. This demonstrates that inclusivity in decision-making ensures that programme goals are not externally imposed but co-created in ways that resonate with local aspirations. The use of proverbs, storytelling, and cultural symbols reinforces collective identity and values, while participatory leadership fosters stronger commitment, resilience, and long-term sustainability. Through collaborative goal setting, communities align their development pathways with shared visions of well-being and dignity.



Part of the pilot in all three countries elucidated the usability of the Umoja construct. **Umoja, a principle centred on collaboration, interconnectedness, and mutual support**, was powerfully evidenced in the lived experiences of the participants. In one example, when a farmer in Zambia lost his entire crop due to unforeseen circumstances, the community rallied around with encouragement, emotional support, and even material assistance to help restart her farming activities. This act of solidarity reflected a widely held belief: *"that an individual's misfortune is a collective concern, just as success is a shared triumph".*

Beyond immediate support, Ubuntu also manifested in the motivations and operations of emerging agropreneurs, whose enterprises were seen not as individual pursuits but as embedded extensions of their communities. A female farmer enrolled in the CAMFED programme in Zambia shared how her upbringing instilled a view of farming as a communal responsibility. She referred to her workers not as employees, but as partners in a shared livelihood, and spoke with reverence about the land in which she farms. Their pieces of land were granted to her, and her fellow programme recipients by the guardianship of the traditional leaders. As such, the agropreneurs viewed the land as the ancestral ground to which she pays homage and inherently connected to her household, clan and the broader community.

Similarly, in Uganda, a young female leathersmith corroborated by the group under the stewardship of the Ripple Effect initiative shared that: "my small-scale shoe-making enterprise was inspired by a culturally entrenched norm of going barefoot in her community". Her business is not merely a means of income generation, but a response to a deeply rooted social

need aimed at restoring dignity and serving those around her. Her entrepreneurial journey is driven primarily by a desire to uplift her community. In Malawi, Umoja defined how success was understood. Women emphasized that their personal progress like building homes or paying school fees was meaningful only when it uplifted others. “I help buy uniforms for children,” one CAMFED alumna shared, linking her economic mobility to community support. Unity was both a process and an outcome of the intervention.

Across all three countries, these examples revealed an underlying ethos: participants saw themselves as active architects of communal progress. Their achievements were not measured solely by economic gains or employment opportunities, but by their ripple effects: social dignity, access to essential goods, expanded access to nutritious diary.

The principle of cooperative practices was another distinct feature that emerged strongly in Malawi and Zambia. Cooperative practices, or what locals in Chichewa (one of the Malawian indigenous languages) refer to as *chipereganyu* - loosely translates to a modality that revives group farming traditions, entailing a rotational system wherein neighbours rotate to work on each other's farms. This approach not only eased labour demands and elucidated endogenous best practices but also reinforced communal ties. As one respondent noted, “*We work together because one head cannot carry the roof.”*

The fabric of leadership and unity was woven through the guidance of established community structures. Chiefs and village committees became conduits for communication and inclusion, ensuring that every voice mattered in steering programme decisions. Notably, early engagement of traditional leaders fostered deeper participation, especially when navigating crises such as climate emergencies. As one participant reflected, *"The chief shares the message with the committee members. It starts from the grassroots,"* illustrating the organic channels through which collaboration flourished.

This spirit of entrepreneurship, grounded in the philosophy of Ubuntu, celebrated self-reliance forged in solidarity. Each initiative, every enterprise, was conceived as both a personal pursuit and a collective gift, nurturing resilience and reinforcing the bonds of community.

Sankofa (Reflexivity and Cyclical Learning)

Sankofa calls for drawing wisdom from the past to inform the present, shape the future, and reimagine it. Its elements include integrating historical lessons from previous community initiatives and respecting traditional mentorship practices, such as guidance from elders. Cultural ceremonies, rituals, and community narratives offer grounded ways to inform programme strategies. Reflexive practices, such as revisiting project goals based on lived experience, ensure that the project cycle notes limited to evaluation and implementation remain adaptive, culturally appropriate, and rooted in community memory.

The Sankofa principle advances the retrieval and application of ancestral knowledge to navigate current and future challenges. Importantly, the value of the organic knowledge system (IKS) was illustrated through community-led methods to optimise the Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) and Youth-Inclusive Dairy Market System (YIDaMS) in all three pilot sites. In amplifying this point, “communities revitalised traditional farming practices learned from their elders, such as manure preservation, fertiliser use and optimisation, including targeted pesticide application which in turn cultivated high-yield and resilient crops”. Faced with the

high cost of synthetic fertilisers, participants embraced such old age practices, which interestingly were found to be aligned with the modern CSA norms and standards, credited to their parents. “We are going back to what our forefathers were doing,” said one farmer, emphasising that tradition offered sustainable solutions for the present. Please refer to Figure 8 for its usability.

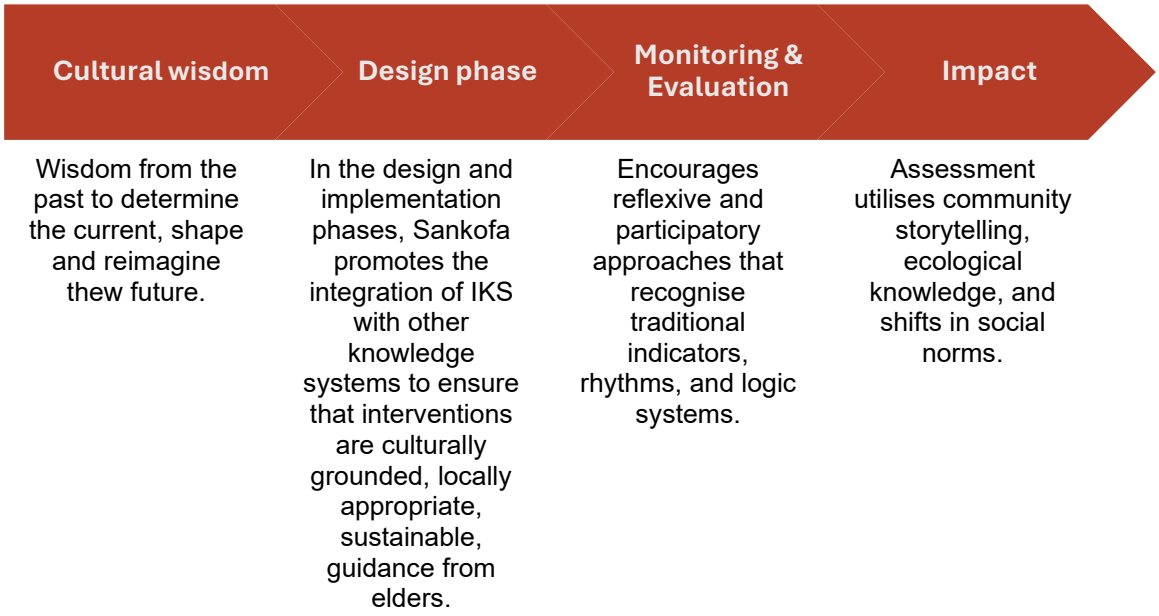


Figure 8. Communities lived experiences and their linkages to the Sankofa principle

These techniques, including the use of drums for decomposition and the practice of burying organic matter in the soil, were not only effective but also affordable and environmentally sustainable. Participants in Zambia and Uganda shared this sentiment: …… *“we monitor these processes over weeks and months, an ‘African science’ fitted to measure their progress”. This cyclical learning was not passive nostalgia, but active innovation. Participants described blending indigenous practices with new knowledge from agricultural guides. For example, in Malawi and Zambia, locally made fertilisers like Mbeya mix (a combination of dung, ash, and maize bran) were promoted. “Now many people are using manure,”* a few respondents shared, highlighting community-wide uptake.

Cultural memory also shaped collective adaptation, as communities revived rituals, proverbs, and land-use customs that had been set aside under external influence. One elder reflected, *“At a certain time, we ran away from culture, but now we are going back.”* Sankofa offered a framework for resilience grounded in remembered success. It affirmed that traditional ecological knowledge is not outdated; rather, it remains central to innovation and adaptation in the face of climate change.

During monitoring and evaluation, Sankofa encourages reflexive and participatory approaches that recognise traditional indicators, rhythms, and logic systems. Rather than relying solely on external metrics, impact is assessed through community storytelling, ecological knowledge, and shifts in social norms. This fosters co-ownership, adaptability, and enduring relevance.

Ultimately, Sankofa reframes the project cycle as a circular process rooted in memory, responsive to context, and aligned with community-defined visions of progress.

Njiani (Focus on the process and adaptation)

This principle focuses on the journey of change rather than fixed endpoints. Key variables include community-defined milestones that reflect collective priorities, ensuring that progress is measured in terms that are meaningful to the community. Responsiveness to emerging needs enables programmes to remain relevant and effective. Thus, feedback loops and iterative learning foster adaptability. The use of IKS informs localised assumptions and strategies, enhancing the legitimacy and utility of interventions over time.

Additionally, the consultative nature of the process for engaging with the community is far more valuable than the actual intervention. This calls for a genuine and continual conversation, as opposed to tick-box exercises, where the programme recipients, community members, funders, traditional leaders, and implementing partners are all enjoined to problem-solve and innovate as equal partners. It should be recognised that the journey is non-static and unpredictable; therefore, programmes, the principal advocates, argue that cultural knowledge systems should be employed as an adaptive management and invention tool.

Resilience and complexity were deeply resonant in the lived stories of the participants across all pilot sites. Many of them had faced significant hardships, whether due to climate-related losses, financial exclusion, or social marginalisation. Yet they demonstrated remarkable resilience. "The droughts completely devastated my crop farming enterprise, and at the time, it felt like the end of my entrepreneurial journey.", said a Zambian female farmer. In a supportive and encouraging manner, her mentor gently encouraged her to explore indoor mushroom cultivation and the integration of cultural artefacts, to diversify her livelihood and cushion the impact of potential setbacks in her crop enterprise. Reflecting on the broader theme of community resilience, participants shared: “Resilience is not just material — it is emotional and spiritual. It is rooted in attributes such as courage, proverbs, and cultural virtues that nurture perseverance.”

Additionally, the community extended an olive branch through acts of solidarity. Similarly, in Uganda, an elderly male chicken breeder was left dejected after experiencing a simultaneous loss of chickens due to theft and the dry season. Interestingly, community members went out of their way to find and arrest the perpetrator, then brought him to the traditional leadership to dispense disciplinary measures. In all three countries, participants’ remarks about the journey were that: *“we are individually and collectively enjoined by the journey; hence, we make strides to contribute to reversing the misfortunes of our community members by gestures such as procuring their products and protecting them against crime”*.



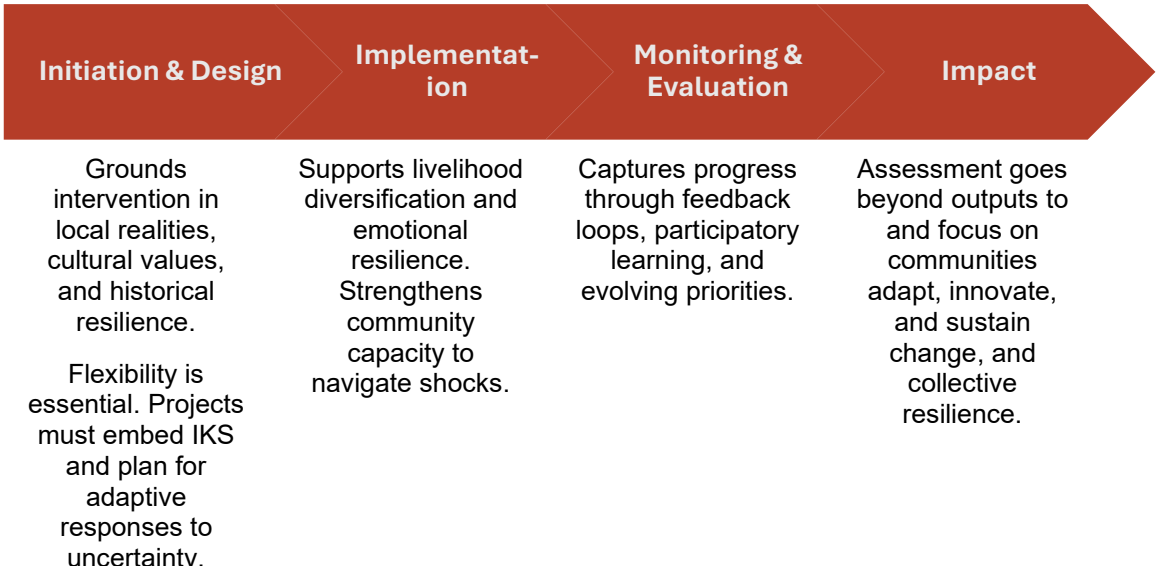


Figure 9. Njiani's contribution to the project cycle

Aas shown by examples in Malawi, communities perceived the journey as not linear but rather shaped by disruption and adaptation. For example, participants narrated how their livelihood paths shifted after climate shocks, such as Cyclone Freddy. One young woman described moving from sugarcane farming to tailoring after soil degradation. "I switched, and I did not know that this was my hidden gem as I made more profits, and I am now sustainable," she explained, underscoring adaptive decision-making. Importantly, milestones were defined locally and drew heavily from the IKS, and progress was celebrated through riddles, testimonies, and songs. One participant shared how she measured success not just by profits, but by *"sending my brother to school" or "buying iron sheets for the house."* Njiani reframed change as incremental and relational.

At a larger scale, the diversification philosophy gained traction, and most participants are making plans to explore manifold approaches, including crops (from maize to millet, and cassava to mushrooms), as well as the integration of livestock and aquatic farming. Peer support emerged as a central process underpinning the journey. Communities formed cooperatives and led farmer networks, ensuring that knowledge aimed at honing each other's skills was shared across the board. "People with skills journeyed with their struggling peers," one respondent noted, emphasising that process matters as much as outcomes. The adaptability was driven by necessity but informed by a long tradition of experimentation and innovation in the face of uncertainty.

Holistic Outlook

A holistic outlook integrates cultural, spiritual, economic, and social dimensions of well-being. Cultural norms influence perceptions of ownership and participation, while spiritual beliefs guide relationships within the community and with the land. This principle emphasises strengthening social bonds, such as family cohesion and community ties, as essential outcomes. It values emotional, physical, and mental well-being alongside traditional

measures of impact, creating an inclusive framework that reflects African worldviews of interconnectedness.

An understanding that life is interconnected through people, nature, and spirit was evident in how participants spoke about environmental protection, communal support, and spirituality. The construct's application lies in its integration of social, ecological, and spiritual domains into programme design and evaluation. Although Christianity is the primary belief system, African science remains part of the spiritual ecosystem. For instance, a representative of the Lozi tribe in Zambia reluctantly conceded that: *"Old women are designated to perform rituals to appease the ancestors to bring the quality rains.".* Similarly, in Uganda, respondents admitted that:

"… although it is a discreet practice, however, we do know that our parents consult traditional healers for the upkeep, multiplication and safeguarding of their livestock (wealth)"

One respondent stated, *"In Malawi, we face a lot of cyclones... hence we encourage communities to plant trees."* Another added: *"We believe that if the weather is cold in October and November, the rains will be late"* These statements illustrate the depth of indigenous climate awareness and underscore the need to integrate traditional ecological knowledge in both programme design and climate-smart interventions. As previously mentioned, the continuation of homegrown manure, pesticides, and other practices is in line with climate-smart agriculture.



Figure 10. Holistic principles' contribution to the project cycle

As previously observed, the continued use of organic fertilisers, homemade pesticides, and manure aligns with climate-smart agriculture practices. Female farmers in Zambia eloquently affirmed that the land is the foundation of community sustainability; its value is deeply spiritual, emotional, and practical. One participant captured this interconnected worldview when she shared: *"…After selling my produce, I use the profits to help the needy with salt."* This statement not only reflects moral responsibility but also illustrates how economic activity is interwoven with social and spiritual obligations.

As already discovered and illustrated by the female farmers in Zambia, the land is the alpha and omega of the community's sustainability and thus wholeheartedly cherished. Its significance and meaning are beyond words and can be drawn from the explanations, expressions, sentiments and aura of the participants. A reflection by one of the participants in the Malawi session, who said "…. after selling my produce, I use the profits to help the needy with salt," sums it all up by linking economic gain to moral responsibility.

