

Improving rainwater management: The Nile Basin Development Challenge

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(Drawing on material from Doug Merrey)



RESEARCH
PROGRAM ON
Water, Land and
Ecosystems

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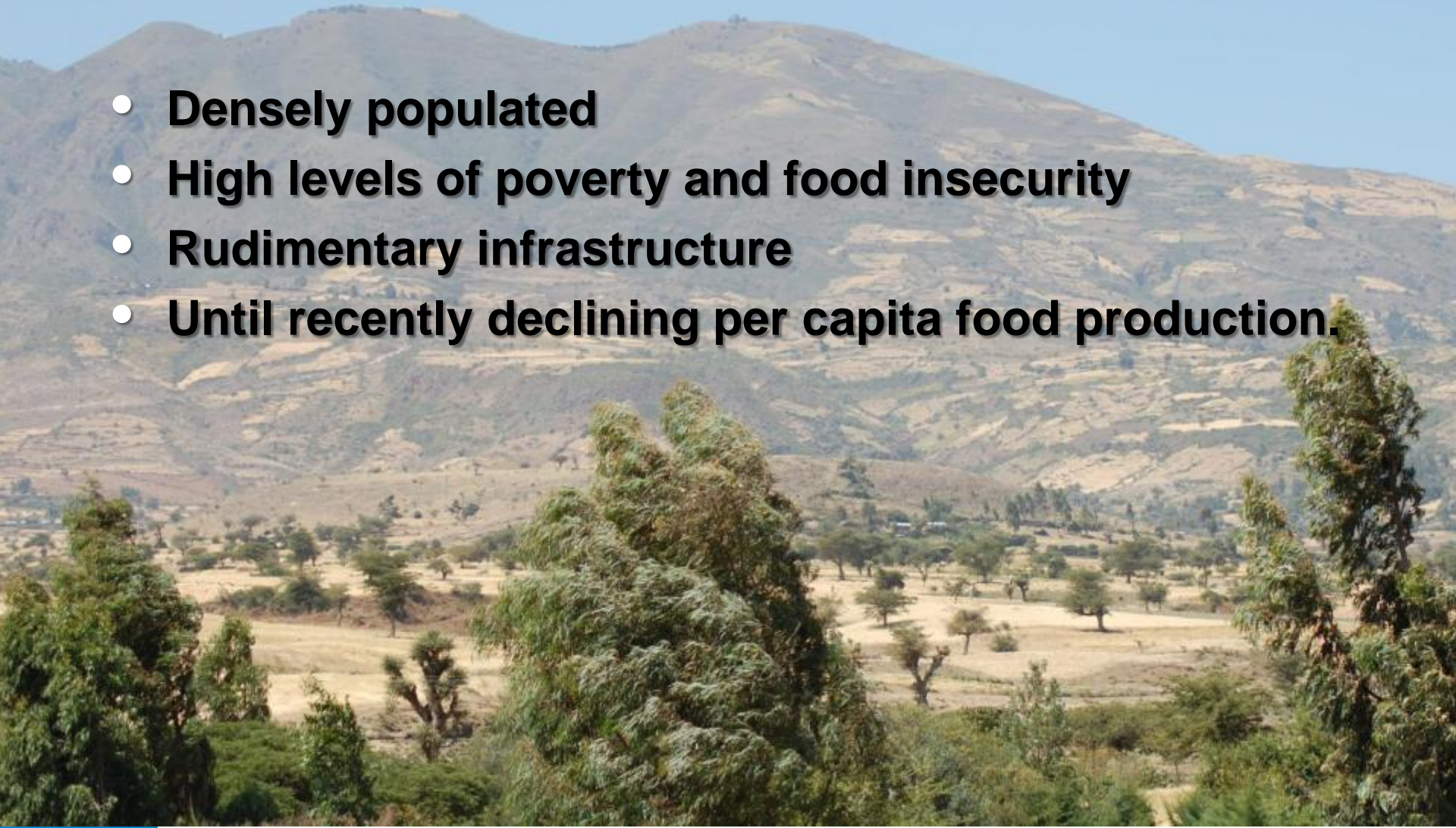


The Challenge: Improved rainwater management

- The Nile Basin Development Challenge (NBDC) Program aims to improve the resilience of rural livelihoods in the Ethiopian highlands through a landscape approach to rainwater management (RWM).
- “Rainwater management” refers to interventions to enable smallholder farmers to sustainably intensify agricultural production through improved rainwater management.

