

Community approaches used in managing BXW in Uganda

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At the onset of the BXW epidemic in Uganda, the government adopted an eradication strategy and hired labour to cut down plantations and dig deep pits to bury infected materials. Both human and financial resources were quickly overstretched as more districts reported the disease. It was thus realized that mobilizing farmers and communities would be essential to augment the research and extension services' efforts. Hence Uganda's strategy to address the outbreak of BXW focused on equipping people with knowledge and tools to manage, control and ultimately eradicate BXW (*National action plan Output 4: Appropriate technologies and information utilized to contain and control BXW*).

Specifically, the strategy involves analyzing the BXW situation, creating awareness/sensitization at all levels along the production-consumption continuum (national to village), effecting control measures that contain and eliminate the disease, and monitoring and evaluating impact. The strategy is based on multi-stakeholder, multi-sector and multi-disciplinary approaches bringing into play national, regional and international organizations to exchange information and technologies in the quest of identifying lasting solutions to the BXW epidemic in Uganda. In this respect BXW Task Force, Steering and Technical Committees as well as working groups were formed with the membership of MAAIF, NARO, DANIDA's Agricultural Sector Programme Support, National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS), Global Plant Clinic (GPC), Agricultural Productivity Enhancement Programme (APEP), Ecotrust, IITA and INIBAP. In addition, BXW control activities have been integrated into on-going banana research programmes at NARO, NAADS, MAAIF, a number of NGOs, CGIAR centres (IPGRI-INIBAP, IITA) the Pest Knowledge Partnership (GPC/MAAIF), a number of research projects (e.g. the IPM-CPP-DFID-NARO), as well as research networks (Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA) and Banana Research Network for Eastern and Southern Africa (BARNESA)).

Approaches adopted

Training and raising public awareness

To date, 198 agricultural officers from 22 districts have participated in a training-of-trainers and these in turn have trained grass-root organizations such as farmers' associations, extension workers and NGOs (Uganda Farmers association, World Vision, KULIKA Charitable Trust, VEDCO, CARITUS etc.). Course materials were developed in workshops and tested with farmers. In addition an intensive publicity campaign has taken place through radio, TV, newspapers and posters (on symptoms and control). In all, 40 000 posters were distributed to 32 affected and 'frontline' districts; 12 radio programmes on local FM stations were run; 67 000 brochures were produced and distributed to service providers; newspaper pull-outs were distributed in five local newspapers; and TV programmes in six major spoken languages and documentaries were aired.

In order to reinforce the message, a public awareness approach, "going public", was borrowed from the HIV-AIDS campaigns to reach markets, social functions, churches, mosques, school speech days and public transport systems.

Participatory development communication (PDC)

Farming communities were directly targeted using a participatory development communication (PDC) approach. This approach involves members of the community to take part in problem identification and analysis, and enables the community to analyse and explore alternative solutions to the problem and to identify the best solutions which they are ready to implement. PDC helps to know why some members in the community don't implement some control measures and to identify the constraints that they face in implementing control measures. Using community knowledge, researchers are able to develop technologies more effectively. The model was tested in three BXW-affected zones and stakeholder planning workshops took place involving district agricultural extension staff, sub-county agricultural extension staff, political leaders (Local Council level 1-3); educational institutions, schools, cultural and religious leaders, NGOs, CBOs and farmers.

The workshop participants identified and prioritized banana-related community needs and constraints and agreed on technologies to address them. Through PDC, interactive discussions identified IPM and BXW problems (pests, diseases, soil fertility, banana cultivars, etc.), and agreed solutions, including field demonstrations to show BXW symptoms, transmission and control measures. Subsequently, the information acquired was used to develop

community BXW action plans to be executed by task forces at various community levels.

In the execution of PDC, a number of challenges emerged. Participants had diverse perceptions about the cause of BXW (including deliberate introduction by scientists, exotic bananas, tissue culture plants, degraded soils, the Mulinga tree, use of molasses in banana systems, etc.). They also discussed reasons why some people in the communities did not implement the recommended control measures. The reasons given included ineffective measures, labour intensive measures, laziness, lack of effective alternatives, costly disinfectants, miscommunication from neighbours, researchers wanting to stamp out traditional technologies, negative attitudes towards technologies, contradictory messages, and fear that new cultivars might degrade the soil.