Visual Depiction

Visual Depiction draws on culturally meaningful imagery, symbols, and stories to convey programme intent and foster a shared understanding, including sharing the results among stakeholders. It emphasises the co-creation of visuals that resonate deeply with local communities, ensuring that messages are not only understood but also embraced. Visual storytelling, through storyboards, drawings, and community-generated illustrations, serves as both a documentation tool and a medium for collective reflection, making abstract programme goals tangible and grounded in local realities. This approach is well poised in contexts with varying literacy levels, where visuals can bridge communication gaps and enhance participation.

In all three countries, the principle of Indigenous expressions and aesthetics was vividly demonstrated using song, dance, proverbs, and storytelling. Participants highlighted that *"Community gatherings, particularly those convened by traditional leaders, often commence with cultural dances and rhythmic drumming. These performances are more than mere entertainment; they serve as intentional acts of engagement that unite communities, strengthen social cohesion, and inspire collective action"*.

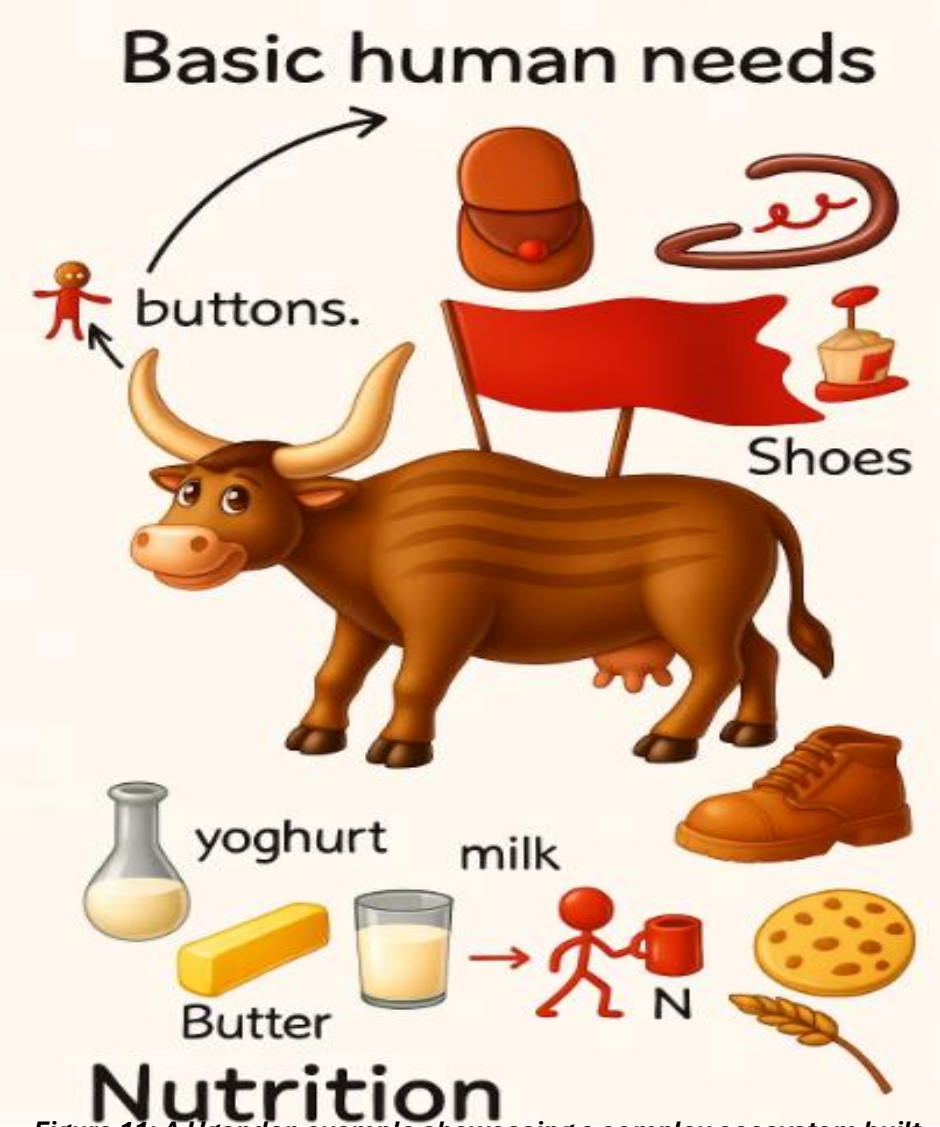


Figure 11: A Ugandan example showcasing a complex ecosystem built around the Ankole cattle

In African culture, the drum is not just a musical instrument, but a powerful landmark of identity, unity, communication, and spiritual connection. Similarly, the wooden chairs used by traditional leaders represent authority and ancestral linkage. In the case of Malawi, agriculture guides and agropreneurs also emphasised the importance of starting meetings with traditional songs, folktales, riddles, and proverbs to set the tone and anchor the discussion in familiar cultural norms.

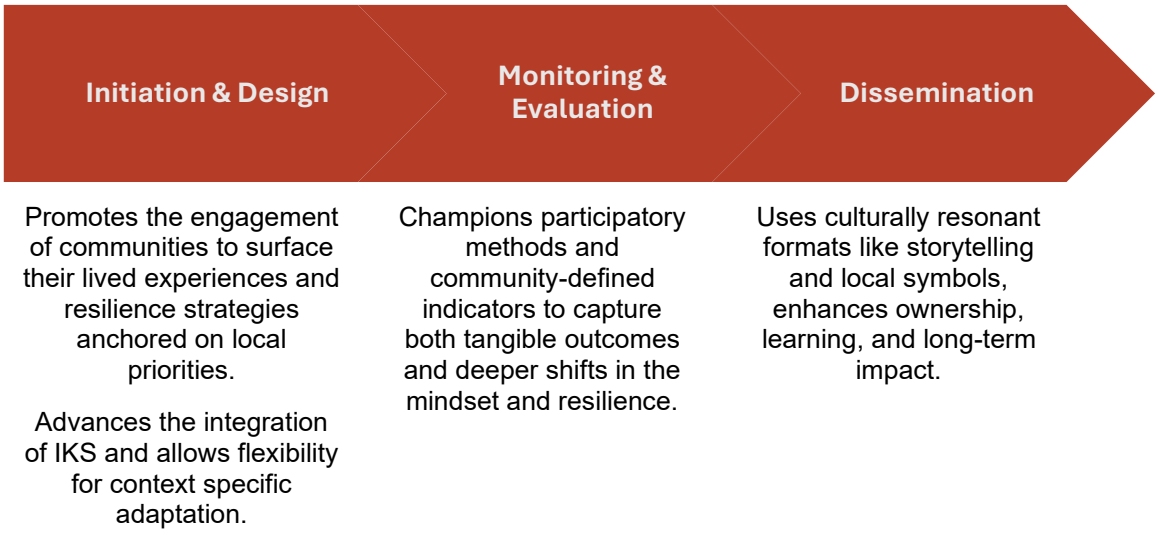


Figure 12. Element of the value depiction principle

For example, *participants sang songs like "wabwera pano koma avine (those who have come should dance), akapanda kuvina sanamve mwambo (if they do not dance, they have not heard the tradition)" to signal both participation and reception of knowledge. Proverbs such as "Chuma chili mu nthaka (our wealth is in the soil)" and "Uzadya thukuta lako (you shall eat your sweat)" were commonly used to emphasise the value of hard work and stewardship.* These expressions are not just symbolic; they guide behaviour, sustain memory, and reinforce community values in everyday life. While these cultural expressions were embedded in the communities we engaged with, the pilot was unable to determine whether these customary practices were intentionally integrated into the initiation, design, and delivery of the interventions.

However, a promising illustration of how such practices can be embedded more systematically also emerged. The pilot established through the articulation of the respondents that: “traditional knowledge systems were actively incorporated into agricultural training through storytelling, role models, local myths, and interactive songs”. In all the settings, participants composed appreciation songs about their farming successes and the support provided by the implementing partners, demonstrating how music serves as both documentation, celebration, and evaluation.

Dhani (Questioning Assumptions)

Dhani invites evaluators to examine and challenge underlying assumptions embedded in programme design. This includes questioning externally imposed ideas about needs, solutions, and success. Local beliefs and practices offer alternative lenses for interpreting

programme logic. Variables here include community-led dialogues that critique design assumptions, compare them with lived realities, and reshape interventions accordingly. Reflexive learning enables mutual understanding and alignment between external actors and indigenous worldviews.

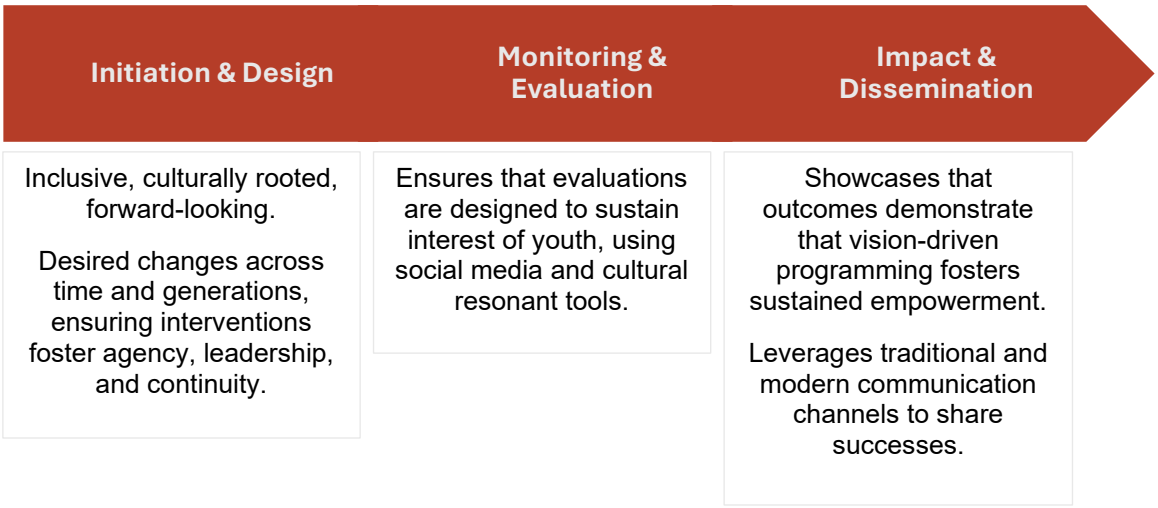


Figure 13. Dhani's core features

This principle is especially relevant in promoting intellectual agency, particularly among youth and women, by encouraging them to test, revise, and take ownership of their development strategies. As one participant in the Mulanje workshop noted: "We have planted pumpkins while pregnant... nothing happened," directly challenging longstanding taboos. Across all three countries, these entrepreneurs consistently pushed boundaries, using such moments as catalysts to advocate for gradual structural reforms. Reflecting this spirit, one farmer shared, *'Together with our mentor, community women, and guides, we conducted house-to-house visits to distribute climate-smart agricultural pamphlets while...'"*

Another noted, *"I was advised to plant beans with pigeon peas... but the beans didn't grow well... so I decided to plant separately next time"*. Echoing the winds of change, one community member from Zambia's Mumbwa region remarked:

'If you are looking ahead, your eyes and ears cannot see your backside. These informed girls educate us who are much older than them,' acknowledging the valuable knowledge and insights gained from the younger generation".

Another encouraging example from Zambia highlights how young women project recipients, with support from their mentors, formed a cooperative and proactively engaged traditional leaders to request land for starting or expanding their crop and vegetable projects. This initiative challenged long-standing cultural norms that traditionally barred women from owning property. Their efforts paid off when they successfully persuaded the local chief to grant them land. Expressing her gratitude, one of the recipients shared, *"For generations, my gender barred me from owning land. Today, I'm proud to say I started with a small plot, and now, I own a farm."*

Unfortunately, the pilot also uncovered instances where cultural practices had severe consequences for programme recipients. Across all three countries, various deeply rooted beliefs were found to deter women from pursuing their entrepreneurial aspirations. For

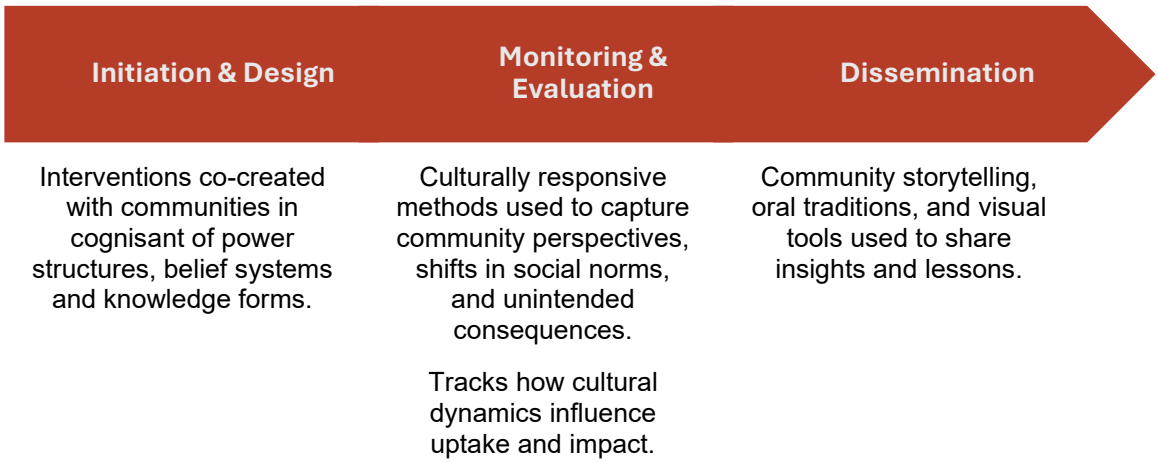


Figure 14. Maono's value addition

instance, young women were often barred from cultivating certain crops, prohibited from entering gardens during their menstrual cycles, and in many cases, land ownership rested with their husbands rather than with the women themselves.

Some participants shared painful reflections on the impact of defying these norms. As one noted, *"We defied community norms and planted the crops that were traditionally forbidden. However, we paid a heavy price without community support; our enterprises ultimately went bankrupt."* Many faced losses because local community members refused to buy their produce.

Maono (Aspirational and Intergenerational Thinking)

The Maono principle, drawn from the Swahili word maono, meaning "vision", emphasises forward-thinking, integrated livelihood planning, and community-driven innovation. It captures how participants envision sustainable futures by interlinking agricultural practices, economic resilience, social empowerment, and cultural authenticity, especially as voiced by youth and elders. Variables include intergenerational visioning that aligns programme outcomes with future aspirations. The process involves mapping desired changes across time and generations, ensuring that interventions promote agency, leadership, and continuity. By supporting young people's visions and connecting them with ancestral legacies, Maono ensures programmes are forward-looking, inclusive, and empowering.

The Maono principle, rooted in hope, aspiration, and collective dreaming, was among the most powerfully voiced across the pilot test. Its applicability lies in driving motivation and goal setting, both personally and communally.

One participant shared, *"We want each girl to have a vegetable farm to address malnutrition... we also encourage irrigation farming, so people don't only depend on rain."* Another said, *"Through my livestock business, I managed to pay school fees for my brother."* These stories reflect a culture of vision, where dreams are not abstract ideals but practical targets tied to empowerment, education, and impact. CAMFED, in this context, becomes a platform for realising bold dreams with local relevance. The CAMA girls describe their future as young, local and bright.

Some of the quotes illustrating the aspirations and intergenerational thinking of the respective communities:

"From that drawing... different fields are supporting each other. I'm using chicken droppings to feed the fish and fertilise my crops. I'm farming in a way that respects the land."
[Participant, Zambia]

"This farmland is not just for consumption; it supports sale, reinvestment, and employment. It's a learning hub for the whole community."
[Workshop Speaker, Malawi]

In articulating the point about community engagement strategies, an attendee said, *"When the chief calls a meeting, they start with traditional dances. Songs attract people and keep them engaged. This is the African way, we learn through joy."*

On monitoring and evaluation, a youth participant said, *"Evaluation should not be dry. Use TikTok and WhatsApp so it's enjoyable and people stay interested."*

Value Add

The application of the Pamoja Safarini Theory of Practice added significant value to the development evaluation process in the communities of Zambia, Uganda, and Malawi. The framework's emphasis on community-driven change and local knowledge ensured that the evaluation process was both culturally grounded and contextually appropriate. Key values added by this approach are summed into five key areas.

