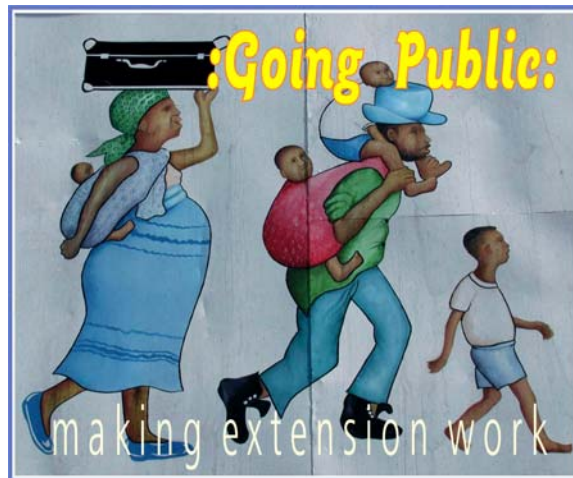




Attempts to control and contain a new banana disease in Uganda

DECEMBER 2004



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Yes, we have no bananas?

Using *Going Public* to explain simple things
to many people in a short time

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Introduction

Over a four day period in early December, 2004 we visited five districts in west Uganda. Working with six agricultural officers, we held 17 Going Public (GP) sessions. A total of around 1000 people attended these sessions, each of which lasted for at least 30 minutes. Some extended to over an hour and during this time we gave a short description of BBW, its key symptoms and features, spread and how to control it.

GP was first used in April 2004 at Kamus Corner, a busy and very important banana market on the borders of Sironko and Kapchorwa. The event is described in a report written by EB for ASPS on awareness raising and training service providers. The current expanded series of GP sessions took the brief but positive outcomes of Kamus Corner and attempted to see how a wider introduction of this new extension method might be applied to the campaign to control and contain BBW.

In brief, a GP event is an informal meeting held impromptu in public settings. It relies on people being drawn to a focal point defined by the GP team. We had no difficulty in attracting sizeable audiences wherever we went, with a minimum of 20 and a maximum of around 130. It is the quickness of GP that is one of its main advantages, but merely gathering a group of people together in anticipation of hearing or seeing something of interest to them is too simple a measure of success.



In the following short summary of what happened we have described both the good and not so good aspects of what we believed we achieved. It is of course difficult to know whether we 'convinced' anyone to carry out a particular control action, or whether they left the meeting able to distinguish BBW from Fusarium wilt. We wish to emphasise more general advantages of GP that make it a useful tool to add to and complement other approaches. GP has unique advantages but at the end of the day it is only one rung on the ladder to successful control of BBW.

Finally, although it is an integral part of GP, we do want to make it clear that it is fully participatory. It is a 'messy' participation since events are not wholly under your control, but as explained below, there is a liveliness and vigour to interchanges which demonstrates that GP is highly effective in getting reactions, both to the initial spiel and to subsequent questions asked from the crowd. There is no particular value in arguing that GP is either better or worse than other participatory methods. We would much rather people examined the outcomes and considered whether these might justify adopting GP in your own toolbox.

¹ This work builds on earlier efforts by NARO, INIBAP and others to understand this new disease and how best to combat it. We are grateful for the contributions made by Dr W Tushemireirwe and his colleagues in Uganda and other countries.

1 Stop, look and listen



Explaining about Banana Bacterial Wilt Disease in Uganda

MBARARA, NTUNGAMO

Results and observations

We will separate these into different categories. First, how we carried out the GP events. Second, what we learnt about efforts to raise awareness in districts where BBW has yet to appear. Third, how GP helped to identify and visualise future work on practical programmes to control the disease.

1 . M E T H O D O L O G Y

Roles: Team members need to sort out their roles quickly. After two days we had a set approach into which each new agricultural officer slotted easily. We avoided any actions that might excite the crowd (cameras were kept out of view, at least initially). Two bazungu are a bonus in that more people are attracted but they can also be a distraction, particularly for small children.

Visual aids: We printed photosheets as we went along, adding new ones to help answer particular questions that we had not thought. The two initial sheets showed symptoms of BBW. The third sheet showed insects and introduced the slogan *Castrate: Twist and Shake*, to encourage removal of all male buds. The insects on flowers emphasised the main supposed method of spread. One of us (OO) produced a male bud and forked stick, to emphasise that *Castration is Good for You*. We produced a distribution map and a comparison between BBW and FW.

Breaking out: After the main presentation, each of us took on smaller groups to repeat key points and answer questions. This helped to emphasise important issues. We had at least three sets of the A4 photosheets. We saw audience members using the photos to discuss matters with their friends. One lady translated English

Agricultural officers: All soon learnt how to do the general talk on BBW. One took to it like a duck to a water; another was sceptical at first but turned into a strong and highly effective speaker, commanding people to attend. Only one officer wanted one of us to give the introductory talk in English. She was nervous about starting the GP event but warmed up in the question and answer session.

