

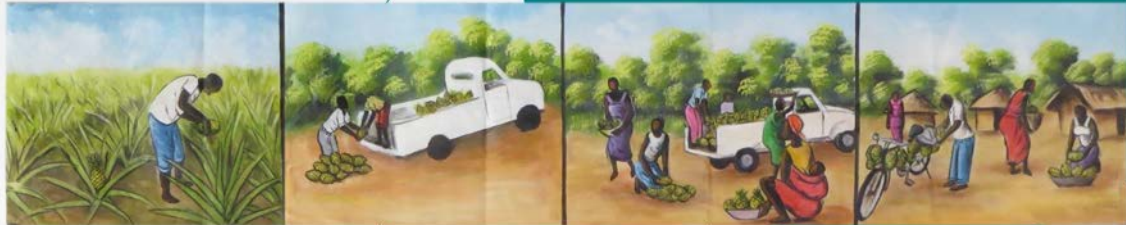
## BENEFITS

Typically, multiple individually negotiated actor relationships shape the functioning of small-scale value chains. To improve the interlinked livelihoods of value chain actors, it is important to develop a **systemic understanding** about the complexity of the local situation and to generate contextual knowledge.

Using participatory methods for **systems learning**

- \* sparked dialogue among farmers, brokers and traders and helped elicit value chain actors' perspectives on factors influencing their activities.
- \* surfaced relevant problem situations, such as high variation in prices and distorted communication which challenged actor relations.
- \* enabled participants to suggest and debate possible resolutions to problems, such as collective bargaining or establishing uniform prices.
- \* initiated dialogue and improved understanding between market actors who were usually competing.
- \* brought forward actors' awareness of potential benefits of improved collaboration and recognition of interdependent activities.
- \* increased participants ownership and self-confidence.

Participatory systems learning helps to capture actors' room of maneuver, and supports processes towards actor-driven change. It **puts people at the center** when improving value chains and fosters local capacity to accommodate diverse perspectives and to co-create solution pathways.



Painting by Carolyn Nakakeeto

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## ACTOR-ORIENTED AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

### Improving small-scale agricultural value chains



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**Facilitating participatory systems learning with value chain  
actors in Uganda**



To improve the small-scale **pineapple value chain in Uganda**, we brought value chain actors, including farmers, brokers and traders together to share their perspectives on the functioning of the chain.

We facilitate **participatory systems learning** in order to integrate value chain actors' perspectives and knowledge and to co-inquire into problematic situations. We used **cognitive mapping** as a way to visualize actors' knowledge and reveal individual perceptions. Thereby, stakeholders articulated their internally held assumptions about how the pineapple business works. Creating cognitive maps in a participatory way allowed for congruent and contradictory views to be discussed.

During meetings, participants defined the factors that influenced how they generate income from the pineapple business. They also explained how these factors were interlinked. This revealed barriers for change and how problem situations affect different value chain actors.

Organizing dialogue and stakeholder meetings created space for learning through social interaction. Building cognitive maps through group-based discussions was an effective tool for quickly bringing together insights from multiple actors to illuminate the current situation. Further, it was well received by participants.

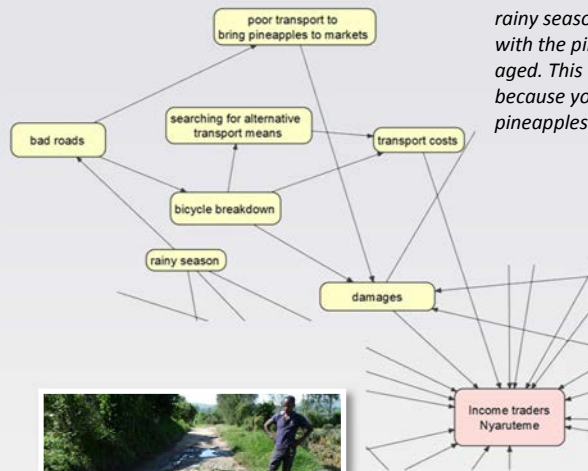


Meeting participants presenting cognitive map

*"We share different knowledge"*

*„I am happy... I have learnt something I didn't know before. Alone, I would have raised four factors but we have so many. So, two heads are better than one"*

The cognitive map revealed multiple natural, technical and social influences impacting on the income of value chain actors.



Transportation accident

*"As roads are bad and slippery during the rainy season, you can get into an accident with the pineapples and they will be damaged. This would result in low income because you'll have to sell the damaged pineapples at low prices."*



A mapping activity with chain actors

The cognitive map revealed reasons for problem situations, such as breaking price agreements between value chain actors.



Buyer inspecting pineapples

*"I [trader] might not go to the farm because it's far and the roads are very bad. So, I have not even known the size of the pineapples I am going to buy from that area but I just accept to pay 500 UGX. But when I come to get the pineapples, I start wondering. I find I said 500 UGX yet the pineapples should be at 300 UGX. So I find I have not spoken the truth. And then you find my relationship with the farmer is not good"*

During discussions, participants explained the need to personally inspect the fields prior to price negotiation, so that prices would not change after an agreement was set. However, they also admitted that it would be hard to enforce buyers visiting their suppliers, because of infrastructural constraints.

For further information refer to:

Tröger, K., Lelea, M.L., Hensel, O. and Kaufmann, B. (2018) "Embracing the Complexity. Surfacing Problem Situations with Multiple Actors of the Pineapple Value Chain in Uganda." *Systemic Practice and Action Research* 31(5):557–80. doi:10.1007/s11213-018-9443-1.