Cultural Relevance: By integrating Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) and honouring cultural norms, the framework demonstrated that local communities are not passive recipients of development but active agents with valuable insights. This shift resulted in deeper community engagement and a greater sense of ownership over the projects.

Inclusivity and Shared Vision: The principle of Umoja emphasised the importance of unity and collective diversity, facilitating the inclusion of various groups such as youth, women, elders, and marginalised populations. This helped ensure that the development process was not one-sided but representative of the entire community's aspirations and needs.

Sustainability through Co-Creation: The Pamoja Safarini framework's participatory approach to design, implementation, and evaluation ensured that interventions were not only more relevant but also more sustainable. Communities co-created solutions that were adaptable, culturally resonant, and ultimately more likely to be sustained over time.

Empowerment of Local Knowledge: Sankofa and Dhani encouraged communities to reflect on and utilize their own historical and traditional wisdom. This validation of local knowledge, alongside new techniques, empowered participants to not only question externally imposed assumptions but also innovate solutions based on their lived experiences.

Dynamic and Adaptive Approaches: By focusing on the process rather than fixed outcomes, Njiani allowed the evaluation to adapt in real time, responding to emerging challenges and shifting priorities. This approach reinforced the resilience of communities in the face of changing circumstances like climate shocks or economic.

Lessons Learned

The Importance of Early Engagement with Traditional Leaders: One of the most critical lessons was the importance of engaging with traditional leaders and elders at an early stage in the process. This helped to avoid cultural clashes and ensured that interventions were accepted and embraced by the broader community. Their involvement in the design phase was crucial for maintaining cultural harmony and promoting authentic co-creation.

Reimagining Success: The pilot revealed that success cannot be measured solely by material outcomes. Many communities redefined success in terms of emotional well-being, community cohesion, and spiritual fulfilment. Programmes that incorporated these dimensions were seen as more holistic and resonated more deeply with participants.

Intergenerational Dialogue is Key: The principle of Maono highlighted the power of intergenerational visioning. Young people and elders were able to work together, blending their knowledge and hopes for the future. This exchange nurtured continuity and sustainability in development efforts, reinforcing the importance of intergenerational knowledge transfer.

Emphasising the Process Over Fixed Outcomes: The feedback from pilot sites indicated that communities valued a process-oriented approach that allowed for flexibility and adaptation. This lesson showed that rigid, linear models of evaluation often overlook the complexity and dynamism of real-world development processes. The Njiani principle, with its emphasis on continual adaptation, was critical in helping communities maintain momentum during setbacks.

Utilising Culturally Relevant Visual Communication: The use of visual tools such as storytelling, songs, proverbs, and community art, was a powerful way to communicate goals and measure progress, particularly in communities with varying literacy levels. These cultural expressions helped strengthen community engagement and provided an effective medium for monitoring and evaluation.

Redefining "External Expertise": Through the Dhani principle, communities were encouraged to critically examine the influence of external expertise and challenge assumptions made by external evaluators or implementers. This led to greater local empowerment and redefined the role of outside experts, shifting them from leaders to co-creators in the evaluation process.

Flexibility in Evaluation: The pilot highlighted the need for evaluators to be flexible and open to adjusting their methods in response to community feedback. Community participants were not just informants: they were partners in the evaluation, shaping how data was collected, interpreted, and used.



CHAPTER 4

Engagement, Participation, Involvement And Ownership (EPIO)

Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of the findings from the pilot testing of Engagement, Participation, Involvement And Ownership (EPIO) as a framework in Zambia, Malawi and Uganda. Its application is illustrated through two contexts: a Climate Smart Agriculture initiative in Zambia and Malawi, and a Girls' Empowerment and Entrepreneurship programme in Uganda. This chapter seeks to examine the effectiveness and usefulness of the framework in these settings but also in the larger African evaluation ecosystem. The first section of the chapter is a discussion of findings from the three pilots, offering insights into the tool's performance in diverse community settings. The second section is an illustration of the applicability and usability of the framework, and the chapter concludes with a section on lessons learned and a section on what value the framework offers evaluation in Africa.



Figure 15. EPIO Framework

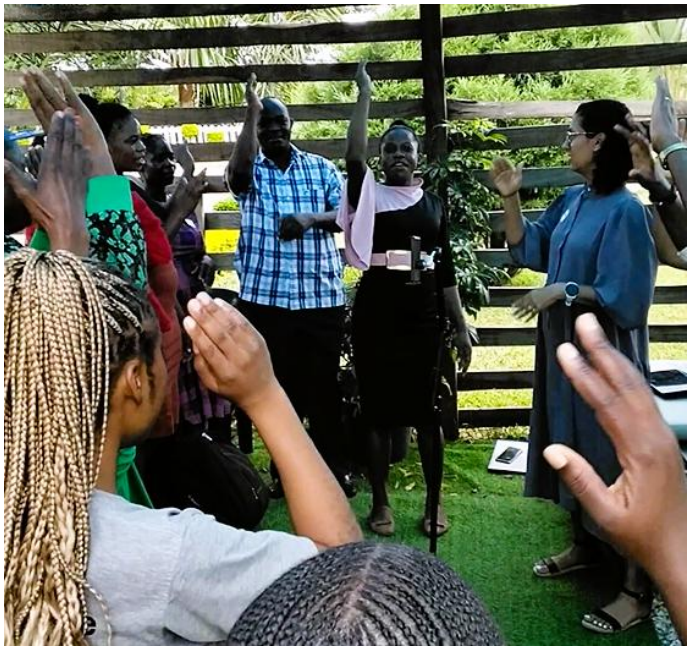


Photo: Engaging through song and movement

Findings

This section focuses on the implementation of the EPIO in Zambia, Malawi and Uganda with practitioners and participants. It highlights the four elements in the framework namely Engagement, Participation, Involvement and Ownership. It interrogates the effectiveness of the framework and identifies areas of convergence and divergence between the framework and the existing practices in the project areas. Figure 16 outlines the four elements of the EPIO framework



Figure 16. Engagement

Engagement

The EPIO tool demonstrated the **value of pre-engagement with the community to understand the community's social, cultural, and historical context**. In Zambia, the early engagement of all stakeholders proved critical to the project's success. This was particularly important given the patriarchal nature of the Mwamba culture, where land allocation is traditionally reserved for men. The case study revealed that, during the initial stages, community leaders were not fully involved. As a result, cultural beliefs and myths, such as the notion that girls should not be allocated land or cultivate certain crops, created barriers to participation. These challenges could have been addressed through pre-engagement with the community before the project's implementation. Once the community leaders were eventually consulted and involved, there was a noticeable shift; families began allocating land to girls, allowing them to launch their projects. This demonstrated the importance and impact of meaningful stakeholder engagement from the outset. Engagement in this instance was the linchpin for the project's success, and the lack of engagement could derail a project and its positive impact on the community.

In Malawi, much like in Zambia, community engagement emerged as a critical factor in determining the success of the project. Early consultations with key local structures such as the Community Development Committee (CDC) and Mother Groups highlighted the importance of inclusive dialogue from the outset. One representative recalled, “We attended the meeting before the project started, the project team was introducing it to us,” reflecting the proactive approach to community involvement.

In the pilot in Uganda with Ripple Effect, the importance of ensuring that engagement is central to all projects was reinforced. It was determined that there was community engagement at multiple layers of the project life cycle. At the level of the participants, many came to Ripple Effect through referrals from existing or former participants. This was successful due to the critical engagement that Ripple Effect had with community leaders to determine the best practices for the community and participants. It is also worth noting that most of the project leadership in Mbarara originated from the community, which provided an additional layer of engagement. The use of EPIO revealed that the institution's structure locally integrates cultural practices, convinces leaders of its viability, and encourages participants to lead in the project’s expansion. Some participants described training and serving as mentors to participants who were new to the programme.

In all three pilot sites, engagement extended beyond formal structures, with chiefs, youth, and broader community members actively contributing to discussions and helping spread information. Chiefs, in Zambia served as the gatekeepers in the community, they played a mentoring role by sharing culturally significant proverbs to inspire the community. Phrases like *"Chammawa sichidziwika" (“No one knows about tomorrow”) encouraged youth to plan for their futures, while "Chala cha mwini sakandira thako" (“You cannot use another's finger to scratch your itch”) promoted self-reliance and responsibility*. In Uganda, proverbs were also used to link the work of Ripple Effect to the values and community norms of the people of Mbarara.

This culturally rooted approach not only built trust but also fostered a sense of ownership within the community. Participants stressed the importance of using local language, especially Chichewa, for effective communication and greater inclusivity: *“We use Chichewa language for easy communication... It fosters community engagement.”* Chiefs and local committees played key roles in guiding project implementation and ensuring grassroots information-sharing. As one participant observed, *“When community members attend meetings, they go back and practice and share what they discussed,”* reflecting strong knowledge transfer and collective learning. Another emphasized, *“If people are involved from the start, they feel they own the project and take care of it,”* underscoring the power of early and meaningful engagement.

Concluding Remarks

The EPIO tool proved effective in highlighting that engagement is not a one-time consultation, but a continuous, relational process that respects cultural knowledge, affirms community agency, and enhances both participation and outcomes. Where engagement was prioritized, communities moved from being project beneficiaries to co-creators and custodians of change. This reaffirms the tool’s central tenet that culturally grounded, early, and sustained

engagement is not only good practice, but also essential for meaningful and lasting development.

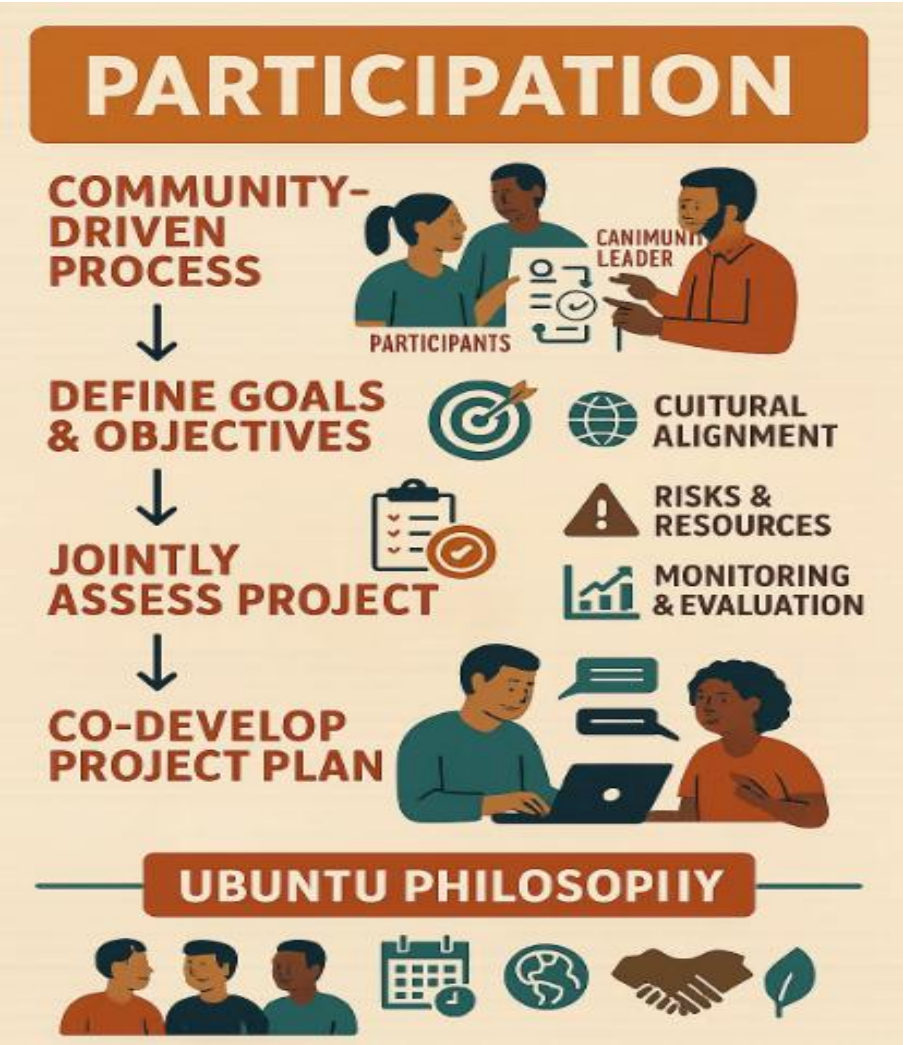


Figure 17. Participation

Participation

In Zambia and Malawi, community participation played a pivotal role in the success of the Agriculture Smart project. Community leaders facilitated inclusive gatherings where young women, specifically the CAMA girls, shared insights and techniques they had learned. **These community meetings, structured as lekgotla (traditional communal forums), created a platform for mutual learning and exchange**. Community members not only attended but also engaged actively, later reaching out to the CAMA girls for further clarification and guidance on implementing the agricultural techniques introduced. This active interest and uptake demonstrated a meaningful transfer of knowledge and skills. The community's willingness to adopt these practices reflected a growing sense of ownership and recognition of the project's value in enhancing local livelihoods. Ultimately, the participatory process not only legitimized the intervention but also ensured that it was rooted in community relevance and responsiveness.

Participation through the lekgotla gatherings also proved beneficial for the young girls, as they gained knowledge of traditional methods for producing organic manure. These indigenous

techniques not only enhanced their crop yields but also preserved soil fertility, reinforcing sustainable agricultural practices. In Uganda, the pilot discovered that the participants, project leaders, and community, are actively involved in the enhancement of the project. However, it appears that the participants are actively engaged in recruiting and training the next generation of participants but are generally following the institution's structure. The project leadership is primarily responsible for connecting with the leadership in the community, including chiefs, key stakeholders, farmers, cow owners , and local shop owners who have a stake in the community ecosystem. The engagement component also emerged when the participants discussed their role in the organisation as contributing to the expansion of the project.

Many participants felt a sense of collective ownership in Mbarara, particularly with Ripple Effect. There was a sense of pride as they discussed their role in the organisation. Although many of the participants were extremely grateful for the opportunity to participate in the project, they also recognised that they were part of making history and contributing to the success of the project. This is tied to the integration of the project in the community; it was determined to determine where the project ended, and the community began valuing indigenous knowledge.

Concluding Remarks

Participation, when grounded in cultural practices and built on reciprocal learning, has the power to transform development initiatives into truly community-owned efforts. Creating inclusive spaces for dialogue and knowledge exchange allows participants to share new skills while also drawing on local wisdom, fostering sustainability, mutual respect, and intergenerational collaboration. When community members actively adopt and adapt introduced practices, participation moves beyond mere presence to become a process of shared responsibility and collective pride. In such contexts, individuals see themselves not as beneficiaries but as co-creators, embedding the project into the social fabric and ensuring its relevance, resilience, and long-term impact.

Involvement

Both in Zambia and Malawi, when community members attended gatherings organized by local leaders, they became more actively involved in the projects. The EPIO tool demonstrated **the need for the involvement of close family members proved beneficial, as they supported the girls throughout the implementation process.** One participant shared, *"I involved my family members so that if I fell sick, they could help take care of the crops."* (CLIP from ZAMBIA).

In Uganda, the pilot discovered that the project used the indigenous language to engage with participants and community members. Cultural stories and community-specific examples are used to engage participants and the community. There is a saying that project leaders mentioned they use, which illustrates the need for one to help themselves and not rely solely on charitable donations.



Figure 18. Involvement

The structure of the project was developed in a way that empowered the local project leaders as subject matter experts. This was witnessed in the interaction between the team leaders, translators (who were also team leaders), and participants. Team leaders discussed how they take the existing curriculum and features of the training and organizational processes and interpret them through the community ecosystem. This is why there is such a focus on expanding the number of participants through referrals and interactions with current participants. At the wrap-up meeting, it was mentioned that for each person trained, there are several additional people who benefit from the work of the organisation. These demonstrations clearly show community involvement at the people-to-people level and organizationally.