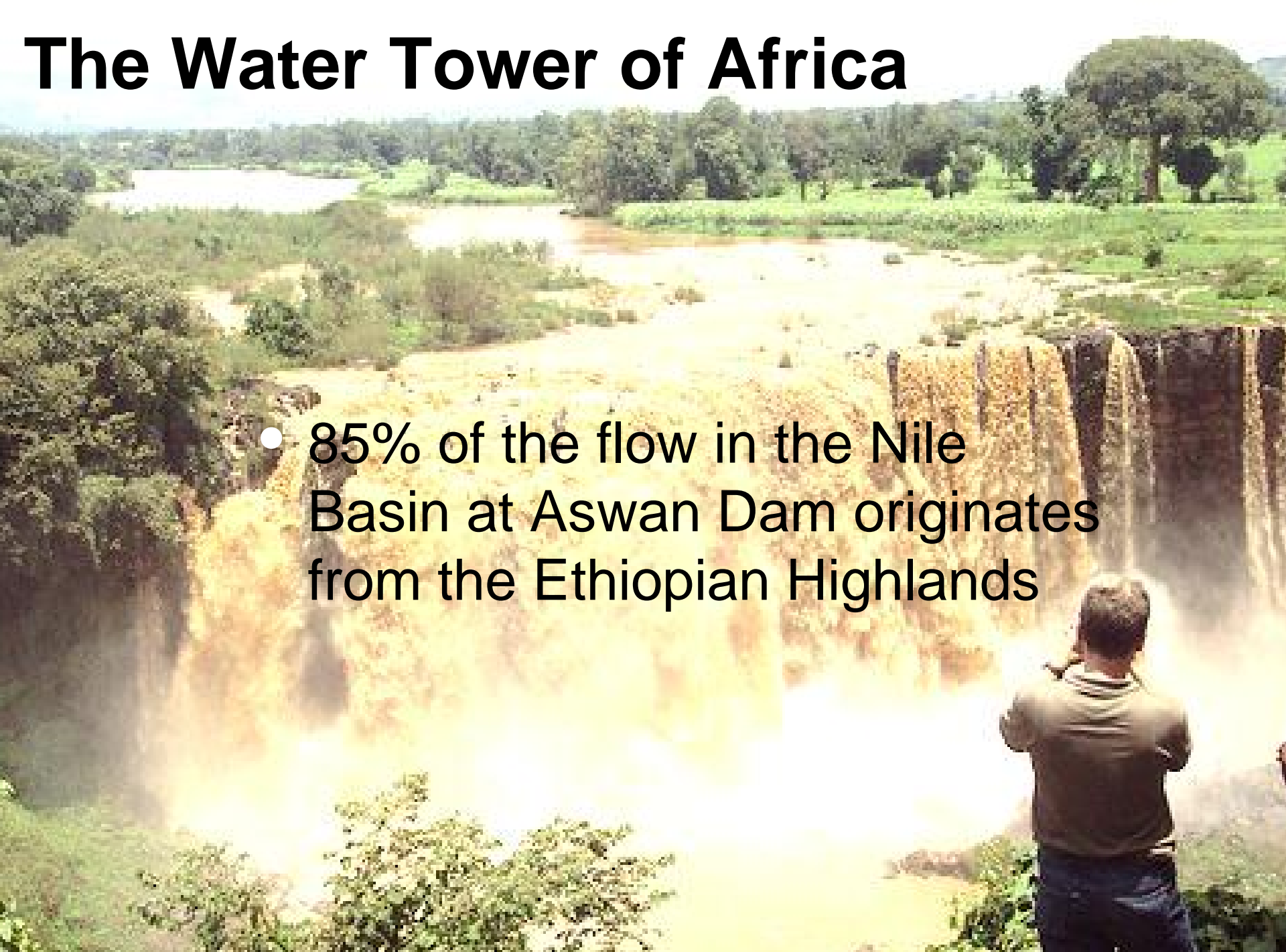
Context: The Ethiopian Highlands

- **Densely populated**
- **High levels of poverty and food insecurity**
- **Rudimentary infrastructure**
- **Until recently declining per capita food production.**



The Water Tower of Africa

- 85% of the flow in the Nile Basin at Aswan Dam originates from the Ethiopian Highlands



Rapid land degradation



Expansion of cultivation



Cultivation of steep slopes



Rainwater Management in the Ethiopian Highlands: History

- From the 1980s, a good understanding on the effectiveness of different RWM technologies to sustainably intensify production

Bunds



Check dams





Gully rehabilitation



Ponds

But ... difficult to translate
knowledge into success on
the ground

Why?

