



# Small N exploratory case study

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RESEARCH  
PROGRAM ON  
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and Bananas

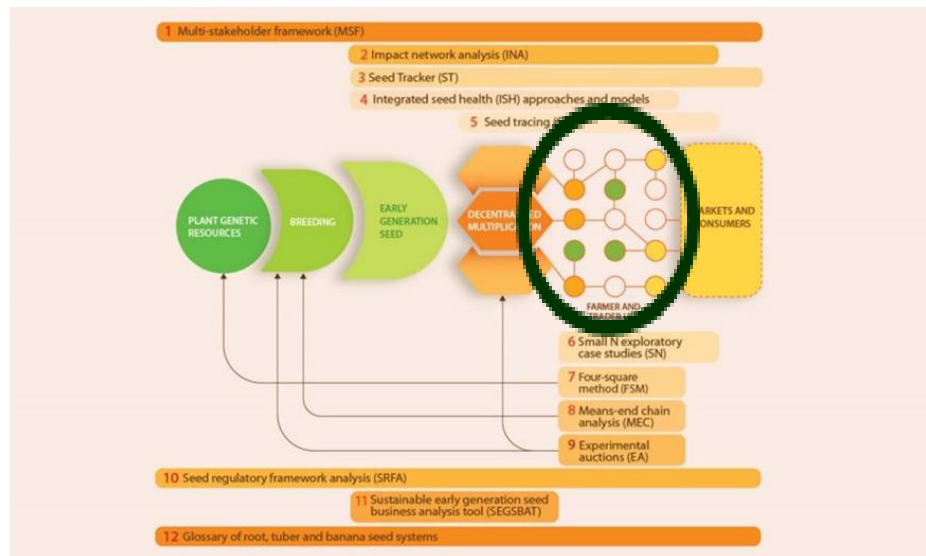
# Purpose of the Small N exploratory case study

To understand and diagnose the farmers' seed system

To identifying the challenges in improving local availability and access to quality seed



Small N exploratory case study



# Level and uses of the Small N exploratory case study

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***Level.*** Focus is usually on a single crop at the farm household level in two or more communities

***Users.*** Seed intervention designers, implementers, evaluators, practitioners, researchers

***A typical question for which the study can be useful:***  
Can decentralized seed multipliers improve the access to quality seed for male and female farmers?



# Typical key information of farm households

## *With the focus on one crop:*

- *Number of varieties that the farmers grow*
- *Type of varieties: improved or local*
- *Use of seed: own saved seed, off-farm sources (neighbor, family, market)*
- *Motivations to use other than own seed*
- *How is the off-farm seed acquired? Gift, purchase, other*
- *Source of seed of new improved varieties*



# Gender

Small N exploratory case studies are meant to find (i.e. explore) differences in seed and variety use that are related to gender and other forms of social differentiation

Disaggregation for economic status (rich, poor) and gender (of the household-head or interviewee) are the two most powerful dimensions of disaggregation.

Disaggregation into relevant farmer categories help you to understand relations between households in a community



# Timing and duration for the Small N exploratory case study

Typically in a diagnostic phase,

- after use of the Multi-stakeholder framework
- before designing interventions
- before a deeper or larger study (like large N baseline studies)