Particularly in Mbarara, there were leaders at every level of the organisation, which allowed participants to envision their roles expanding. Several participants described themselves as employers due to their success with their businesses. These businesses were directly tied to Ripple Effect and the work that the organisation was doing to expand entrepreneurship and create youth jobs in the community. There were some participants who had been veterans in the project and owned cows, employed people, and served as mentors, while others were new to the project or less active, but they all seemed engaged in the project. One woman described how she recruited her neighbour to join the project simply by sharing the benefits with her, reflecting the organic spread of interest and participation driven by community members themselves. This sentiment was echoed by other participants who highlighted how their involvement inspired others:

"Yes, some people come to learn from me, because during this season I practice irrigation farming, hence people are interested in knowing what I do to harvest more in the dry season."

"People are interested; they sometimes send me to buy seedlings for them and ask for advice on how to plant them."

"For example, in my group, we were only a few, but now the number has grown as more people want to learn."

When asked, "How many people were there in your group when you were starting?" ('munayamba ndi anthu angati?'), one participant responded, "At first, we were only 12 people, but now we are 34." This growth not only demonstrates the community's strong involvement but also highlights how shared learning, mutual support, and collective agency, core to the Ubuntu philosophy, are central to the EPIO tool. Such community participation is not just beneficial but essential for the sustainability and long-term success of development projects.

Concluding Remarks

The EPIO tool demonstrates that meaningful community involvement rooted in mutual support, cultural relevance, and shared agency is essential for the sustainability and long-term success of development initiatives. When families, peers, and local leaders are actively engaged, they not only strengthen individual participation but also create a supportive ecosystem that sustains project outcomes. The use of local language, cultural stories, and community-specific examples ensures that interventions resonate deeply and are interpreted through the community's values and realities. This fosters organic growth, where knowledge and opportunities spread naturally through personal connections and lived examples. As participants take on roles as mentors, employers, and innovators, they inspire others to join and contribute, turning individual success into collective progress. Such people-to-people involvement reflects the Ubuntu philosophy, where interconnectedness and shared responsibility drive lasting impact far beyond the life of any single project.

Ownership

The Future is Bright, The Future is Youth, The Future is Local

In both Malawi and Zambia, the EPIO tool proved **the importance of ownership as a marker of collective success.** It demonstrated that the community's full support and deep connection to the project led them to accept it as their own. The EPIO tool emphasized that true sustainability depends on this sense of community ownership. When the community accepted the project and actively participated from beginning to end, ownership naturally developed, leading to the project's overall success. In Malawi, as the girls involved in the project began to thrive, they created additional opportunities, such as opening bank accounts to save their earnings and provide loans to others in the community at interest. These initiatives were designed to ensure the project's continuity even after Mastercard's support ended. The CAMA girls in Malawi noted that:

"We cannot only rely on CAMFED grants, because the profits that we have can even help us to go back to school."

"We have a village bank where we keep our money after making profits from our farming. We can therefore borrow money from the village to boost the business."

In Zambia, the importance of community ownership was illustrated by one participant who shared a story: *"There were some thieves in the village who used to steal from my farm. One day, the thief was seen but managed to escape. However, the community took it upon themselves to find and bring the thief to justice."* The villagers explained that they considered the farm their own because they regularly bought vegetables from it. The participant highlighted that this demonstrated a sense of indirect ownership by the community. He emphasized that such acceptance and involvement by the community is crucial for sustaining the project in the long term.

In Uganda, ownership of the project was much like that in Zambia and Malawi. Participants and project leaders shared a collective sense of ownership of the project. This is primarily due to the project being rooted in the fact that it centres the primary resource in the community. These resources of the cow ecosystem include everything from farms to producing food and crafts for sale in the community. Ownership was demonstrated by the participants through

their excitement and engagement with recruiting and mentoring other participants. One young woman was also excited about her ability to 'employ' three community members in her business. She talked about the project with pride and enthusiasm, but most importantly, she felt a sense of ownership as she described her role as a key player in the evolution and success of the project. One got the sense that the project would continue even if the funder pulled out. This is due to the ownership that the participants and leaders demonstrated by explaining the project to family and neighbours, to serving as ambassadors for the project, to training the next generation of participants.

Community participation is widely recognized in development literature as a critical determinant of project sustainability, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, where communal systems of support and decision-making are deeply entrenched. The EPIO tool affirms that active engagement by local communities, through consultation, participation in design and implementation, and shared leadership, significantly enhances the relevance, effectiveness, and longevity of development interventions. Across the three pilot sites, the emergence of local mechanisms such as community-led savings groups in Malawi, informal security networks in Zambia, and local employment generation in Uganda demonstrated how participation transforms passive recipients into co-creators of development. This participatory orientation fosters local commitment and accountability, reducing dependency on external actors and enabling communities to adapt and sustain initiatives beyond the period of external funding or technical support.



Figure 19. Ownership

This approach is fundamentally aligned with the principles of Ubuntu, a philosophical and ethical framework rooted in African ontologies that emphasizes mutuality, relationality, and collective well-being. Ubuntu's core tenet, "umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu" (a person is a person through other people), underscores the interdependence of individuals and communities. By grounding the EPIO tool in Ubuntu values, the model promotes inclusive and culturally congruent pathways to ownership and sustainability. The spontaneous mentoring of new participants, the communal safeguarding of project assets, and the reinvestment of project-generated income into collective resources illustrate how Ubuntu-based participation moves beyond transactional involvement to deeper forms of social embeddedness. These expressions of ownership, deeply rooted in the lived experiences and cultural logic of the communities, are essential for ensuring that development projects are not only successful but also enduring and transformative.

Concluding Remarks

The EPIO tool illustrates that community participation is not simply a methodological preference but a foundational pillar for sustainable development in African contexts. When participation is embedded within culturally resonant frameworks such as Ubuntu, it fosters deeper forms of ownership, solidarity, and resilience (Nabudere, 2005). The pilot findings from Malawi, Zambia, and Uganda demonstrate that sustainability is most viable when projects are embraced and driven by the communities themselves, when they become part of the community's shared identity, priorities, and social networks (Mansuri & Rao, 2013). As such, participatory approaches rooted in indigenous philosophies should be considered not only best practice but essential for ethical and effective development interventions on the continent (Chilisa, 2012; Chilisa, 2020).

Success from an African Perspective

Success in an African context is relational, rooted in survival, interdependence, and responsibility to family and community. Testimonies from young women involved in livelihood projects reveal that success is grounded in resourcefulness, independence, and interdependence:

"Because now I can sell my goats if I have challenges, and I also get manure from the goats for my maize farm."

"At first, I had one chicken, but now I have 15 chickens, and whenever I have problems, I can sell my chickens, use them for relish."

"After writing my final secondary education, I did not do well, but through my livestock business, I managed to send myself back to school."

"Through my business, I managed to pay school fees for my brother when he was in form 2."

Understanding the definition of success from the community's perspective helps the evaluators avoid imposing Western definitions of success when they measure impact. Success must be defined locally, recognizing contextual realities, cultural values, and gendered responsibilities.

Application and Usability

This section examines the applicability and usability in Zambia, Malawi and Uganda across its four core dimensions: Engagement, Participation, Involvement, and Ownership. Under Engagement, the **EPIO tool proved highly applicable in Zambia, particularly where culturally sensitive issues, such as land allocation to girls, initially triggered resistance**. The tool highlighted the importance of pre-engagement with traditional leaders, whose early exclusion had hindered community acceptance. Once traditional authorities and key stakeholders were meaningfully included, attitudes shifted significantly. The culturally respectful approach fostered openness, enabling project goals to be pursued effectively. The usability of the tool in this context was evident in how it facilitated respectful dialogue and helped navigate gender norms through traditional protocols.

In Malawi, the tool was applied through existing grassroots structures like Community Development Committees and Mother Groups. Its adaptability to local context, especially through the use of indigenous language and proverbs, enhanced community buy-in. Phrases such as “Chammawa sichidziwika” (“No one knows about tomorrow”) and “Chala cha mwini sakandira thako” (“You cannot use another's finger to scratch your itch”) served as powerful metaphors, creating a shared vision and promoting responsibility. This linguistic and cultural flexibility made the tool usable in fostering a sense of collective future and community motivation.

In terms of participation, **the EPIO tool was applicable in Zambia by providing inclusive, lekgotla-style platforms that encouraged youth, elders, and girls to share knowledge and experiences.** These forums respected existing cultural forms of dialogue and were instrumental in creating spaces for mutual learning. Community members learned from the agricultural techniques demonstrated by the CAMA girls, and in turn, shared their own practices, reflecting the EPIO model’s participatory ethos. Its usability was reinforced through these reciprocal knowledge exchanges, which fostered appreciation for the girls’ contributions and strengthened the project’s relevance. In Malawi, participation was rooted in practical engagement with sustainable agricultural practices. CAMA girls taught communities how to produce organic manure, integrating traditional methods with new learning. This hands-on, culturally grounded participation validated local knowledge and encouraged co-learning between generations. The usability of the tool was further demonstrated as girls and elders became both learners and teachers, reinforcing the community’s cohesion and capacity. With regards to involvement, the EPIO model’s applicability in Zambia emerged through the ongoing support of families, who played a vital role in sustaining the girls’ agricultural projects. In times of illness or absence, family members helped with the girls’ farming work, illustrating the communal spirit the model encourages. The involvement of families ensured continuity and deepened the sense of shared responsibility. The use of local language and storytelling also strengthened communal learning and emphasized Ubuntu values. These practices made the tool usable in embedding the initiative into the broader community, not just among the direct beneficiaries.

In Malawi, involvement expanded through organic peer mentorship, where girls who had succeeded in the programme recruited others. One group grew from 12 to 34 members, showing the tool’s applicability in generating local ownership and growth through social

networks. **The usability of the tool was seen in how it enabled girls to assume leadership roles, mentor peers, and create self-sustaining support systems, all of which contributed to the project's expansion and long-term impact.** Under Ownership, the tool's application in Zambia was reflected in the strong communal protection of the girls' projects. In one instance, villagers pursued a thief who tried to steal from a girl's farm, underscoring the community's sense of shared investment. The project was framed not as a personal endeavour but as a communal asset—aligning with Ubuntu philosophy and demonstrating the tool's cultural fit. This deep-rooted sense of responsibility made the tool highly usable in promoting sustainability and long-term commitment.

In Malawi, ownership was expressed primarily through economic initiatives. CAMA girls formed village savings groups, reinvested profits, and opened personal bank accounts. These practices showed the tool's applicability in fostering financial independence and structural empowerment. The usability of the tool was evident in how it equipped girls with the confidence and resources to manage and grow their ventures, illustrating the potential for the EPIO model to support long-lasting, community-driven development

In Uganda, the application and usability of the tool were more effective with the project leaders. They seemed to be intimately involved with the inner workings of the project, while the participants were engaged in the community-facing portion of the project.

Ubuntu, as a central component of the tool, helped to create a link between the tool and the project leaders. They used the tool to identify, for example, how they build relationships with project recipients, what networks they have built, and how they build relationships with families. The project leadership also walked through a project cycle using Ubuntu and EPIO as the foundational theory or idea and were able to identify how they are using indigenous culture to operate their project from inception to evaluation.

Concluding Remarks

In sum, the EPIO tool demonstrated strong applicability and usability in Zambia, Malawi, and Uganda, adapting effectively to each context's cultural norms and community structures. Across all four elements, Engagement, Participation, Involvement, and Ownership, the tool facilitated meaningful dialogue, fostered inclusivity, empowered local actors, and supported sustainable outcomes rooted in Ubuntu values.

Lesson Learned

The Engagement, Participation, Involvement, and Ownership (EPIO) of the Community is critical for the sustainability and overall success of the project. Lack of these EPIO pillars reduces the sustainability of the project. Projects are incorporating African Indigenous Knowledge into the project cycle; however, due to the strenuous nature of project reporting and funding, this contribution is being underreported. The importance, for example, of engaging with participants in the most spoken language in the community is significant, but is rarely given priority in reporting.

The format used and the evaluator's linkage are critical to using this tool. In all three pilots, we had community members supporting our engagement with participants. However, their engagement was limited because they were not familiar with our tools. This limited their full participation in pilot testing the instrument, which may have impacted the quality of the results.

Ensuring that the team is engaged equally will help with addressing the issue of uneven engagement with the tool.

There is also the question of the relationship of an individual or group of people to the project and their interactions with engagement, participation, involvement, and ownership in relation to the project. One's level of EPIO depends on their role in the organisation, as most of these organisations are not egalitarian or do not operate in a co-op format. While there is community involvement, it may be limited without a reassessment of the very structure of the projects or the organisation.

The tool can be adapted to meet the organisational needs of particular institutions based on structure, operations and output. This may provide a more robust and holistic approach to using EIPO to build community and ensure collective engagement across the various stakeholders.

Value Added

The EPIO framework is Afrocentric, inclusive and community centred. The four elements of the framework are focal in many African communities. The framework enabled participants and project leadership to recognise and incorporate community specific cultural values and principles in the evaluation ecosystem. The following are the core ways that this framework adds value to the African evaluation landscape.

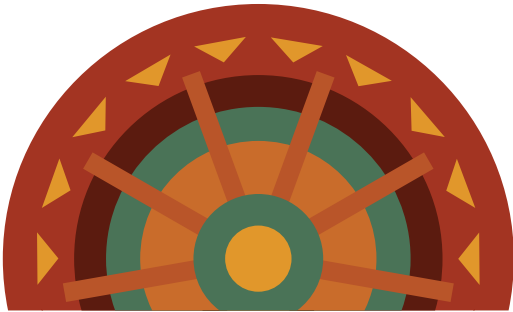
The EPIO framework is not just a tool; it’s a paradigm shift. It redefines what meaningful participation means in African contexts. Where many tools are instrumental, EPIO is transformational, aiming for liberatory development rooted in dignity, relational ethics, and communal agency.

EPIO’s distinctive value lies in its ability to serve both as a participatory framework and an evaluative tool that assesses the quality of engagement through culturally resonant indicators, including social responsibility, dignity, and interconnectedness.

The framework supports communities to highlight and report community-specific cultural practices that inform the implementation of projects, such as the use of community languages, incorporating community leadership into the inception and implementation of the project, and using cultural nuances to ensure project success.

It also provides an opportunity for project leaderships to acknowledge, highlight and promote their role in the success of the project. By engaging multiple stakeholders using the four elements’ evaluators will be able to determine the extent to which the project is embedded in the community’s infrastructure.

Finally, the framework ensures that data collection is conducted from multiple publics in the community, which enriches the project, evaluation and prospect for improving the project.



CHAPTER 5

People, Environment, Place, Space, and Time (PEPST) Framework

Introduction

In this chapter we demonstrate, through a pilot process, the application of the PEPST framework to a Climate Smart project in Zambia and Malawi as well as an Entrepreneur project in Uganda. We report on the findings on its application, followed by lessons learned and the final version of the tool, describing each element and when, why and how the tool can be used. Next are findings reported according to each element in the tool.

Photo: Lekgotla format discussions



Findings

People

Under this construct, **we tested the applicability of the tool in capturing diverse stakeholders in the project, their roles and responsibilities in the design of the project, and strategies for addressing differences in perspective, building relationships, addressing power asymmetries and changing mindsets.**

The conversation with the designers revealed that in both Zambia and Malawi, community leaders are not involved in the planning phase of the project. The CAMFED Association Guides work with stakeholders from agriculture, youth, environment, and gender ministries, to support women and girls to grow their farms into profitable businesses, supplying more nutritious food for local communities and creating jobs (Agriculture Guide Companion 2021). The absence of community leaders at the planning/design stage has negative consequences on the project as in Zambia, it was reported that certain cultural practices and beliefs prohibit girls from growing specific crops and vegetables, such as butternuts and mushrooms. Some girls chose to grow cabbage, but experienced losses because community members refused to buy their produce. Participants expressed the view that, had project designers involved community leaders and local knowledge holders from the onset, they could have found culturally appropriate ways to navigate differing perspectives and identify crops that were acceptable and viable within the local context.



Figure 20. People

Community leaders are nevertheless involved during the implementation of the projects. The Agriculture Guide Companion emphasises respect for communities and adapting local indigenous agriculture practices to inform practice. The process requires participation and involvement of community leaders. In Zambia, multiple layers of village structures were involved in the implementation of the project. The importance of holding regular conversations between important role players in the implementation of the Smart

Agriculture Project was shared by Agriculture Guides in Zambia. The following was a story shared by one of the Agriculture guides:

The issue of land allocation to women changed after the Climate-Smart Agriculture Project activities. This is because of meetings that agriculture guides held with different stakeholders such as community leaders, staff from Ministry of Agriculture, and village Indunas (community or village leaders), to discuss important Smart Agriculture topics like climate change. It is good to involve other people in the discussion of the project for its successful implementation.