Why....?

- Authoritarian top-down quota-driven implementation
- Promotion of inappropriate technologies
- Insufficient focus on improving productivity and livelihoods and on creating incentives for adopting and maintaining the interventions.

Government campaigns



Destruction by farmers of previous interventions



NBDC: An Emerging R4D Success Story

- Field level
 - Innovation platforms
 - Participatory planning tools
- Basin and landscape level
 - Nile Goblet tool
- Policy level
 - National platform

Innovation Platforms (IPs).



Why Innovation Platforms?

Push RWM interventions & technologies

→ Achieve short term quotas



Or...

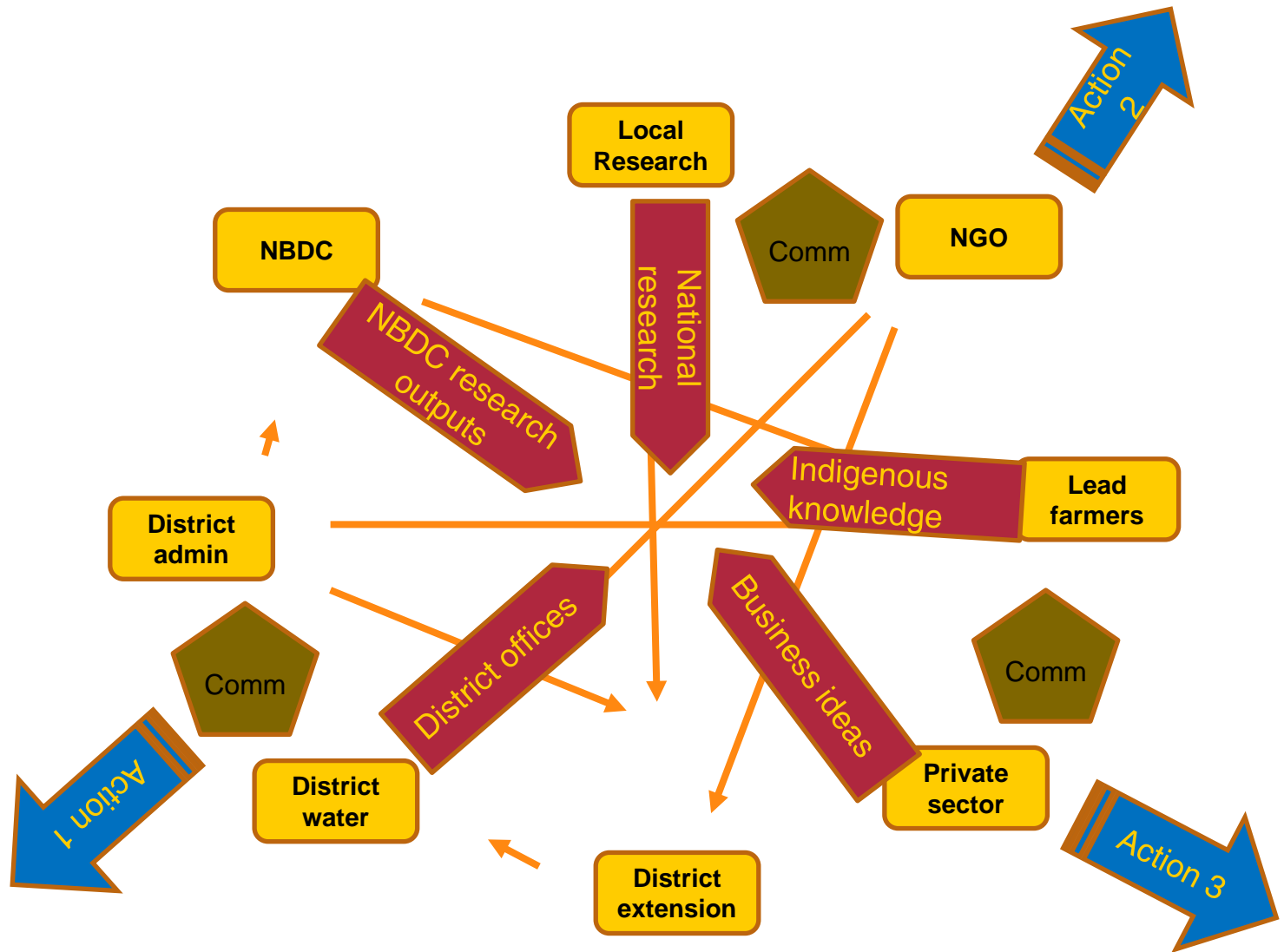
Empower & engage actors in RWM strategies

