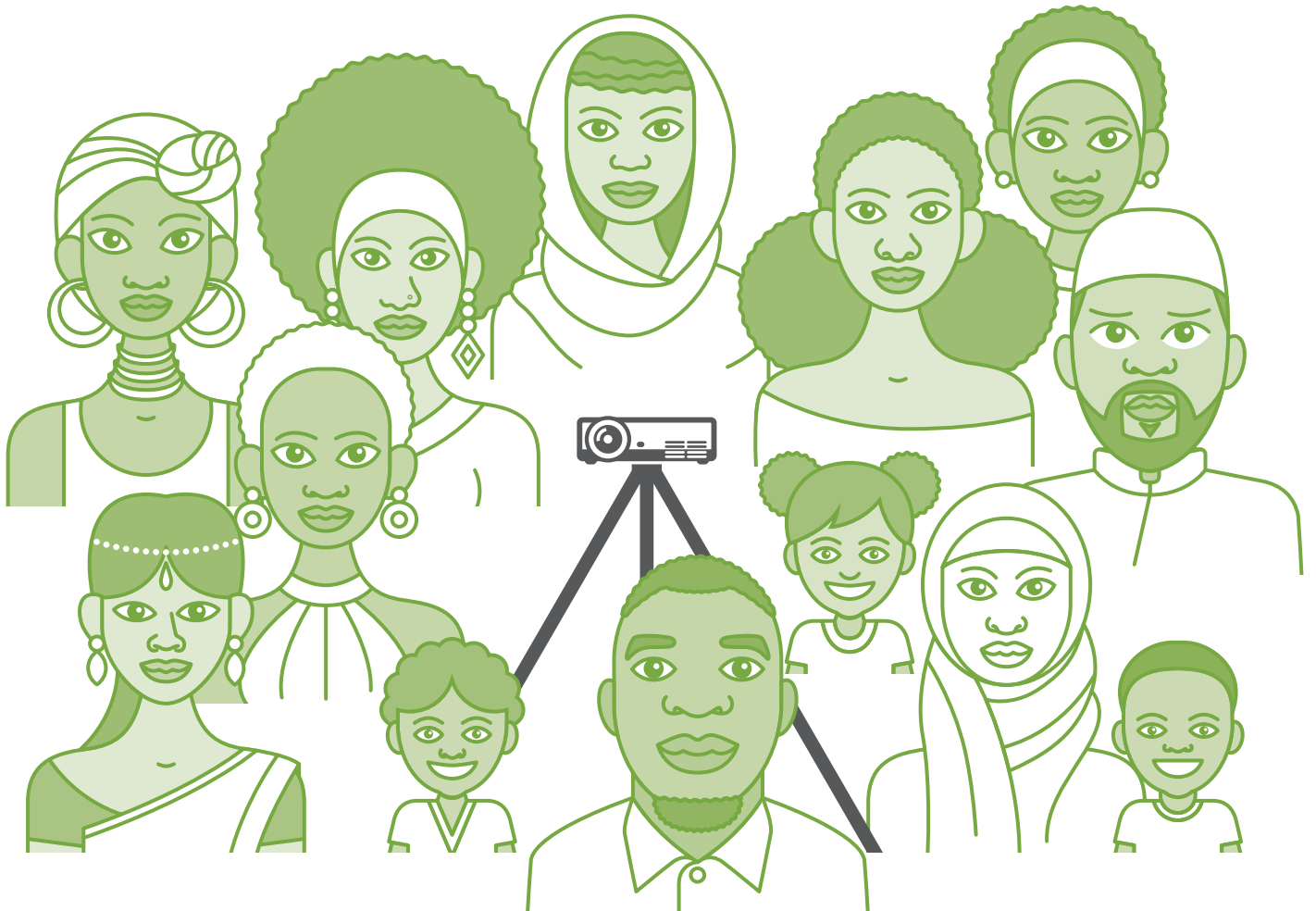


Young changemakers



Scaling agroecology using video in Africa and India

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About Access Agriculture

Access Agriculture is an international non-profit organisation that works across all developing countries to enable the South-South exchange of and access to quality farmer-to-farmer learning videos to promote agroecological principles and rural entrepreneurship. Access Agriculture builds capacity for the production of videos and, upon demand, translates any video hosted on its platform into any local language. It enables access to these videos for multiple stakeholders, including rural advisory services, education