In Malawi, community engagement was seen as an important predictor of success. Consultations with community representatives, including CDC, BAC, and Mother Groups, highlighted the value of inclusive dialogue in the early stages of project implementation. Representatives noted, *"We attended the meeting before the project started—the project team was introducing it to us."* They emphasized that chiefs, youths, and community members all contributed meaningfully to discussions and the dissemination of information. Chiefs play a mentoring role, using sayings like *"Chammawa sichidziwika" (No one knows about tomorrow) to encourage youth, and "Chala cha mwini sakandira thako" (You cannot use another's finger to scratch your itch)* to promote self-reliance. This culturally rooted engagement reinforces community trust and encourages local ownership.

Community engagement was identified as a key to project success. Participants emphasized the importance of local language: *"We use Chichewa language for easy communication... It fosters community engagement."* Chiefs and committees guide projects and share information at the grassroots level. *"When community members attend meetings, they go back and practice and share what they discussed,"* demonstrating effective knowledge transfer. One participant noted, *"If people are involved from the start, they feel they own the project and take care of it."*

The project recipients and agricultural guides have maintained strong relationships with community leaders. The agricultural guides shared information on Climate-Smart Agriculture with the project recipients, who, in turn, passed this knowledge on to the broader community. The relationship has grown so close that the community now actively supports and takes ownership of the projects. Because of this strong relationship, the community is open to learning from the girls, while also continuing to value traditional knowledge shared by elders. The girls shared a story in which they came together to grow tomatoes—a crop they were traditionally forbidden to cultivate. They then invited the community to visit their tomato garden. Upon seeing the thriving vegetable plots and the impressive yield, community members changed their perceptions. They became convinced that girls could grow tomatoes just as successfully as boys. The story demonstrates change of mindsets.

There are also protocols to be observed that promote togetherness and maintain healthy relationships among stakeholders. In both Zambia and Malawi, permission for the team to conduct the pilot was sought by CAMFED from the District Commissioner, who is responsible for all developments projects in the community. The District Commissioner worked closely with multiple village structures led by Chiefs, headmen, and ward leaders.

In Uganda, local authorities among them District councils and community leaders are engaged to ensure the acceptability of project in their areas. There are also engagements and

discussions which are held with the Government on licensing and business standards. These are an indicator of the need to map government policies and policy makers to include the stakeholder committees so that they too are accountable and can commit to the success of the project.

Under People, the findings are that **all stakeholders, including the communities, should be engaged throughout the life cycle of the project.** Strategies to navigate differences in perspectives and build relationships emerged as essential for the success of the project. Community language in the form of proverbs emerged as an important strategy for building relationships, promoting collective responsibility, community trust, resilience and local ownership of projects. The community language has the power to anchor the project in the values of the community, ensuring its success and sustainability. The tool guides the evaluator to identify the stakeholders, their roles and responsibilities, strategies that facilitate communication, engagement, and relationship building among stakeholders and strategies that address change of mindsets where stakeholders have different perspectives

Environment

The construct elicits information on **government policies, socio-cultural practices, gender policies and the people's relationship with the environment and how these affect the design, implementation and success of projects. Environment entails issues of respect for the environment and environmental justice.**

In Malawi, it was shown that agricultural practices are governed by the rhythm of the ecosystem and that there is integration of local indigenous knowledge with Smart Climate Agricultural practices that come through agricultural guides. Agriculture is linked to nature. Many farmers observe the moon to predict rainfall. When the moon looks large, good rains are expected. A small moon means no rain. The appearance of red ants is a sign of impending drought and hunger ahead, prompting the storage of food for the future. Some farmers are guided by the rhythm of the ecosystem and go ahead to cultivate the land even before the rains come. Agriculture guides and project recipients worked with community members to change their mindsets. This was achieved through a process where the agricultural guides, who are implementers, and the project recipients borrowed local indigenous practices from the communities and acknowledged the value of the practices. In response to the respect and valorisation of their knowledge, they, in turn, learned from agricultural guides. This multi-directional borrowing and lending of knowledge facilitated the integration of knowledge, ensuring project success. The tool revealed that change came when communities are listened to and respected, and there is space for all knowledge systems.

The tool also revealed the importance of cultural sensitivity. Participants from both consultations agreed that understanding and respecting cultural norms is essential. They emphasized that failure to do so can lead to rejection of projects*: "If you bring a project promoting pigs in a Muslim community, it will be rejected." Language plays a key role—"We use Chichewa so everyone can understand and express themselves." Cultural alignment is seen not only as respectful but also strategic: "If the visitors come, we will follow their values—*

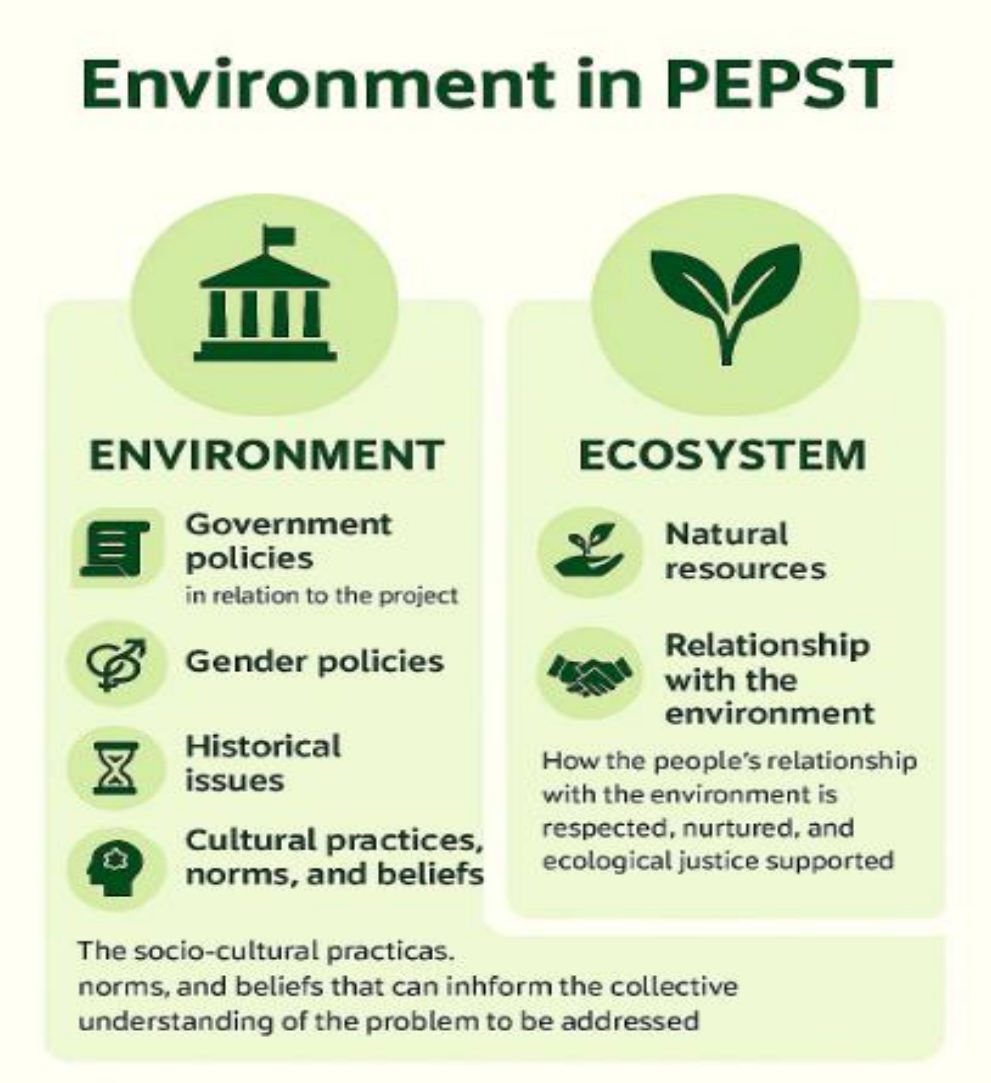


Figure 21.Environment

but they must respect ours too." Cultural practices, they noted, also support sustainability: *"If you involve the community, they take care of the trees because they feel the project is theirs.*

Participants strongly advocated for cultural sensitivity. Proverbs are used to caution against cultural insensitivity, such as *"Safunsa anadya phula" (He who does not ask ended up eating charcoal). Another added, "We respect norms and values—you cannot enter the community and bring new ideas without informing the chief." Participants emphasized the importance of dialogue: "It is very important because if you know the cultural values, you will know if this project will work in that area or not."*

In Zambia, the tool revealed that even though there were policies that promoted gender equality, cultural practices affected the success of projects. In Zambia, young women, unlike their brothers, are not allocated land, and this affects womens' participation. One participant observed:

“In our culture, the belief is that even if parents have four or five children, their space for land is from their fathers’ side. A female cannot be given the same land as her brother, even if the women have more children, as it is believed that her children's land will come from their father's

side. So, if I am given the same portion as my brother, it means his children will have a smaller portion than what he has been given".

In Malawi, which is a matrilineal society, the land belongs to women. Cultural practices, however, determine what women can do with the land. Women/girls can only engage in agricultural entrepreneur projects that do not require them to be away from the family.

From applying the Environment construct, we conclude that integration of local indigenous knowledge with expert knowledge from the project implementers, cultural sensitivity and respect for community values, affect the success of the implementation process and the project outputs and outcomes. Cultural practices are resilient to government policies. A government policy on gender equality, for example, does not necessarily mean the policy is practised in the communities. When this construct is applied in evaluation, evaluators judge how cultural practices, gender norms, government policies affect the implementation, output and outcome of projects and activities that address mindsets for optimal project outcomes, continuity, and sustainability.

In Zambia, it was clear that cultural context plays an important role in the success of the project. While it is common for projects to suffer setbacks due to failing projects, cultural folklore and sayings are used to promote interactions, bringing people together to support those falling behind in their projects. For instance, to encourage new CAMA members to keep on working on their project regardless of challenges, guides use proverbs such as *"Metals get deformed but will never break"* which simply encourage the girls to be more resilient when they get criticisms from people. These types of sayings are repeatedly used to encourage girls to soldier on.

Similarly in Malawi it was evident that cultural practices informed by songs, sayings, folktales, and songs continue to be used by communities as a mode of communication, for instance, there are songs for; a good harvest, a loss or sadness, encouragement when projects don't do well and to pray for rain.

These usage of songs and sayings are a clear indication that the cultural practices are critical in binding the people together and informing their daily interactions. As such these can be used as assessment tools to evaluate the success and challenges of any project.

In Uganda, churning ghee is predominantly a woman's role. The process of churning ghee according to the participants in the Mumbwa district is a traditional exercise that enables the women to grow beauty curves that make them attractive to their men. The place and space play an important role in planning in the butter project. The churning is done in special traditional thatched houses so that the butter does not melt and there must also be special spaces to store churning tools. A problem-solving stakeholder committee using PEPST would look for solutions to the ghee churning that address space, keeping the ghee production which is also understood as an exercise in enhancing beauty among women, while at the same time developing and adopting hand-operated high-capacity churners to increase productivity. The problem-solving stakeholder committee moves away from monitoring predetermined objectives to continuously building implementation strategies that respect communities' cultural practices while at the same time seeking innovative technology solutions. Project implementers in this context continuously monitor projects not only to explain achievement

and lessons learned but also to continuously adapt the project plan to respond to people-centred and people led solutions to their challenges.

In Uganda where churning the ghee is done at home, women stay at home while men go out to sell the ghee and collect the revenue. Participants noted that even though the project is meant to benefit women, and women work hard on the production of the ghee, men tend to gain more from the sales. This means that how projects navigate gender norms and alleviate poverty among women remains a challenge. The PEPST draws project designers and implementers to continuously monitor the gender and power dynamics to create strategies to change mindsets and envision better futures for marginalised groups.

It is important also to note that participants emphasized that men and women in their society coexist, and men cannot be separated from women. They noted that successful women are supported by their men and that success comes when there is respect, unity, co-participation, and partnership of the two genders. Navigating cultural norms and practices in implementation of projects is a reality that needs to be flagged, and the PEPST tool promotes monitoring and evaluation of how gender norms and power dynamics impact project outcomes and success.

Environmental justice requires project recipients to minimize harm to the environment. In Malawi the young women agri-entrepreneurs were conscious of their responsibilities over the environment. They related how they were choosing organic manure over chemical fertilizers. They narrated how the use of fertilizers had left the land barren.

In Uganda, it was noted that the production of sandals from leather required strategies for disposing the leather scraps. The churning of the ghee, a popular entrepreneur business, required clear strategies on what to do with the ghee residue to keep the environment clean. The strategies, whether they point to repurposing of the leather scraps or the ghee residue, suggest care of the environment and therefore environmental justice.

Place and space

The constructs elicit information on **how context, as defined by the place (country, district or village) where the project is located, and the space within that place contributes to the success of project implementation outputs and outcomes.**

In Malawi, participants talked about sacred places that included rivers, forests, and graveyards. With the revival of local practices, communities' bylaws are bringing back those customs. Trees are being replanted, and sticks are placed at entrances to show that these are sacred places. Only the chief can give permission to enter. These acts show how tradition continues to shape and protect the environment.

In Zambia, there is a big tree in an area called Shimbish. This big tree is guarded, and there are flowers planted around it. Though it is on fertile ground that could have been used for the Smart Agriculture Project, no one is allowed to use the land around it for agriculture because it is a sacred area. There are certain rivers called malande that don't dry out. The areas around these rivers are restricted — communities are not allowed to collect water from such rivers. Communities use most of these sacred places as places of worship. The practice nevertheless shows communities' resilient methods of conservation that have survived the onslaught of cultural imperialism and the erosion of indigenous knowledge systems.

In Uganda for example, in the district of Mumbwa the cow is the symbol of community identity, livelihoods and survival. Development projects are anchored on the community resources and assets. The project Save a cow, has many cow-related entrepreneurship businesses. The project on Save a cow for example, was designed to address the need for sandals and the opportunity to utilize locally available materials. Participants for example, mentioned its importance and benefits.

There are also traditional spaces for dialogue that can create safe places for communities to share their perspectives, using their preferred modes of communication that include songs, proverbs, riddles, storytelling, and rituals. Evaluators need to consider safe spaces for data collection.

From applying the construct Place and Space, we concluded that it was important for evaluators to consider cultural beliefs about place and space and how these can inform location, type and choice of project and the implementation process. It is important to consider community resources and assets that the projects can leverage on and the general project responsiveness to community needs.

