

The PIP approach: fostering resilience-based stewardship

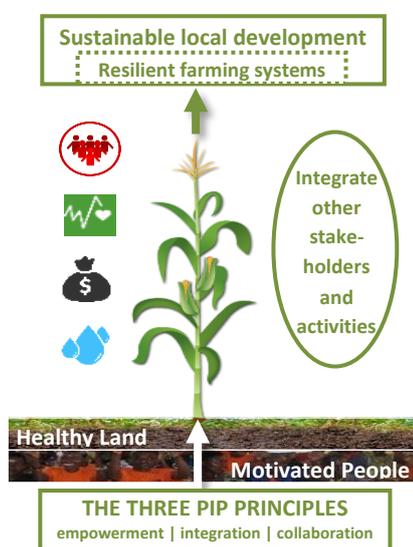
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The need for another approach

Given current global challenges of food production and climate change, sustainable land management should be at the top of the political agenda. Particularly smallholder farmers are key actors: they depend on, and manage, millions of small plots of land, which provide them food and income. When this land degrades, farmers may need to migrate, and seek opportunities elsewhere. A strong focus on land quality and on building farmers' stewardship capacities should therefore be central to any development strategy. However, current approaches often fail to genuinely involve smallholder farmers, do not put "care for the earth" central to their strategy, or are too market driven and single commodity focused.

Facing continuing land degradation and its effects on food production and ecosystem services worldwide, we need a drastic change in strategy: one that empowers farmers to be responsible stewards of their land, so that even the smallest farm will become a basis for a more resilient and sustainable livelihood. However, fostering this resilience-based stewardship requires a significant change in mind-set, both among smallholder farmers and in policymakers. This is the starting-point of the PIP approach (from French '*Plan Intégré du Paysan*'): an approach in which integrated planning with a vision generates the required intrinsic motivation in people to change their reality - their farm, their village, their landscape.

Key principles of the PIP approach



Sustainable development, anywhere, needs a solid foundation of *healthy land* and *motivated people*. While many other approaches often start with "implementing solutions", the PIP approach first builds this foundation. With a dynamic process of vision building, planning, learning and action, the PIP approach generates an ever-increasing number of proud farmers who realize that their land is their main asset, and who feel able and intrinsically motivated to invest in their farms. This is a huge change, because once this foundation is laid, collaboration with other stakeholders and integration of new activities further drives wide-scale change. The following three "PIP principles" are therefore crucial in the approach:

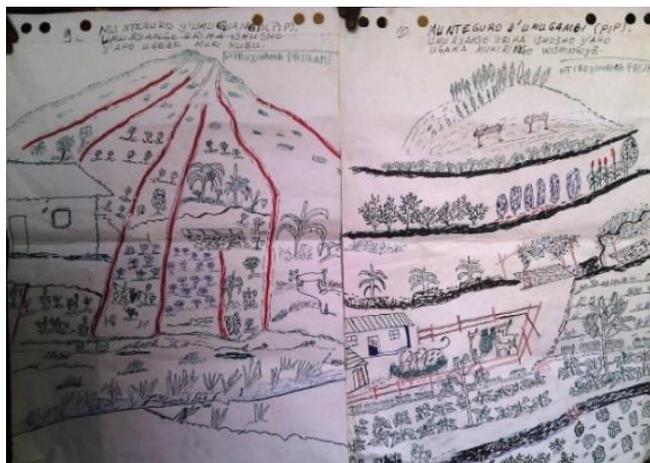
1. **Empowerment:** to believe in one's own ability to change one's reality, see the opportunities to improve, and have intrinsic motivation to undertake action;
2. **Integration:** to be aware of the importance of farm resilience, and develop an attainable future farm vision with integrated activities;
3. **Collaboration:** to exchange knowledge and learn from others to improve, and carry out actions together to achieve wide-scale sustainable impact.

Applying these principles to smallholder farmers means building their capacity and motivation to experiment with improved practices, to learn from others, and to undertake collective action to scale-up resilient farming village-wide. This is a key component for local sustainable development. However, it implies a major change in mind-set: instead of "farmers by default" (without alternatives) these farmers become "farmers by choice" (land stewards, sustainable entrepreneurs), who invest in resilient farming without any external incentives. This is real ownership, the flywheel for sustainability!