The PDC's interactive approach enabled farmers, who were ignorant of basic crop management and IPM practices, to take advantage of the extensive experience of other farmers. Community leaders, having been made fully aware of the threat, pledged to support the effort to fight the disease, and it was recognised that the responsibility for the BXW problem has to be shared by the whole community.

Community organizational framework

In Uganda, the community task forces, consisting of at least four people, mobilized individual communities in partnership with parish and village councils, trained people on BXW, directed the development and implementation of community actions plans, and monitored and communicated progress to the task force at the next community level. The task force was also responsible for the establishment of demonstration plots and maintaining networks with other partners in control of BXW (agric-extension, NGOs, NARO, MAAIF and others).

Training videos in different languages were used to disseminate information on BXW symptoms, transmission and control, PDC methods, the sensitization process and success stories of BXW control in model districts. Fact sheets on BXW symptoms, transmission and control; guidelines for formation of BXW task forces in the community; posters and brochures on BXW; and banana production manuals were also disseminated.

The experiences gained from the initial PDC model in the pioneer areas were used to scale out activities to other areas. The original model was slightly modified in order to gain more political backing and funding support, by targeting the chief Administrative Officer and the Local Council chair person at the highest level in the district rather than the District Agricultural Extension (DAE).

Results of PDC effort

There has been widespread adoption of PDC approach in most banana growing districts of Uganda and communities have undertaken a number of actions as given below:

- PDC outputs have been used by the BXW field working group on control to sensitize district officials in more than 10 districts in 'frontline' and unaffected areas
- Using the PDC process and communication tools, district, sub-county, parish and village taskforces have been formed in some districts (Mpigi, Kibale, Bushenyi, Hoima, Masindi, Kabarole, Mubende and Kyenjojo)
- District BXW task forces have been formed and action plans for disease control have been developed and activities prioritized
- Most district officials are aware of the disease and they are doing 'all that is within their means' to sensitize people on BXW
- Quarantine has been established in some district BXW task forces (e.g. Kabalore, Hoima, Kyenjojo), prohibiting movement of banana plant parts
- Awareness campaigns are aired on local radio involving other stakeholders and members on the district Task Force (e.g. Kabalore, Hioma, Mubende)
- CBOs have supported BXW sensitization (e.g. Kyabigambire Vanilla and Horticultural Association in Hioma)
- Local radio stations such as Voice of Toro, Radio West, Radio Hioma, Radio Kagadi and Sky Net are being used to sensitise Local communities
- NGOs are currently using the PDC videos to sensitise communities (World Vision in Mpigi, Kiboga; VEDCO and Plan International in Luwero; AMREF in Mubende; Kulika in Kyenjojo; NAADS in Kabarole and Hioma and Kyawada in Kibaale)
- Bulindi NARO-Agricultural Research Development Center (ARDC) provided improved cassava as an incentive and encouragement to BXW affected farmers to destroy affected plantations in Hoima district
- Some community leaders are taking the lead in cutting and destroying infected banana plantations and planting alternative crops
- Demonstrations on early de-budding are being established on farmers' fields. Some communities have tried to copy this practice.

Challenges at farming community level

- By-laws need to be enacted urgently to reinforce community action on BXW
- BXW training and sensitization communication tools, such as posters, brochures, facts sheets and videos, need to be disseminated at the village level

- Communities need a quick cure for BXW
- Communities want government to provide alternative crops and clean banana planting materials for people who have cut down BXW-affected gardens
- Community action in destroying infected plants is still limited in Kayinja beer banana systems
- Removal of male buds as preventive measures for BXW is an uphill task in some communities
- BXW task forces need reinforcement in some districts from political leadership at national, district, sub-county and community levels
- Integration of BXW control activities into general IPM strategies at district and lower community levels is still slow
- Lack of funding in many districts has delayed the progress of some BXW activities at lower district community levels
- Follow up and feedback on BXW community action needs strengthening.