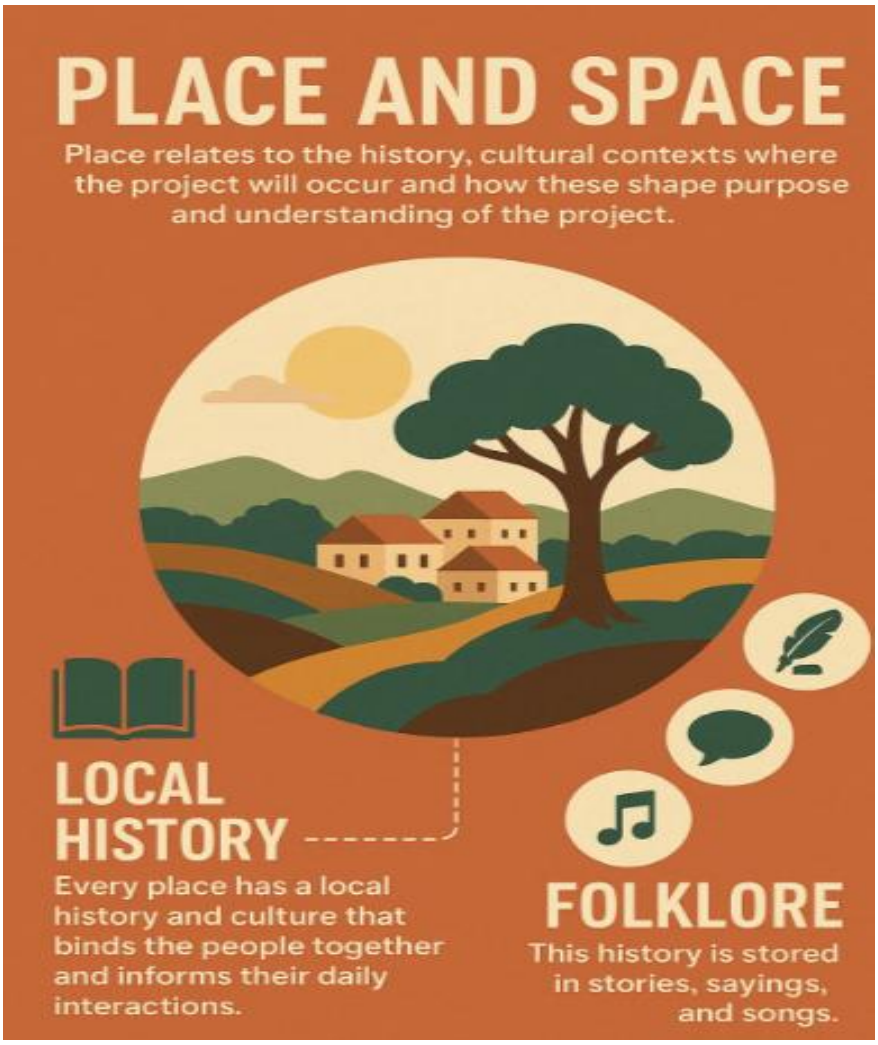


Figure 22. Place and Space

Time

In Malawi, time meant **looking back to the past, engaging in the present, and looking forward to the future.** One participant commented, “The Future is Bright, the future is Youth. The Future is Local.” Participants envisioned a future where the youth can produce enough to feed the whole nation, to eradicate hunger and malnutrition, and even sell to other countries. They envisioned a future rooted in borrowing cultural practices on agriculture that are relevant and useful—for example, growing manure the traditional way instead of relying on chemical fertilizers that, according to them, have damaged the soil. CAMA members, for example, use Mbeya manure to make the soil better in a low-cost way, and also solar panels to run irrigation systems that help crops grow better. Furthermore, they use Chitetezo Mbaula—simple stoves made from local materials that save fuel, reduce smoke, and help protect forests.

Participants discussed how young people are forming cooperatives, reviving local practices, and standing up for education and financial sustainability. For the participants, the past, now, and future is dependent on how communities are listened to, respected, and trusted to lead.

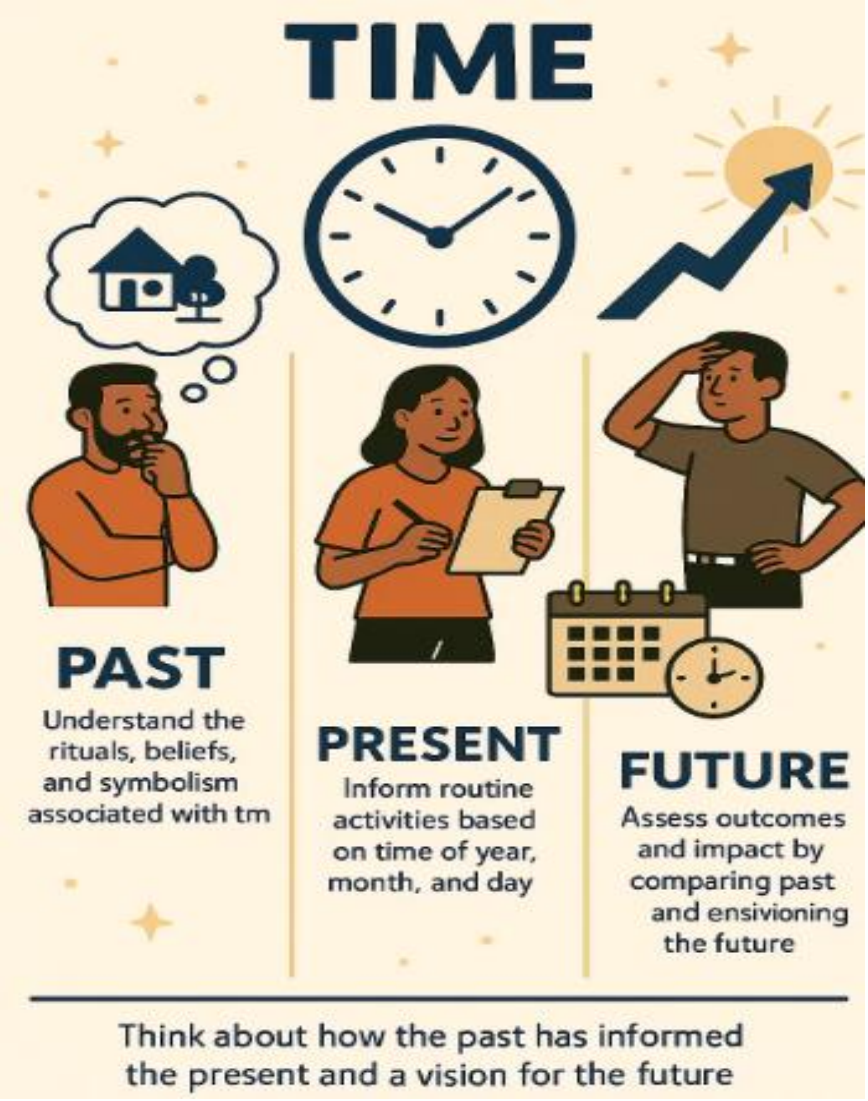


Figure 23. Time

In Uganda, time meant looking back and processing what is valuable from the past, assessing the current and forecasting the future. One of the common businesses was on production of ghee. Some businesses produced ghee the traditional way because there was a market for traditional ghee , which was also considered organic. They could, however, not produce it in bulk or even brand it because of regulatory requirements. Their concern was growing the business to sell in a large scale and even internationally. The original project had no forecast and no strategies for growth beyond the predetermined goals and objectives. Furthermore, in Uganda, participants were asked to role play the application of the PEPST framework and compare it with their practices. It was compared with a practice in Malawi and Zambia that communities are engaged in during the implementation of the project. The limited diversity in the stakeholder composition limited its capacity to adapt and nurture the growth of the projects. It was noted for example, that while churning of the ghee was the popular business for young women, the business was limited to local markets, failing to reach the commercial markets where branding was required. Participants noted that the presence of representatives from licensing departments, the Bureau of Standards and representatives from other Government entities regulating the handling and marketing of food would have enriched the success of the project.

Applying the PEPST on a Butter project, participants emphasised the need for a diverse stakeholder committee with defined roles to aid the growth and success of the project. Its main role should be problem solving and continuously adapting the objectives and implementation strategies of the project to respond the realities on the ground. This advisory committee should have schedule meeting times and, memorandum of understanding with partners. Participants were of the view that where local people are involved or have contributed to the project from its initial stage there is some level of growth in such projects. Local involvement is likely to contribute to sustainability of projects because local people indicated that they have their own way of looking at their problems and are more inclined to commit to such projects where they are accountable.

In Zambia and Malawi, participants noted strong participation of local communities at the implementation level. There were examples where there was adaptation at the implementation level. To that extent, it is reasonable to say that PEPST is in practice in CAMFED community projects. The practice, however, remains undocumented with the literature still promoting the mainstream project circle with time-bound, predetermined objectives and outcomes across projects. Under PEPST, the project is evolving. Time is not an endpoint but a symbol of continuity. Time marks the past, the now and the future.

We conclude that cultural practices associated with time can affect project implementation, project success, and outcome. Communities judge their success against past experiences and always envision possibilities for the future. Individual success, family success and community success contribute towards the meaning of success.

Lessons Learned

Participants associated spirituality with religious practices and traditional rituals involving communication with the immortals. In response the tool is preceded by an explanation of the Ubuntu world view that informs the tool and the meaning of spirituality in relation to the evaluation process. The words taboos and

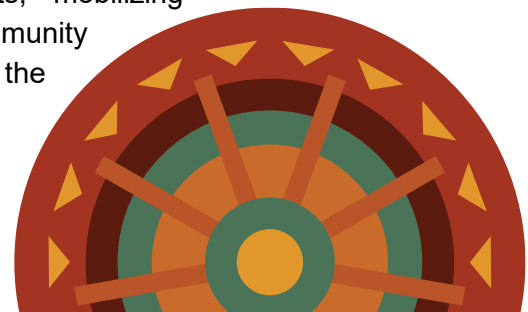
rituals carried a negative connotation about a culture that participants felt was hardly practised. Participants were comfortable discussing cultural practices that were part of their day-to-day practices and experiences. The cultural practices were contextual, differing from one local space to the other. In line with the participants' ways of thinking, we felt that the framework name should as much as possible reflect its main focus while at the same time spelling out the elements or constructs that make up the tool. It was also difficult to separate space from place. These were therefore merged together. The framework was renamed The People, Environment, Place, Space and Time (PEPST) Context Responsive framework.

Value Added

The PEPST Context Responsive framework is a departure from evaluation practice that focuses on time-bound, predetermined objectives as the main measures of success. What emerged from the pilot is that the success of the project depends to some extent on how the project implementers work with communities to adapt projects continuously, integrate local indigenous knowledge with expert science knowledge, and respond to diverse contexts. It enables evaluators to assess the compatibility of the project with the needs, priorities of the people and synergy with the environment and place. The tool makes adaptation and integration of local indigenous knowledge in the project an important contributor to the success to measure. The tool shifts community participation from only extracting information from them to valorising and revitalizing indigenous local knowledge that contributes to project success and sustainability. In addition, the tool offers an innovative way of thinking about context, derived from the philosophy of Ubuntu. The underlying assumption is that context-responsive development projects can yield impactful, transformative, and sustainable outcomes. It is also assumed that, in order to bring about transformative change, evaluation tools should incorporate opportunities to measure strategies for changing mindsets, building relationships, community adaptive and innovative strategies, addressing power asymmetries, and envisioning the future.

Applying the Ubuntu philosophy, the PEPST tool creates space for evaluators to valorise African indigenous knowledge and to create pathways that promote the integration of knowledge systems. This integration is critical for addressing complex societal challenges, shifting mindsets, strengthening relationships, incorporating community resilience and innovativeness, redressing power imbalances, and co-imagining the future. The tool, if applied, has the ability to bring all stakeholders such as the target population, community leaders, government officials, implementers, and funders together to collaboratively conceptualize and define the intended purpose of an intervention or project. This includes jointly developing its theory of change and indicators of success. Using the PEPST framework, ensures that the intervention is transformative, relevant, and culturally responsive to the needs and aspirations of the target population. The framework can be applied to guide project initiation, design, implementation, monitoring, and impact evaluation.

The pilot test informs a transformative project cycle that begins with planning led by a diverse group of stakeholders who informed their planning by engaging in ecosystem mapping defining strategies to build relationships, changing mindsets, mobilizing community resources that can leverage success buy in by the community and local ownership of the project. At the planning stage the



stakeholders also deliberate on the project goals and objectives, strategies for implementation, designing monitoring tools, memorandums of understanding with partners and clear delineated roles and responsibilities for committee members including time schedules for meetings.



Figure 24. Community Based Project Cycle

The implementation stage is a problem-solving endeavour where the implementation strategies and project objectives, are adapted to respond to the realities on the ground for continuous adaption of the plans and strategies. Responding to the flow of time, the stakeholder committee need to capture and forecast the future leading to additional adaptation of the project that speaks to project sustainability. Impact evaluation eventually looks at how the project was adapted, the implementation process, the vision for the future, project outcomes and success as defined by the communities (see figure 25).

CHAPTER 6

Cultural Empowerment Tool (Ngwanake)

Introduction

The original Ngwanake Cultural empowerment framework developed during the co-creation workshops was suggested as a framework suitable for empowering youth to actively participate in the evaluation practice. *The philosophy of Ngwanake emanates from the systematic review findings that Stated that youths were not active on utilizing cultural evaluations approaches during their design thinking; and implementation of projects; where we noted lack of cultural integration. The tool endeavours to encourage the youth to participate in evaluations with its uniqueness grounded on empowerment emphases, inculcating African culture in the context of interconnectedness; intracultural relationships; thus, fostering overall cultural empowerment on Evaluation practices.*

The initial constructs of the framework were cultural Sensitisation, Scaffolding, and Execution[1]. This chapter therefore presents an analysis of the findings from the pilot testing of *Ngwanake* Cultural Empowerment framework in Zambia, Malawi and Uganda where the evidence on each component of the framework is discussed. Its application is illustrated through two contexts: a Climate Smart Agriculture initiative in Zambia and Malawi, and the YiDAMS programme in Uganda. The chapter seeks to examine the effectiveness and usefulness of the framework in these settings but also in the larger African evaluation ecosystem. The First section of the chapter is a discussion of findings from the three pilots, offering insights into the tool's performance in diverse community settings. The Second section is an illustration of the applicability, usability and adoptability of the framework constructs, and the chapter concludes

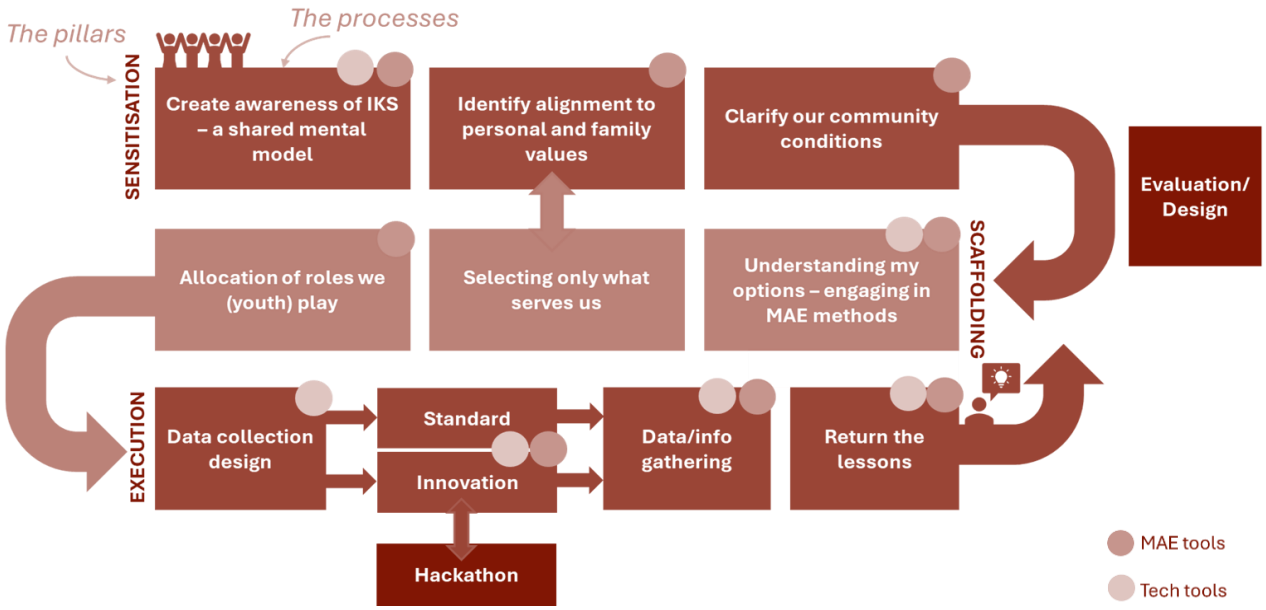


Photo: AI generated image used as visual prompt in engagements

with a section on lessons learned and a section on what value the framework offers evaluation in Africa.