→ Achieve sustainable landscapes & improved livelihoods



Credit: Beth Cullen

Innovation Platforms

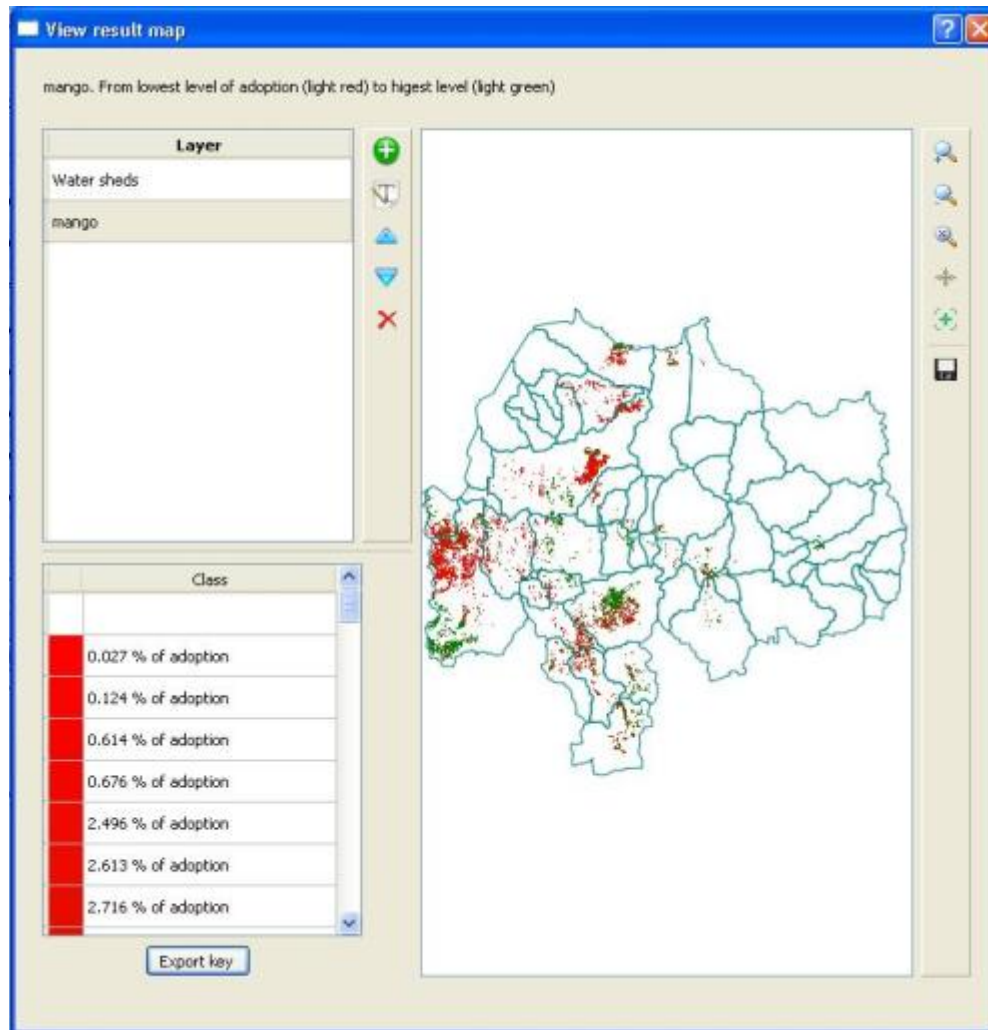


Participatory planning and learning tools – Wat-a-Game



Credit: Beth Cullen

Nile Goblet Tool



Suitability
mapping of
rainwater
management
strategies

National RWM Stakeholder Platform



Emerging messages from NBDC

- Local community empowerment and leadership based on demand, equity and inclusiveness;
- Partnerships integrating and sharing local and scientific knowledge;
- Emphasis on learning process by all parties in a linked manner;
- Creating incentives and risk management mechanisms for innovation and success;
- Transforming the institutional and human capacities of all stakeholders; and
- Adapting and using new learning and planning tools.

<http://nilebdc.org>



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