

Junior Farmer Field Schools: Participatory Learning

Presented by

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Introduction

- Junior Farmer Field Schools (JFFS) are hands-on, community based schools to teach farming techniques and life skills
- Farmers, caregivers, teachers and extension workers from the community provide guidance
- JFFS empower OVC to strengthen their communities' food and livelihood security
- Many OVC lack basic farming skills (traditionally handed down from parents to children)
- Actively participate in their own education, retaining more from lessons and developing enhanced capacity for decision-making

Methods

- OVC (age 12-18) are targeted for participation in JFFS
- Participation is **voluntary** to reduce stigma
- Non-OVC can also participate, further reducing stigma
- Ideal group size is ~20 participants
- JFFS meet weekly for 2-3 hours



Methods, cont'd

- JFFS are typically based at the homestead of an adult facilitator or on land earmarked by the village headman to facilitate adult mentoring
- CRS is currently piloting JFFS at schools, which would facilitate reintegration



Curriculum

- Curriculum covers:
 - Crop and poultry production
 - Integrated soil, water and nutrient management
 - Basic agro-business skills
 - HIV prevention and mitigation
- Exact lesson schedule and activities developed by the children



Results

- 390 females & 734 males currently enrolled
- Overall household nutrition improved as participants replicate new technologies at home
- Increased knowledge of HIV
- Increased basic farming skills
- Increased sense of social responsibility in participants (e.g. some children assist peers to set up gardens or donate JFFS' produce to others in need)



Discussion

- Some caregivers feel the JFFS interferes with their need for labor at home
- Girls' participation sometimes restricted by guardians
- Agricultural experiments can take a long time to bear results; children can get impatient and want to drop out
- Some facilitators are not accustomed to the concept of child participation
- Projects such as fowl runs, rabbitry and goat-keeping require more resources

Discussion, cont'd

- JFFS work best if packaged with other existing interventions at household level
- Ongoing training of adult facilitators is critical, including child rights and participation
- Extensive consultation with stakeholders, including children, must precede introduction of JFFS
- Next steps:
 - roll-out to partners that work with out-of-school youths
 - strengthen HIV component of curriculum by linking with community health workers
 - enhance integration with other livelihoods and OVC care and support interventions

What's exciting about this approach!

- JFFS curriculum complements what children learn at school; is relevant to their situation and needs
- Children learn by discovery
- Children have put what they learn into practice by replicating conservation farming, indigenous poultry production at their homes





For More Information...

- *SARO OVC Good Practices* document for more information.
- Or, contact Shepherd Mupfumi at smupfumi@zw.saro.crs.org or Willie Makumbe wmakumbe@zw.saro.crs.org

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