Height matters: Everyone got the idea that you had to be above the gathered crowd. In banana trading spots we used the back of the pickup. Elsewhere we stood on mounds, in front of shops, as if on a stage, or simply at the top of slope.

Getting messages across: After the first day we developed a short routine that both gave key pieces of information about symptoms, origins, present distribution and varieties affected and to some extent anticipated common questions. We learnt not to say too much and not to speak for more than five minutes before changing the voice. Then we talked about removing male buds. We emphasised this over all other control approaches. We also mentioned the potential for moving the disease in suckers and to cut down and mound diseased bananas. But these became secondary points and removing male buds was the most urgent message we sought to convey.



- *Leaf bases are used to pack bananas for transport. Can the disease be spread unwittingly in this way?*

2. RAISING AWARENESS

Posters: We held up the posters at some GP events to demonstrate symptoms. We immediately learnt that quite a few people were under the mistaken impression that BBW only affected sweet and brewing bananas. We corrected this and made sure our own photosheets had symptoms on matooke. There are various sources of information which emphasise that all banana types are affected, but this should feature prominently in all media. Few if any of the people who formed the audience knew about the poster. We do not believe this has any particular significance since the straw poll we held on who had heard the radio programme was most encouraging. At the same time, everyone who attended the GP sessions wanted a photograph. Few of these requests were frivolous and we believe that almost all reflected a need to look at the symptoms again to remind them of what they should look out for.

Radio programmes: Up to 40% of audiences had heard the radio programme. This helped us considerably when talking about BBW. It was not a 'disease out of nowhere'. The programmes helped to create a thirst for visual material (see before), while our own presence emphasised that there was follow-up from government.

Other sources: One banana trader had seen the disease in Luwero and a few others had heard of it through connections who had experienced BBW themselves (i.e. in central eastern Uganda). No one specifically mentioned newspapers and this might help calm the fears of researchers and others who are understandably aggrieved when wild or inaccurate statements are made about BBW in the press. The impact of such statements appears limited, though it would help in other GP sessions to ask the audience who had read about the disease. Once the newspaper insert is distributed further M&E of this approach to education on BBW can also be undertaken by GP.



- *Are these the unseen reason why bacterial wilt has spread so fast and far? The evidence is convincing though research is needed.*

2 Place the bud here



Explaining about Banana Bacterial Wilt Disease in Uganda

NTUNGAMO, KISORO

3 . W H A T G P T E L L S U S

Practical steps on control: We agree that removing buds is the most important step to emphasise and introduce. GP cannot do the latter, but it can contribute to wider campaigns to encourage adoption. We need better visual tools to show that cutting tools can spread infections while a forked stick does not. One forked stick failed to break off the male bud, rather unfortunate given that around 15 farmers were watching at the time (not a GP session). Perhaps a piece of paper showing a suitable angle for the fork might be useful. This is the sort of thing you can hand out in GP events. Movement of infected suckers was not entirely neglected in our talks and we found the opportunity to highlight the danger of moving material

New information on BBW: On three occasions we drove to nearby farms, following up on potential leads. All proved negative, yet helped to demonstrate, we feel, that GP is more than an in-and-out method. Of course, making a field visit requires a vehicle and fuel, and that needs to be considered in any wider adoption of the GP method. Most interestingly, one of the field visits revealed a potentially new disease of bananas for Uganda which the Global Plant Clinic will investigate. This illustrates that GP can lead to unexpected discoveries, even though the key message here is control and containment. Elsewhere we learn about movement of banana planting material into Uganda from Congo, something unknown to one of us (OO).

Banana trading posts: We are desperately in need of simple methods that convey information and gather responses from much wider groups of people. It struck us forcefully that the trading posts, large and small, are key places to get visual messages across. Simply putting up a poster is not enough unless they are protected from rain and fixed in place e.g. attached to a piece of wood. One trading post had had posters removed (by someone keen to have their own copy) and now the poster was kept inside an office. We should consider erecting billboards or simple notices that catch the attention of more people more often. It would be expensive to do all trading posts – some we visited were little more than gathering places for local banana producers, where they sold to traders – but the big ones should be a priority. We know enough about the responses to the posters to be able to design simple billboards with key information on BBW.

Will GP continue? We're optimistic but realistic about the prospect of agricultural officers continuing on a regular basis. They were all pleased to have taken part in our one-off trial but for GP to be fully integrated into their work schedule that would need official approval and some (though small) funds to pay for travel. The photosheets and posters are already available. Agricultural officers can be shown how to produce their own photosheets though we suspect this is too ambitious to introduce.