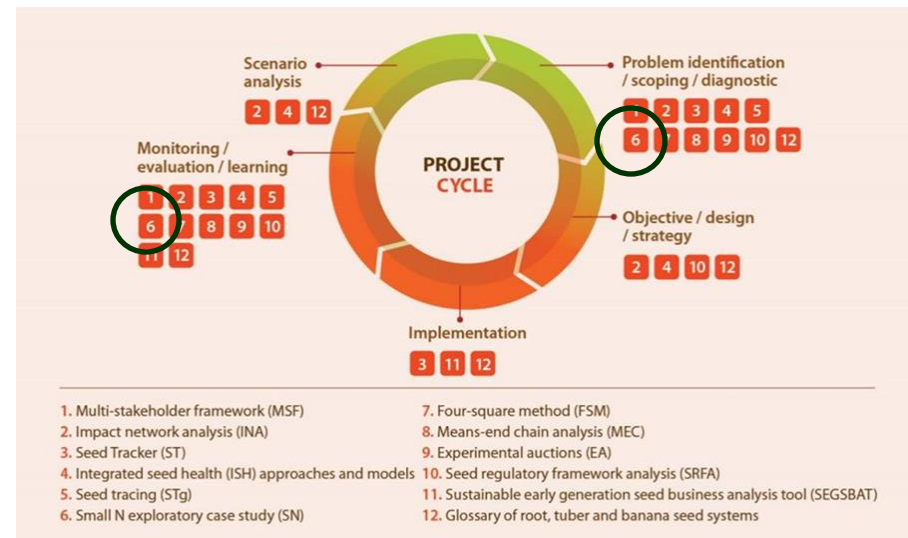
Duration:

1 week per village

(as a rule of the thumb;

adapt rest to it,

i.e. team sizes, number and length of questionnaire)



# Output and audience of the Small N exploratory case study

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**Output.** A description of current variety use, seed sources and seed acquisition practices by farmers in a few case study communities

Characterization of 1 or more community seed systems

**Audience.** Same as users (seed intervention designers, implementers, evaluators, practitioners, researchers)



# Minimum sample size for the Small N exploratory case study

- 2-3 communities
- Minimum of 12-15 farmers per category (well-off, intermediate, poorest) in each community





# Resources for using the Small N exploratory case study

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***Number of people:*** 1-2 persons to form a team

***Equipment:*** transport, pen and paper

***Expertise:*** basic socio-economic and agro-ecological knowledge of seeds and varieties, interviewing skills text, basic use of Excel<sup>©</sup>



# Steps for using Small N exploratory case study

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**Step 1.** Identify representative communities for the seed system to be characterized: at least 2 for each typical seed system area

**Step 2.** Develop a questionnaire and interview questions (max 1.5 hours per interview) – and prepare the excel sheet for data entry

**Step 3.** Define a farmer-selection plan: in each community identify 12-15 farmers per social category (poor, medium, less-poor; women, men)



# Steps Small N exploratory case study (continued)

**Step 4.** Try out the questionnaire by validating it in the field and editing it for clarity and relevance

**Step 5.** Plan the data collection trips

**Step 6.** Enter the data in Excel, or similar software; analyze data

***See example studies  
([www.tools4seedsystems.org](http://www.tools4seedsystems.org))***



# Methods that can be combined with the Small N exploratory case study

**Method.** Multi-stakeholder framework

**Method.** Four Square Method

**Method.** Literature review, interviews with key informants, observation – as part of a mixed method study with qualitative and quantitative data



# Limitations of the Small N exploratory case study

Not for impact studies as it is not meant to work with representative samples (it is exploratory!)

In highly variable contexts or when the situation may vary strongly between farmers and communities it can be difficult to see a pattern or coherent picture



# Main advantages of the Small N exploratory case study

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- No major budget required
- No extraordinary capacities required (i.e. data analysis)
- Data may become available relatively soon
- Gives the research team opportunity to become familiar with the seed systems of the selected community: relevant learning experiences because the insights stay close to the data collectors



## Contact persons

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**User guide** Almekinders, C.J.M. and Bentley, J.W. 2020. User guide to the small N exploratory case study. Lima (Peru). CGIAR Research Program on Roots, Tubers and Bananas (RTB). RTB User Guide. No. 2020-3. [HERE](#)

**Description sheet** Almekinders, C.J.M. and Bentley, J.W. 2021. Tool description sheet to the small N exploratory case study. Lima (Peru). CGIAR Research Program on Roots, Tubers and Bananas (RTB). [HERE](#)