Findings

This section focuses on the implementation of the *Ngwanake* Cultural Empowerment framework in Zambia, Malawi and Uganda with practitioners and participants. It highlights the three constructs in the framework namely *Cultural Sensitisation, Scaffolding, and Execution*. It interrogates the effectiveness of the framework and identifies areas of convergence and divergence between the framework and the existing practices in the project areas. The following chart outlines the three elements of the first iteration of the Ngwanake framework:



Cultural Sensitization

The pilot findings demonstrated that the youth who participated in the CAMFED, Zambia and Malawi, and Ripple Effect, Uganda did not need any sensitisation, since they were already embracing their cultural practices, songs, proverbs, and values, and using these in their projects. However, it became apparent that there was need for cultural empowerment, so that these culturally empowered youths bring their unique cultural practices, beliefs, and values into the evaluation practice. This would significantly influence how they understand project initiation, design, implementation and impact from a cultural-context perspective. Cultural integration ensures that there is affirmation of culture, diverse local beliefs, culturally informed perspectives, norms and practices throughout the life-cycle of programme evaluation. So, Sensitisation evolved to Cultural Integration. In this Cultural Integration construct of the Ngwanake Empowerment Framework, as was with Sensitisation, technology plays a vital role of amplifying cultural practices, perspectives, norms, values, and the voices of the youths. For example; using digital technology such as TikTok, WhatsApp, and Facebook for brainstorming and conducting culturally sensitive needs assessment.

Scaffolding

During piloting it became apparent that participants in the CAMFED, Zambia and Malawi, and Ripple Effect, Uganda projects have come up with novel products emanating from historical practices rooted in local content, co-created, co-designed through community science. As a result, Scaffolding, which focused on youth participatory planning and conceptualization stages of development programmes, conducted through the co-design / co-creation approaches, evolved to Cultural Innovation. Cultural Innovation as a construct in the Ngwanake Empowerment framework entail empowering the youth to innovatively and collaboratively integrate cultural knowledge and technology to generate relevant interventions and ways to evaluate them. This construct takes into cognisance the multiple contextual dimensions, including socio-cultural, technology, utilization of context-appropriate methods and tools. Cultural Innovation also entail empowering the youth to access the necessary tools and support from the community. For example, using of technology to implement and monitor culturally grounded initiatives.

Execution

The findings from the pilot revealed that the CAMFED and Ripple Effect interventions showed different levels of sustainability. Therefore, empowering the youth to take up ownership of the initiatives' output and outcome was necessary. All these would ensure that the projects are sustainable beyond the funder's contractual obligation. The youth would need to be empowered in terms of training to value and market their products beyond their locality. In the process, the products would become financially viable to sustain in the case where the funder withdrew their funding. Again, to promote ownership, pride, branding, marketing, and patenting, technology becomes inevitably important. Hence, Self-reliance [Jitegemme] was added as a third construct to replace Execution in the original Ngwanake empowerment framework.

Concluding Remarks

From the findings, it was evident that the Empowerment framework that was designed with three dimensions; *cultural Sensitisation, Scaffolding, and Execution,* did not fully address the capacitation of the youth in participating in evaluation of interventions. Lessons learned informed the redefining of Ngwanake Cultural Empowerment Framework Components into Constructs that were more engaging and adoptable; aligned with participants consultations.

Application, Adaptability, And Usability

The Pilot process tested the components, procedures, steps and guidelines outlined in Ngwanake Cultural Empowerment Framework for its clarity, context-appropriateness, applicability, usability and value addition in programme design, implementation and impact. The findings from piloting on the applicability, adaptability and usability of the Framework revealed that there was an exchange of Knowledge and skills between the younger and older generation at project design and implementation. The findings also depicted the use of technology in project design, implementation and dissemination. This section examines the applicability, adaptability, and usability in Zambia, Malawi, and Uganda across its three core dimensions: Sensitisation, Scaffolding, and Execution.

Cultural Sensitisation

In **Zambia**, Cultural Sensitisation was evident to a limited extent. Community narratives integrated past challenges into future opportunities, the process from Land preparation to Harvesting portrayed Cultural knowledge grounded on community science in resilience-building techniques within Soil-to Maize crops ecosystems, and community climate action was reflected through cultural practices. During the pilot testing of Ngwanake Cultural Empowerment tool in Zambia, a CAMFED Association Member narrated her Cultural knowledge that was inherited from her grandparents who taught her on Cover cropping to build soil structure, improve soil fertility , soil aeration and water retention capacity. She narrated how her inherited cultural knowledge which enabled her to know how cover crops should be grown during the periods with less competition for nutrients. She cited an example of cover cropping where Maize, beans and Okra are grown together to benefit from each other; where the Maize provides the structure for the beans like cow peas to climb and fixes nitrogen to the soil while Okra plants grow upright with a branching stem, providing a cloud cover from emerging weeds. Another cultural integrational awareness was depicted on environmentally friendly composting through natural alternative methods to chemical fertilizers; which is deemed a simple way, free and easy to make to add nutrient rich humus, stimulates plant growth and restores vitality to depleted soils. Other intergenerational cultural awareness strategies that poised localized solutions in Smart Agriculture was the appearance of moon and butterflies in the sky that often symbolized the onset of rains. In conclusion; the participants deemed these traditional methods more effective than western methods; which authenticates the impetus of cultural awareness.

Malawi, a fictitious story of a young African girl who lost her inheritance due to lack of cultural sensitization at a young age was shared. During conversations around this story, participants [beneficiaries of the CAMFED, Malawi] presented feeling of cultural shock and amusement. They could not understand how the young African girl could be so culturally insensitive to a point where she lost her inheritance. They shared their own cultural practices for protecting heirs from losing their inheritance. This was a demonstration that the participants were culturally sensitized. They even shared examples of local practices in place to sensitize the youth about the importance of culture and cultural practice. One such example shared by one participant was where a young man or woman is given ownership of livestock or goats at a young age to encourage them to grow the love for livestock. This is a cultural practice common in most African indigenous communities. In Botswana the culture is known as "go tshwaelwa". This practice involves giving somebody [usually younger, or poorer] ownership of one or two animals as a way to encourage and motivate them to grow the love for rearing animals. The intention of giving ownership does not include giving the responsibility for the upkeep of the animal, the upkeep remains the responsibility of the giver, but the given develops interest and they would participate and gain the necessary knowledge and skills in the process. Participants demonstrated cultural awareness, a demonstration that this stage of sensitization is necessary where need be. However, cultural integration sounded more reasonable to use as an element of the tool rather than Sensitisation.



In **Uganda,** community members conveyed cultural sensitization by explaining how indigenous practices innovatively contributed towards preservation of milk products using local culture; value addition to milk products like yoghurt and ghee. A practical process was the utilization of community science along the entire milk ecosystem from using special herbs for preservation, smoke from selected roots, sieving of cream from special lemon glass to add some flavor and storage in guards for fermentation and product packaging. One of the participants demonstrated the ghee processing steps all grounded on intergenerational cultural knowledge where she retaliated;

"*My grandmother taught me how to Knead the clay until soft, then mold it into a round milk storage vessel known as Ensimbo (guard) which is the butter churner; where the in side is aligned with a on a non-stick surface or wax paper. After milking the cow; the milk is stored in the Ensimbo to churn for seven (7days); so as to separate the Cream butter and fermented milk. The Fermented cream is sieved using Lemon grass and product produced is known as butter. The Ensimbo is then washed using water with soda ash and the sieved fermented milk is churned again while the Butter is packed for consumption."*

The product is flavored with varied flavors that are locally sourced from herbal plants; e.g, Mint, ginger, menthol plants. The maturity occurs after 7 days, where the Ghee is churned and packed for consumption."

In concluding the cultural sensitization, community narratives integrated cultural knowledge into future opportunities by incorporating traditional mentorship models by embracing co-creation sessions with elders and youth to gather intergenerational insights that connect past cultural knowledge and practices with future opportunities for sustainable cultural implications, particularly the aspect of:

- equity;
- gender parities and emerging issues;
- by attributing to roles played by women versus men;
- the economic empowerment from the innovative products and the ownership associated to products production and expertise;
- culturally grounded on pure community science, which is a value add from other contemporary evaluation methodologies.

Leading questions on cultural sensitization

1. What Cultural practices and values do you embrace in relation the ongoing intervention design?
2. How much of local knowledge inform the ways the implementation of ongoing interventions is applied? (you want to capture how voice asymmetries and power dynamics would be addressed through cultural-values consideration and practice)
3. During the design phase of the project, were there any cultural practices [behaviours, attitudes, songs, proverbs, beliefs, etc] considered to inform the project initiation?

Scaffolding

In **Zambia,** women especially in rural communities' farm in relatively small plots of lands; exacerbated by cultural practices embedded on beliefs that profile a woman as a home maker. Following the pilot study conversational interactions with the participants, women adopt cultural innovative Smart Agriculture techniques as opposed to rain fed agriculture; fostering innovative ways that fixes soil fertility through vegetation regeneration and crop rotational mapping, Insects food webs chains, Integrated Pest Management, Sustainable Agroforestry and Propagation farming. These innovative practices enable women to harvest more food for their families from their small plots of land, while also improving the quality of the soil. One of the participants narrated, *"I feel lucky to have learned from my parents and grandparents on farming using innovative cultural techniques that are easy and readily available, since I now provide nutrition for my family and have created a livelihood for myself."*

Other cultural innovation practices observed entailed use of organic waste as fertilizer, sun-drying commodities, using bottle and salt water to monitor the level of dryness of maize and using clear glass bottles to assess moisture levels. Participants also narrated how cultural innovation on continuous mulching eradicated termites' infestation due to moisture in the soil, while cover crops covers the soil surface and suppresses after the harvest especially for the main crops like maize. In conclusion, these cultural Innovation practices influence community resilience in smart farming and propagate sustainable community-led Smart Agriculture diversification.

In **Malawi**, a folklore approach was applied. This involved watching a video of the hummingbird story as narrated by Wangari Maathai. Using the moral behind the Hummingbird story participation in the smart climate agricultural project was discussed. The project recipients shared how there was tension and jealousy towards them from some members of their communities. They indicated that some members from their communities would not buy their agricultural produce due to jealousy. However, they indicated that they work as a group to encourage and support one another and buy from each other.

The participants confirmed that the creation of WhatsApp groups for communication and information sharing. They also shared some of the cultural practices, wise sayings, songs and proverbs that encourage them to pursue their dreams despite the negative attitudes they experience from some of the community members. Projects recipients also worked closely with Agricultural guides, who are the implementers. The Agricultural guides, and the project recipients, used local cultural practices and proverbs, and these have helped them to succeed in coming up with agricultural produce that generate income to feed their families, as well other needs. The discussions that followed the hummingbird story revolved around questions to do with power dynamics and voice asymmetries, Inclusion and participation for mindset change and adoption for best practices, as well as whether the project recipients engaged in setting up a social platform and creating groups to connect and interact to come with better and innovative outcomes.

In **Uganda**, the brainstorming sessions with the participants shared their innovation of cultural production of gainful products along the cow value chain in the Ripple Effect Project. The innovation is described by the cultural orientation from the milk as a product; the preservation; preparation of milk products; hygiene in packaging and marketing; and leveraging on

technology. During the pilot study, an Implementer of the Ripple Effect project retaliated, “In *collaboration with dairy Agro processors and other dairy MSMEs in the community, a category of youth will be supported to map out value addition opportunities and skilled through apprenticeship on milk value addition with the intention of setting up cottage industries. These will include confectionery, ice cream, yoghurt, ghee, and cheese, among others”*.

The products culturally innovated along the cow value chain include hide- Leather accessories, milk products, and *ensimbo-guard* innovatively molded for preservation. Cultural innovation depicted Labour Generative and job creation through cultural innovations across value chains where Community science was weaved along the entire milk ecosystem from using special herbs for preservation, smoke from selected roots, sieving of cream from special lemon glass to add some flavour and storage in guards for fermentation and product packaging; where every value chain created a demand driven opportunity.

In conclusion, cultural innovation was portrayed by integrating contextual knowledge with modern tech tools that the community actively used. This phase takes cognisance of multiple contextual dimensions, which include socio-cultural, digital tech and the autonomy in applying context-relevant innovation and preferred digital tools.

Leading question to test scaffolding

1. How is cultural knowledge demonstrated in co creativity and value addition along value and supply chains?
2. How do they gain the novel cultural knowledge and how is it documented

Execution

In **Zambia,** one of the participants commented “*through value addition, you make new products”*. This implied the process of production which involved adding value to their groundnuts by converting them into peanuts, branding and selling them at a higher price than they sold the raw groundnuts. Another Implementer informed us during the pilot how she launched an agro-processing business to help farmers preserve and add value to their produce using cultural innovative techniques save sun drying. A participant also demonstrated how drip irrigation using plastic bottles and clay pots offers affordable ways to add water to the soil considering the erratic rainfall patterns in Zambia; which reduces nutrients leaching. This signifies community resilience on climate change through adaption on alternative irrigation technologies; embedded on community science; where drip irrigation is applied on plants with overhead shoots and fibrous roots systems like tomatoes, cabbage and cucumbers. In conclusion, these cultural Innovation practices influence community resilience in smart farming and propagates sustainable community-led Smart Agriculture diversification

In **Malawi,** both the project recipients and Agricultural guides were probed to share how they made sure that their projects succeeded. The probing and information gathering was collected during the discussion the discussion of the fictitious story of a young African girl who lost her inheritance due to lack of cultural sensitization at a young age, and the hummingbird story. Some information was collected during individual interview sessions. Strategies on self-reliance and ownership as shared by participants included involving different stakeholders at

different levels of the project. The community, through different stakeholders, is allowed to even choose what type of project they would like to take place in their area. This helps in that the community would consider the skills already available in the community, so that even at the end of the project, these skills and many others that they would have been developed during the project are utilized for the next project. The other strategy included involving chiefs and other elders in the community. For example, chiefs as custodians of the agricultural land supported them by providing land for demonstration purposes. This land provided for demonstration purposes would then be used in training project receipts before they start projects in their own farm lands.

Projects recipients and Agricultural guides embraced technology taking advantage of its many applications. They indicated that in executing their projects, they use technological tools to communicate, to share ideas, as well as to keep records.

In **Uganda,** Lessons learned from the pilot exercise majorly on Mentorship and apprenticeship programmes in Uganda particularly on gainful cultural Value addition practices through Milk value chains nuanced the value-add aspect embraced on mentorship and apprenticeship programme; enabling the young people to gain additional hands-on experience and confidence in managing their own businesses. The appreciation of Cultural innovate practices revolved along utilization of community science towards the Creation of ownership strategies on African indigenous knowledge in business, products thus leading to branding and patenting to comply with legal forces. The incorporation of cultural practices and integrating Technology fostered Ownership; indicative on gainful benefits through leveraging on technology. In conclusion, execution is portrayed in self-reliance; conceptualized in empowering youth and community to turn their innovative cultural practices into gainful returns through Patenting, branding, marketing, networks, Saccos and SME enterprises with gender inclusion and equity, co-branding, Place-branding, Licensing and Marketing. Hence, integrating technology with culture; signifying their ingenuity on utilizing culture for business.

Leading questions on execution

1. How is the rich indigenous knowledge to inter- generations (; you will be testing Technology- social media, radio, etc)
2. What aspects of the outcome of the project demonstrates community ownership?
3. What community aspects are visible in the branding of the project outcome?
4. What cultural aspects were incorporated in the project branding, marketing and distribution of the final project output

Lesson Learned

We observed the role **Technology played in amplifying youth voices** which they termed to be crucial in communication where they obtained real time data; especially when marketing the products. During data collection, Youths and communities who participated in the pilot process displayed their knowledge on the usage of youth friendly technology that aligned with their interventions along the value chains. Examples of tech tools that the participants were familiar with were the basic Social Media Platforms (WhatsApp, TikTok, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram). Youth and communities should therefore be empowered on how to leverage on

these platforms to enable them share insights, engage in discussions, and document findings in creative formats

The pilot process used Mobile Data Collection Tools to collect data; (Kobo collect Toolbox, ODK, WhatsApp Chatbots). Youth and communities can be empowered to utilize these tools to enable real-time, mobile-based data gathering, and efficacy

Value Added

This initial tool helped to modify the constructs to capture cultural knowledge and skills integration with technology in evaluation; that theorized Ngwanake[2] Cultural Empowerment Framework.

- Change of mind set; the tool is Youth-centric with practical integration of technology depicted by appreciation of innovative cultural science in production, improving productivity, preservation and value addition of products
- Identification of Cultural bias and aspect of equity; the tool is community-centric with a high affinity to community science and integration of technology.
- The tool encompasses Intergenerational strategies from exclusionary practices to inclusive, localized solutions ensuring no one is left behind; address power dynamics and voice asymmetries within the communities that affect participation and decision-making.
- The tool empowers the youth and community towards labour generative strategies and job creation through cultural innovations.