Local knowledge: GP doesn't officially set out to absorb local knowledge. We have however picked up a local name for BBW (at Kamus Corner) and we became more widely aware of banana management practices. The suggestion that male buds could be eaten was widely exclaimed at, yet one person said they had done so and proceeded to explain how he had mixed the steamed bud with tomatoes. This is an incidental point, but GP events are full of such snippets which may well turn out to have a wider significance.

Task Forces: These are an essential part of local campaigns against BBW. There is no reason why these TFs could not use a GP event to publicise what they were doing, and to respond to questions and suggestions in turn. The costs of holding formal meetings are high, both in financial terms and time spent organising them. If TFs were to hold GP events after church meetings or at other local gatherings (not only markets, perhaps by the side of the road where people congregate) this would be a simple way of getting them known and encouraging local ingenuity and innovation.

Final Statement

This is a preliminary analysis of a short but intensive series of GP events. We would welcome comments, both for and against the method, realising that GP is essentially practical and that it does not claim to be everything to all people. It is cheap, quick and by its modest aims, also effective. The following photographs are visual information that we hope help to bring out these main points.

13 December 2004 with edits 17 February 2005

3 Let me explain it for you



Explaining about Banana Bacterial Wilt Disease in Uganda

KABALE, KISORO

The End of the World

Mrs Poniano (Zoë) Tinkamanyine's story of how she discovered banana bacterial wilt in Mabaale sub-county, northern Kibale

Paula Nash, Global Plant Clinic

December 2004

'I KNEW THERE WAS A NEW DISEASE in the bananas because it looked different from other diseases. The new disease starts from the top and the other disease starts from the bottom². I cannot tell where the new disease comes from, but I saw it first in August 2004, and thought that this marked the end of the world.

It was very slow at first and I did not know what it was, but there was a great fear in me because I had also seen that there was a disease in cassava. There was rotting of the tuber, and the leaves were dry and a mottled colour. I don't believe it is the same as the new banana disease as it is rotting in a different way. When I first saw the new disease the bananas became ripe before their time, which was not normal. The leaves were yellow and wilted and the male bud dried and rotted and remained where it was. The plant had wilted for about a month. There was also some black spots inside the banana.

After seeing this for the first time, I tried to prepare the banana. I peeled the fingers and prepared them to eat, and dared my husband to eat them first. Before he ate them, I told him they were strange and that I was not trying to poison him. I told him that something strange was happening to the bananas. It was a very bitter love potion [*she laughs*]. I then took my husband to come and see the banana mat.

We opened the bananas and found that they had yellow, very yellow things inside them. I discovered that the taste was bitter, very bitter. We could not eat them. I told my husband that he should tell the neighbours as I was very concerned. We talked to others and found similar stories in the village.

We cut the stem and the sap was very thick and syrupy and it stayed where it had been cut. Usually the sap runs slowly down the side of the cut edge, it was very different. Other people were just talking and waiting for something to be done. I think that if we had taken rapid action, the problem would not be so bad.

When I heard about the control practices from NARO, to remove the male banana buds with a stick and to cut down diseased trees, I had no objections to trying them. My husband and I started to cut down the banana trees that were bad straight away.

I have also heard that others have the disease and it is in every sub-county. I think that other people who have not cut down the trees may be lazy, or they think it may involve a lot of money³. The fate of the lazy people should be in the hands of the ruling chiefs who should make them do something about it. I think that they should make bye-laws⁴.

I would like to encourage my neighbours to try the controls, and I must help them to do this.

I think the best way of telling lots of people what is happening, is to get together in small groups and decide to work together. Two or three women must work together. I would like to understand more about the methods of control, and I think that it would be useful if you (MAAIF), should show a video about what this is, and how control can help.'

I ask her how the control has worked in her shamba. She replies: 'My bananas are not affected anymore'. I said she was a pioneer scientist, and that her fields were as good as a video, to which she gave a modest response.

Later, Mrs Tinkamanyine added: 'When monkeys have taken the male bud off the banana tree, the bananas still come.' I asked what she did with the male bud when she removed it 'The male bud is just dropped on the floor.' I tell Mrs Tinkamanyine that in Bangladesh the women prepare the male bud and eat it. She laughs when hearing this. 'For that I would need cooking lessons.'



² Fusarium wilt or Panama disease

³ Perhaps because of labour costs to carry out the recommended practices or loss of money through cutting down the bananas.

⁴ I wasn't sure if this was what the interpreter thought or if it was what Mrs. Tinkamanyine had said.

4 Please, I have a question!



Explaining about Banana Bacterial Wilt Disease in Uganda

KISORO, BUSHENYI