systems, media houses and farmer organisations. By improving access of youth, women, smallholder and marginalised farmers to relevant knowledge, Access Agriculture aims to contribute to more resilient food systems that can counter the changing climate and the erosion of our natural resources.

For more information on Access Agriculture, visit www.accessagriculture.org

When passion meets purpose, amazing things happen



Ochen Umar Bashir

Ochen Umar Bashir fell in love with agriculture as a child. This was quite remarkable as he belongs to the Karamojong ethnic group of pastoralists, who rely on their herds as source of income and food. Bashir grew up in Karamoja in northern Uganda, which is one of the driest and most food-insecure regions in the country.

When he was about 13 years old, seeing his keen interest, his grandmother gave him a plot of land to develop his own garden. *“I would grow maize there and*

After he studied Crop Production and Management at Busitema University, Bashir was eager to share his knowledge with other members of his community. *“Most of our people have pastoral knowledge and know very little about agriculture,”* Bashir explains. He started by helping his community members on a voluntary basis and then joined the Warrior Squad Foundation in Kotido, a local NGO, helping farmers adopt good agricultural practices. Later, he took up positions with Mercy Corps and Catholic Relief Services.

The videos have helped the FFS learn beyond their expectations, as the videos simplify the trainings and make them shorter. Most videos run for 10-15 minutes and at the end of the show, farmers grasp well the principles and practices shown in the videos



sell the produce and earn money. So, when I started getting money at that age, I was convinced that agriculture is the way to go. I thought agriculture is something that you just do and after some time, you get money,” Bashir recounts.

His experiences and network led him to join Slow Food Uganda that focuses on the preservation of indigenous food traditions and biodiversity, and promotion of agroecology – all issues that were close to his heart. Slow Food Uganda is part of the global Slow Food movement. In 2021,

Bashir participated in the Slow Food Youth Academy's six-month programme and ever since, he has trained youths to establish Slow Food gardens and provided technical support to those in the community who are transitioning to agroecology. Today, Bashir is recognised as a prominent young leader of the Toyoro Kongokin-yinyir Nopimpim (Survive with Your Sweat) Slow Food Community in Karamoja region and a technical advisor for the Slow Food Youth Network in Uganda.

In 2022, when Bashir heard about the call for ERAs (Entrepreneurs for Rural Access), jointly organised by Access Agriculture and FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), he and his team member, Nikolina Lemukol, promptly submitted a proposal. They were among the three selected ERA teams to support FAO's Farmer Field School (FFS) programme in Karamoja region to build climate-resilient capacities and improve rural livelihoods.

In March 2023, they were trained by Access Agriculture, and received a portable solar-powered smart projector, containing hundreds of training videos on agroecological practices, including [50 videos in Karamojong language](#). In addition, it contained videos in several other languages that are spoken in Uganda.

"I was really excited to receive the smart projector, as it is very resourceful," says Bashir. Since the smart projector has a built-in

computer, he also uses it for his business correspondence.

"When I go to the field, I tell the farmers, I have come to train you, but I will talk less – it is the smart projector that will explain to you the techniques step by step. You just watch and learn."

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Embedding farmer-to-farmer training videos into an FFS has been powerful in that farmers can directly learn from farmers across the world through videos in their own languages

tices shown in the videos." Bashir adds with a smile that farmers told him the projector can train someone within 15 minutes, what would take several days for a training programme to do without the videos. *"I provide explanations, where necessary, after the videos are screened,"* he clarifies.