CHAPTER 7

Community Based Evaluation Framework

Introduction

This chapter presents findings of the pilot phase of the Community Based Evaluation Framework (CoLABEV) that was developed by the Pan African Indigenous Evaluation Consortium (PAIEC) with support from the Mastercard Foundation. The CoLABEV is a framework for conducting evaluation in African communities using community language including proverbs, songs, idioms, storytelling, folktales, myths and taboos.

The indigenous pedagogies of the various African oral literatures include fairy tales, legends, tall tales, jokes, proverbs and riddles, among others. However, proverbs stand from the rest of the crowd because they offer a wider lens and hence are adapted as an illustration for how the CoLABEV can be applied. The CoLABEV was developed as an application of the CoLABEV , using proverbs, songs and riddles. The same approach can be used with other community languages.

Community Based Evaluation Framework

The CoLABEV is an innovative tool that contributes to the body of evaluation tools for Made in Africa Evaluation (MAE). CoLABEV has unique characteristics that position them as indigenous knowledge of evaluators society. The PAIEC pilot tested the CoLABEV in Uganda Zambia and Malawi to attest its usability, applicability and efficacy to be used in evaluation.

It is evident from this pilot study that Africa's richness in community languages encompassing proverbs that embed cultural values and norms. The 2024 Systematic review report by the Pan African Indigenous Evaluation Consortium (PAIEC) highlighted the importance of evaluation theory and practice in Africa being influenced by ethnophilosophy that embraces African rootedness.



Photo: Community members sharing proverbs with PAIEC

The CoLABEV is a four-stage model (Figure 1) that enables evaluators to undertake project evaluation from design and initiation, data collection, reporting and communication phases using proverbs. The four phases of the model that cover the entire evaluation life cycle are:

1. **Project Evaluation Initiation:** This first phase aims at determining if the community context and needs of stakeholders were integrated in the project initiation and if the wisdom of proverbs contributed to this understanding.
2. **Project Evaluation Design:** The second phase aims to bring together key stakeholders to co-create in the project design using the wisdom of proverbs that are relevant to this stage. The focus is on identifying proverbs that inform the design in terms of how to enhance stakeholder participation at all stages of implementation, ownership, connectedness and impact and identify key indicators of success.
3. **Project Evaluation -Data Collection and Analysis:** The third phase establishes evaluative insights from proverbs that inform how evaluators can engage communities meaningfully in data collection, analysis, and processing to ensure ethics and integrity in all the processes, while respecting their local context.
4. **Project Evaluation Reporting and Communication:** The fourth phase focuses on inquiring about proverbs that have insights on the most appropriate ways of reporting and communicating evaluation findings to communities and key stakeholders

Figure 25. Community Based Evaluation Framework

Project Evaluation Initiation	Project Evaluation Design	Project Evaluation (Data Collection and Analysis)	Project Evaluation Reporting and Communication
• Proverbs that trigger behaviour, foster unity, respect, relationships, responsibility, ownership. stakeholder management at initiation • Identification of needs and aspirations of stakeholders • Community engagement in project design • Protocol on stakeholder management, promoting working harmoniously at project evaluation initiation stage	• Inquire about proverbs for understanding community context, needs for evaluation • Relevant data sources, methods, tools appropriate in community setting • Cultural relevance of the evaluation, norms, values and responsibilities in society • Project Evaluation Design Protocol	• Inquire about proverbs that indicate communicate credible community engagement in data collection processes • Integrity, transparency in data collection and analysis • Capturing of voices of all • Project Evaluation Data Collection and Analysis Protocol	• Inquire proverbs on the different appropriate ways of reporting and communicating the evaluation findings to the communities and key stakeholders • Ensure inclusiness of community members • Project Evaluation Reporting and Communication Protocol

Findings

The pilot studies with Ripple Effect project in Uganda and CAMFED project in Zambia revealed that the CoLABEV was relevant, useful and easy to apply in project evaluation in Africa. The communities comfortably and freely expressed their experiences and concerns about their projects through their local languages, proverbs, sayings and songs. There were relevant proverbs shared that provided useful insights on what community values to include at each stage of the project cycle (Table 1).

Table 5. Application of Proverbs and their evaluative wisdom in Ankole in Uganda and Kaonde communities in Zambia

Project phase	Proverb/Community language and its interpretation in English	Evaluative wisdom and values
Uganda		
Project initiation and design	"Owawe kahakula, niwe oligasa engaalo" *When your friend harvests honey, you will leak your finger; when one is successful, the whole community is successful*	Togetherness, Connectivity and connectedness will lead to community success
	Poem: "Ente Ente ENte Orimunyani wangye, Nompa Amate, Nompa amshita, Nompa enyama, Ente Ente orimuyanyi wangye buziima" *Cow Cow Cow is my friend, because you give me me, yiu give me ghee, you give me milk; Cow Cow you are my best friend indeed*	Cohesion, unity and togetherness
	"Ente ni byonna" *A cow is everything*	Commitment, ownership, community engagement
	"Waba otarikumanya ahorikuruga nohorikuuza buri muhanda gwona nigutwalayo" *When you do not know where you are coming from or heading to, all roads will take you to your destination*	Envision the future, goal oriented, road map, awareness, context
	"Twetungure, Tukwatanise".. *Let us develop together, work together from beginning*	Unity, Togetherness, Involvement Participation
Project implementation	"Kamwe-Kamwe Nigwo Muganda" *One by one makes a bundle*	Unity, togetherness, participation
	"Mpora Mpora ekahitsya omungongorora ahaiziiba" *Slowly by slowly made the snail reach the destination*	When a group is committed, resilient and working consistently at their project, they would finally achieve the intended goal
	"Buto nekolela bukulo" *When you are young, you must work hard for old age*	Hard work key to success, sustainability

Project phase	Proverb/Community language and its interpretation in English	Evaluative wisdom and values
	"Ageterine nigo gata igufu" *Combined effort of teeth breaks the bone*	Togetherness, unity, relational, commitment, involvement, participation
	"Agogaya nigo Gabutosa*"* *The one you despise may be the strong one*	Respect and equality
	"Owubasigire ati bandinzire" *You are lazy thinking they are waiting for you when they have already progressed*	Hard work, commitment, positivity
Zambia		
Initiation	Tabatuka ngwena elyo taulayabuka umumana *"We do not insult the crocodile before crossing the river"*	Respect to community
	Ululumbi lwamulanda kukakata "*One who is poor will only improve their status by working hard"*	Tolerance
Implementation	Babili temwenso kusoshanya *"Together is not to bring fear, but rather a relation"*	Collaboration / cooperation
Initiation	Imiti ikula empanga *"Young growing trees are the future forest"*	Community engagement
Implementation	Babili temwenso kusoshanya *"Together is not to bring fear, but rather a relation"*	
Impact	Babili temwenso kusoshanya *"Together is not to bring fear, but rather a relation"*	Interdependence
Impact	Amano mambulwa yafuma mwifwesa ya yamuculu *"Wisdom can be gotten from anyone, it is shared not a monopoly of one person"*	Equity
Impact	Babili temwenso kusoshanya *"Together is not to bring fear, but rather a relation"*	Teamwork
Project implementation	"Kamwe-Kamwe Nigwo Muganda" *One by one makes a bundle*	Unity, togetherness, participation
Malawi		
Project initiation	"Papita khasu sipanana" Where the hoe has worked, something always grows	Effort always brings results

Project phase	Proverb/Community language and its interpretation in English	Evaluative wisdom and values
Initiation, Implementation, Impact	“Chala chimodzi sichiswanso nsabwe”—one finger cannot kill lice—	Power of working together, Team work spirit or researcher triangulation
Implementation, Impact	“Mphechepeche mwa njovu sapitamo kawiri” Once bitten, be cautious	Encourages learning and persistence
	“Mutu umodzi susenza denga” *One head cannot carry the roof*	Teaches the importance of unity and working together
	“Chinenepetsa nkhumba sichidziwika” *No one knows what made the pig fat*	Encouraging people to try different things, to be open to new opportunities, and to never give up. Resilience. This is usually used to inspire young girls to return to school, motivate farmers to work in groups, and to remind each other that success comes through effort and cooperation
Songs		
Project initiation	“Tiwalandire alendo athu tiwalandire” Let us welcome our visitors.	You are opening your hearts to others
Implementation	“Ubaleu ubaleu anzanga nzaudandaula ukadzatha” This relationship worries us if it ends	Expressing the value of partnership and the hope for continued support
Impact	“CAMFED yamayankho, ona sukulu tamaliza aye, ona ma business tikupanga” CAMFED has the answers—see, we’ve finished school and we’re running businesses	Celebrating success and showing the impact of your hard work.

How To Apply the Proverb Based Evaluation Framework

A step-by-step protocol (Table 2) with key evaluation questions in the four phases was developed to help apply the framework to the project cycle. The protocol espoused the key evaluation questions that solicit the proverbs and the wisdom that is sought to enrich the project cycle to enhance stakeholder participation, ownership and intervention impact.

Table 6: Step by Step Protocol for the Proverb Based Evaluation Framework

Project phase	Strategy	Main Evaluation Questions
Project Design and Initiation **(Including Data Collection and Analysis and communication stages)**	Evaluators engage project initiators and design participants to find out if the wisdom from proverbs, myths, folktales were used in the design and initiation of the project; and data collection and analysis approaches	• Who were the key players in project initiation and design? • Did you use the wisdom of proverbs, myths, or folktales that foster ownership, unity, respect, relationships when initiating or designing this project as well as designing data collection and analysis tools? If you used them, which proverbs did you use and which values did you incorporate in this project based on the wisdom from these proverbs? If not used, why? • If you did not use local wisdom, we would like to role play designing and initiating this project and data collection using local wisdom from proverbs, myths, folktales that foster these values • If we want this project to bring impact and success, are there proverbs that bring out these values? • Assess the extent to which the selected project utilized the above wisdom in crafting the data collection, interpretation and analysis approach; Who was involved?
Project Implementation	Evaluators engage project implementers to find out if the wisdom from proverbs, myths, folktales were used in the implementation of the project	• Who were/are the key players in implementing the project? • When delivering the project, was there any local wisdom used in delivering the project • Did you use the wisdom of proverbs, myths, or folktales that foster ownership, participation, inclusiveness, respect, relationships when implementing this project? If you used them, which proverbs did you use and which values did you incorporate in this project based on the wisdom from these proverbs? If not used, why?

Project phase	Strategy	Main Evaluation Questions
		• If you did not use local wisdom, we would like to role play implementing this project using local wisdom from proverbs, myths, folktales that foster these values • During implementation of the project, we want inclusiveness, engagement to succeed, commitment, devotion by the participants; are there any proverbs, myths, folk tales that foster these values, working hard?
Project Evaluation Reporting and Communication	Inquire if wisdom from proverbs were used on the different appropriate ways of reporting and communicating the evaluation findings to the communities and key stakeholders	• Who are/were the key players in reporting and communicating the project progress and evaluation findings? • Did you use the wisdom of proverbs, myths, or folktales that foster ownership, unity, respect, relationships when preparing tools and approaches for reporting and communicating project information? If you used them, which proverbs did you use and which values did you incorporate in this project based on the wisdom from these proverbs? If not used, why? • If you did not use local wisdom, we would like to role play reporting and communicating project data and information using local wisdom from proverbs, myths, folktales that foster these values

Pilot testing approach

The CoLABEV was piloted to CAMFED project implementers and community beneficiaries in Mumbwa District, Zambia in March 2025. The piloting was systematically done in the following key steps:

- Step 1: Participants were gathered in a circle (Baraza / Lokota), then the tool was introduced with its context, objective and expectations from the group.
- Step 2: Asking participants (Implementers / beneficiaries/ agribusiness entrepreneurs/ Stakeholders) to describe local proverbs that express PAIEC values
- Step 3: Locating community language against the expressed values to test the applicability, usability of PAIEC tools

Results from piloting of PBEF are organized along four main project cycles of Initiation, Design, Implementation, and Impact Evaluation:

1. Test applicability: Results show that it is possible to use Community Language Based Evaluation framework to initiate and develop objectives goals of a development programme.
2. Test on usability: Results show that CoLABEV framework is user friendly to guide implementation, monitoring and impact evaluation of development programmes.
3. Test on Impact: Results show that CoLABEV can be used to measure impact of development programmes on the intended recipients. Furthermore, PBEF can mediate project success, community ownership, and sustainability of projects.
4. Use of CoLABEV framework to evaluate process of initiation: Results show that CoLABEV can probe on whether stakeholders were consulted or engaged in the initiation of project evaluation.
5. Value added of CoLABEV framework, on whether the framework brings new insights.
6. compared to mainstream evaluation frameworks. Results show the value addition for using PBEF in evaluation of development projects.

Value Added

The value added of the CoLABEV framework is that it gives convening space to the targeted beneficiaries, project designers and implementers and funders to discuss the applicable proverbs and other community languages in their community that can shape the project intended purpose, projected outcomes and indicators of success. In so doing, the CoLABEV improves the relevance and impact of the project interventions through informing the design, implementation, monitoring and communication of evaluation findings.

Community based language was visible in proverbs, songs, and riddles carry evaluative insights and values that motivate, encourage people to work in partnership, to be resilient and give feed-back to project funders, implementers and the community.

Lessons Learned

Some important lessons emerged when testing the ease of applying the tool. First, in the co-created framework (Figure 1), separating *Phase 1 – Project Evaluation Initiation* from *Phase*

2 – Project Evaluation Design made the exercise cumbersome without much value added. Thus, Phase 1 and Phase 2 are collapsed into the **Phase 1: Project Initiation and Design**.

Secondly, an important phase on project Implementation was missing in the PBEF. There were several insightful proverbs that directed the way in which projects should be implemented to enhance inclusivity, connectivity and participation. The CoLABEV was thereafter applied and its final form post pre-testing is presented in Table 2 with associated expressed evaluative values and insights depicting project cycles of **Initiation**, **Design**, **Implementation**, and **Impact Evaluation**.

1. Proverbs were not well known by young people; they were more knowledgeable about cultural practices that were shared by the older generations, especially the grand mothers.
2. It was possible and practical to test the PBEF using proverbs across all PAIEC tools and frameworks because CoLABEV carries African indigenous knowledge system (IKS).
3. The PBEF tool enabled CAMFED young girls to express in their language and cultural beliefs, which suggested that they have been empowered to realize that people used to believe that such taboos were issues of the past. Now, it means God is having them in the way the new generation wants. They have taken agriculture as a business, where a woman teaches them (men) some of the techniques using traditional remittance like when there was the pest in control.
4. Community members are very mindful of words they use and respectful to culture. They say “we don't want anyone to go against culture”. They expressed the use of manure that can only be used for specific plants or crops.
5. Community language such as proverbs are used to inspire young girls to return to school, to motivate farmers to work in groups, and to remind each other that success comes through effort and cooperation.

Conclusion

The Proverb Based Evaluation Framework as a practical application of the CoLABEV , contributes to initiating, designing and implementing projects in a manner that is aligned to norms, beliefs and practices of African people for increased ownership, impact and sustainability of project interventions. The CoLABEV advocates for voice, participation, inclusiveness, unity, relations, respect, connectedness and wellness in interventions.

The Uganda pilot confirmed that the CoLABEV is useful in bringing out evaluative insights in proverbs that can enrich the project cycle and the success of the interventions. For example, the proverbs from the Ankole communities encouraged values around participation, commitment, unity and respect to be integrated during project initiation and design. The CoLABEV was easy to use as there were many proverbs, songs and sayings in the communities that could be used to apply the tool.

However, despite the deep knowledge of proverbs that was embedded in the Mbarara community, we found that the embedded wisdom had not been tapped into when designing or implementing the piloted project. Neither were the values and evaluative insights in the community languages used to inform the strategies to ensure effective participation,

ownership and unity in the project. This shows the short comings of having depended on Western originated evaluation tools to design the project. The risk here is the potential lower participation, ownership, impact and sustainability of the project as key values that are critical to success from an African perspective would not have been incorporated.

The framework may be used at all stages of the project evaluation cycle and more especially at project design and implementation, and evaluation execution. It enables cultural grounding of project planning, management and evaluation, helping youth and communities to build relationships and engage in collective action and promoting unity. The CoLABEV can be applied to any of the PAIEC frameworks capturing the evaluative insights in proverbs.