The PIP approach in practice

At the core of the PIP approach lies the Integrated Farm Plan: the PIP, which consists of two drawings that visualize the current farm situation and the family's desired future situation. It is developed and drawn by all family members together, based on their own aspirations and needs. Creating a PIP triggers discussion and reflection in a family concerning their future, and the central role of the land and its resources. What flows from this is a common vision with a concrete action plan, and a change in mind-set (more stewardship!) to invest in a more resilient farm - together.

The PIP gives specific attention to land management and crop-livestock practices, however non-farm, household and entrepreneurial activities are included as well. Particularly



in areas with high pressure on land, sustainable intensification by means of sound soil fertility management and optimal land use planning are paramount in the PIP – including measures such as compost use, green manure, erosion control, crop diversification, sound rotations and vegetable gardens. These measures contribute to food security (SDG2), to carbon sequestration (SDG 13), as well as to reversing land degradation and biodiversity loss (SDG 15). However, families will also include plans to improve their house, stables or stoves. It is *their* plan, and this ownership enhances their commitment to start acting to improve their well-being (SDG 3).



Action starts with a group of 20 Innovative Farmers in each village: they are the first to create a PIP, change their mind-set to more stewardship, and become farmer-to-farmer trainer. However, the real power of PIP lies in its potential to change mind-sets village-wide: collaboration is a major stimulus. This is done in PIP competitions, in which organized farmer groups - under the lead of PIP trainers - learn how to create a PIP. This is learning-by-doing, with farmer-trainers who transfer passion, a vision and intrinsic motivation, which further strengthens social cohesion in a village. Crucial here is the active involvement of extension services and governmental institutions. This is achieved by means of trainings, exchange visits and gradually handing-over responsibility to these permanent structures for the further upscaling of PIP.

Going to scale is essential to tackle land degradation. The PIP approach builds an increasing mass of proud and motivated stewards of healthy land: within two years, most of the households in a village have created a PIP, followed by scaling-up to adjacent villages. Village visions and collective action, regional or landscape development plans, agripreneurial activities of organized (young) farmers; all this can be further developed once counting with motivated people and healthy land.

The 10 success factors of the PIP approach

The PIP approach was first tested and validated in Burundi, and is now being piloted in Rwanda and Ethiopia. It started in 2014 with the project “Fanning the Spark” (SCAD) in three provinces in Burundi, where currently 18,000 farmers have created a PIP, with a spillover effect to 55 adjacent villages. In 2015 the PAPAB project started in six provinces with funding from the Dutch Embassy. This project has already reached 14,000 households, and first results of a recent study reveal that the approach generates fast change in many aspects of resilient farming among PIP farmers, especially in a higher intrinsic motivation to invest in the farm. The following 10 success factors explain these achievements:

1. *The rather hopeless context in Burundi:* with hardly any options for smallholder farmers to escape from the vicious circle of population growth, poverty, land degradation and food insecurity, most people are open for “change”;
2. *The focus on empowerment:* farmers becoming aware that can change their reality, that even small plots are worth investing in; that they have the capacity to do it themselves, even if they start with little investment power;
3. *The common vision in a family:* the PIP (the plan, the drawing) as catalyst of a change in mind-set, and by visualizing the desired future, the sense of “fatality” is converted into a sense of “hope”;
4. *The integration of activities:* activities in a PIP are realistic, and together they are a “total family package” in which synergy is crucial; each family member is important, which enhances ownership;
5. *The elimination of financial incentives:* emphasizing that farmers can do it themselves, their own knowledge and capacities are taken seriously, and intrinsic motivation always comes before any kind of (subsidized) assistance;
6. *The focus on short-term results:* the on-demand trainings focus on accessible crop and soil management techniques that can generate quick yield increase; this stimulates intrinsic motivation to continue and motivates peers;
7. *The focus on village level collaboration:* the bonding social capital in a village is essential to show that doing things together and learning from each other is valuable (e.g. in the PIP competitions and farmer-to-farmer trainings);
8. *Stimulating fast upscaling:* activities such as Open Days and exchange visits lead to rapid spreading of “the PIP fever” towards village level and beyond, with people genuinely participating, wanting to be part of the solution
9. *Engaging institutional stakeholders:* engaging policy makers and other influential stakeholders whenever possible, which is essential to create an enabling environment that will also enhance further upscaling;
10. *Having engaged project staff:* it is essential to have staff who fully believes in the approach, who can transfer not only knowledge on agro-technical issues but also passion and a vision, and adopts a level playing field with farmers.