An FFS brings together committed farmers who are already eager to learn and the videos make the learning simpler and easier. The video shows have also attracted non-FFS members.

"This approach of embedding farmer-to-farmer training videos into an FFS has been powerful in that farmers can directly learn from farmers across the world through videos in their own languages," says Bashir.

Farmers are eager to watch the videos, not only because they are in their own language, but also because the information is clearly conveyed. *"Take for example the video [Making a cooling chamber for tomatoes](#). Instead of beating around the bush as is usually*

done in training programmes, the video is straightforward and that is what my communities really like,” Bashir says.

Initially, he was not able to make much money by showing videos to farmers using the smart projector, but now he works with governmental and non-govern-

mental organisations as well as schools to train rural communities and schoolchildren. Bashir approaches schools and churches in villages to get halls to screen the videos. This strategy has allowed him to earn revenues and save on costs of hiring of halls.

For instance, when Bashir approached the local agricultural department in Moroto district and showed the staff the range

of videos he has in the smart projector, he was given a 2-week contract worth 20,000 Ugandan sticks, and charged 500 Ugandan Shilling (0.12 Euro) per video, on top of the unit cost of the carrier.

After he showed the video [Controlling banana weevils](#) to the Slow Food International Uganda office using the smart projector, Bashir was given a contract to train youths in various aspects of



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agroecology and organic farming. Slow Food International's social media and newsletters have commended him for his efforts to train indigenous pastoral communities in agroecological practices by screening videos.

Bashir first informs the communities what he has in the video library and how this knowledge can benefit them. He then screens videos based on the topics the communities choose. For instance, seeing their interest in vegetables, legumes, nutrition, and agro-forestry, he has shown the videos [Storing fresh and dried tomatoes](#), [Drip irrigation for tomato](#), [Managing black rot in cabbage](#), [Harvesting and storage of green gram](#), [Enriching porridge](#) and [Parkland agroforestry](#) in various districts in Karamoja region.

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Shilling (5 Euros) per day to create awareness among the community members on the importance of small irrigation and water saving systems, using videos such as [Road runoff harvesting](#) and [Working in groups to save water](#).

On request of Sasakawa Africa Association, he copied videos on maize postharvest onto USB

In the village of Adi, farmers increasingly struggle because

rains have declined and droughts are more frequent. Bashir was pleased he could train the farmers in simple soil and water conservation measures by showing them videos, such as [Zai planting pits](#), which is a traditional method used in the arid Sahel to grow crops by making small depressions in the soil to collect and store rainwater.



Shilling (between 50 and 100 Euros) per week.

As part of a partnership agreement between World Bicycle Relief and Access Agriculture, Bashir was among the five ERA teams from Uganda, that received a heavy-duty Buffalo Bicycle to help overcome challenges of transportation



Bashir explains to farmers that even in the dry season they can grow a short-term crop like leafy vegetables, which grow very fast. *“Many farmers started growing cowpeas, spinach and amaranth and established a garden for the community. They are now eating fresh vegetables and selling the surplus produce. With that money, they are able to buy essential items like sugar, salt and cooking oil.”*

Bashir continues to be a strong advocate for youth engagement in agroecology. *“If they embrace agroecology, they will help it spread,”* he says. Knowing that young people are fond of watching football matches, his aim is to attract them to his farmer-training video screenings by also showing football matches. To do this, he plans to build his own video hall and hopes to make between 200,000 and 400,000 Ugandan




so that they can do their work efficiently as e-extension service providers.

Based on advice from his NGO partners, he recently registered his company ‘Youth Smart Extension Solutions,’ which will greatly facilitate his work with them, particularly for promoting his services as a business.

As a youth leader, Bashir’s mantra for budding ERAs is simple, but wise: if you have pati-

ence, you will succeed. *“I know, as youths, we want quick things, we are looking for quick money, but you have to be patient in whatever you are doing. Always have hope even if things don’t work out for you. Be confident that you can do it, then you will succeed,”* he concludes.

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