Filling Knowledge Gaps between Model Farmers and their Communities. Implementing the Concept of Social Debt to Promote Knowledge Diffusion in Benin

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Introduction

- Conventional extension approaches struggle to reach beyond the circle of model farmers, despite growing investments on sustainable land management (SLM)

- Recurrent challenges include addressing model farmers' long-term motivation, legitimacy and acceptance as local facilitators and knowledge brokers

- The *Tem Sesiabun Gorado* (TSG) technology diffusion model was developed to address these challenges, as well as enhance knowledge transfer from model farmers (project beneficiaries) to non-project beneficiaries.

- TSG model tested in Kabanou and Sinawongourou villages in northern Benin, and currently used as upscaling strategy by GIZ soil rehabilitation project in 456 villages (18 communes) across the country.

Fig 1: Location of Kabanou and Sinawongourou

Context and methods

- Accompanying research to a GIZ soil rehabilitation project in Benin (SeWoH Initiative)

- 2 household surveys and 3 qualitative studies (focus group discussions, interviews)

- Structured discussions with farmers (n=594) based on a reflective approach termed „*Deep Reflection Process*"

Fig 2: Village consultations facilitated using the Deep Reflection Process in Kabanou village

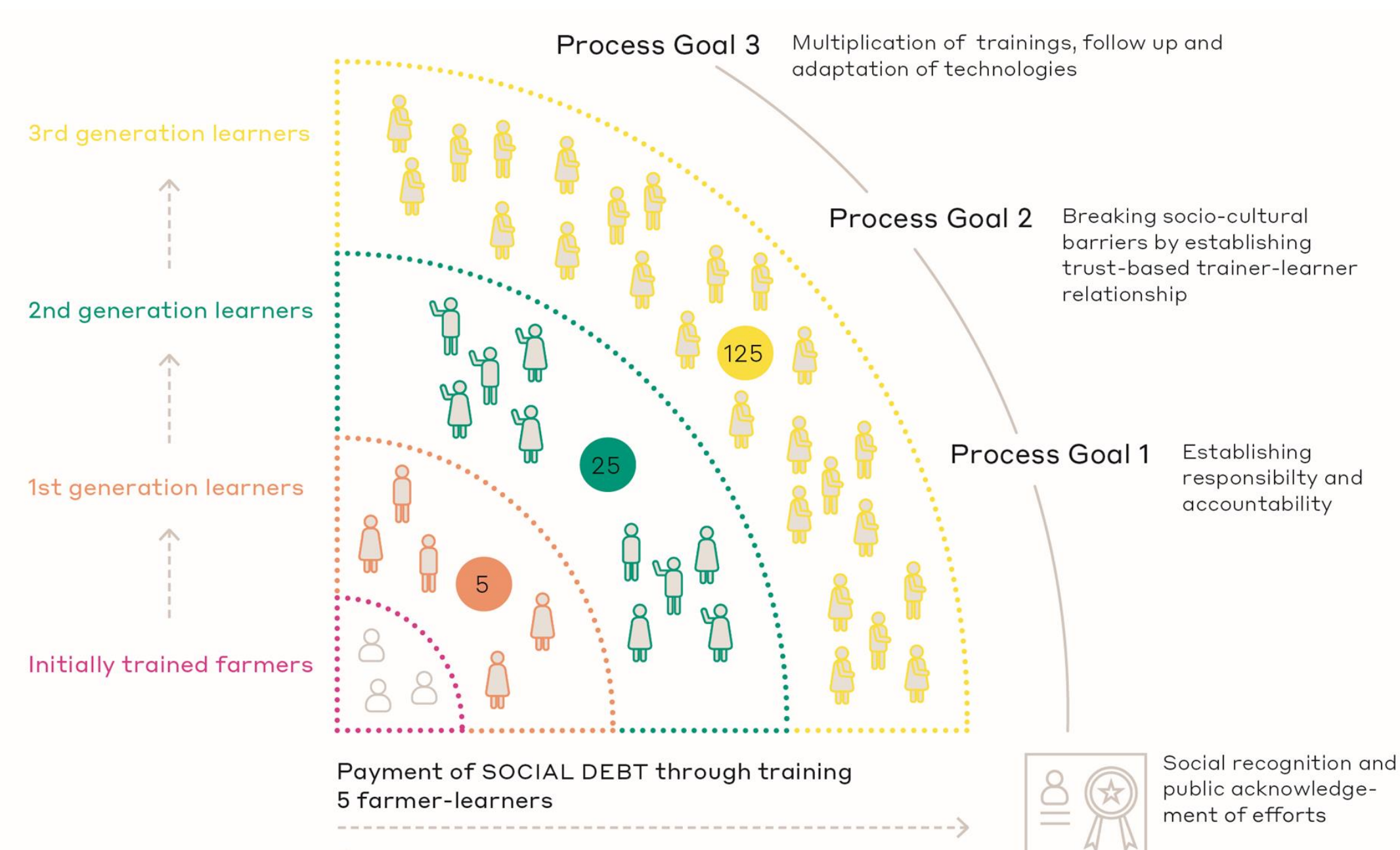## The Tem Sesiabun Gorado model: Framework and implementation approach

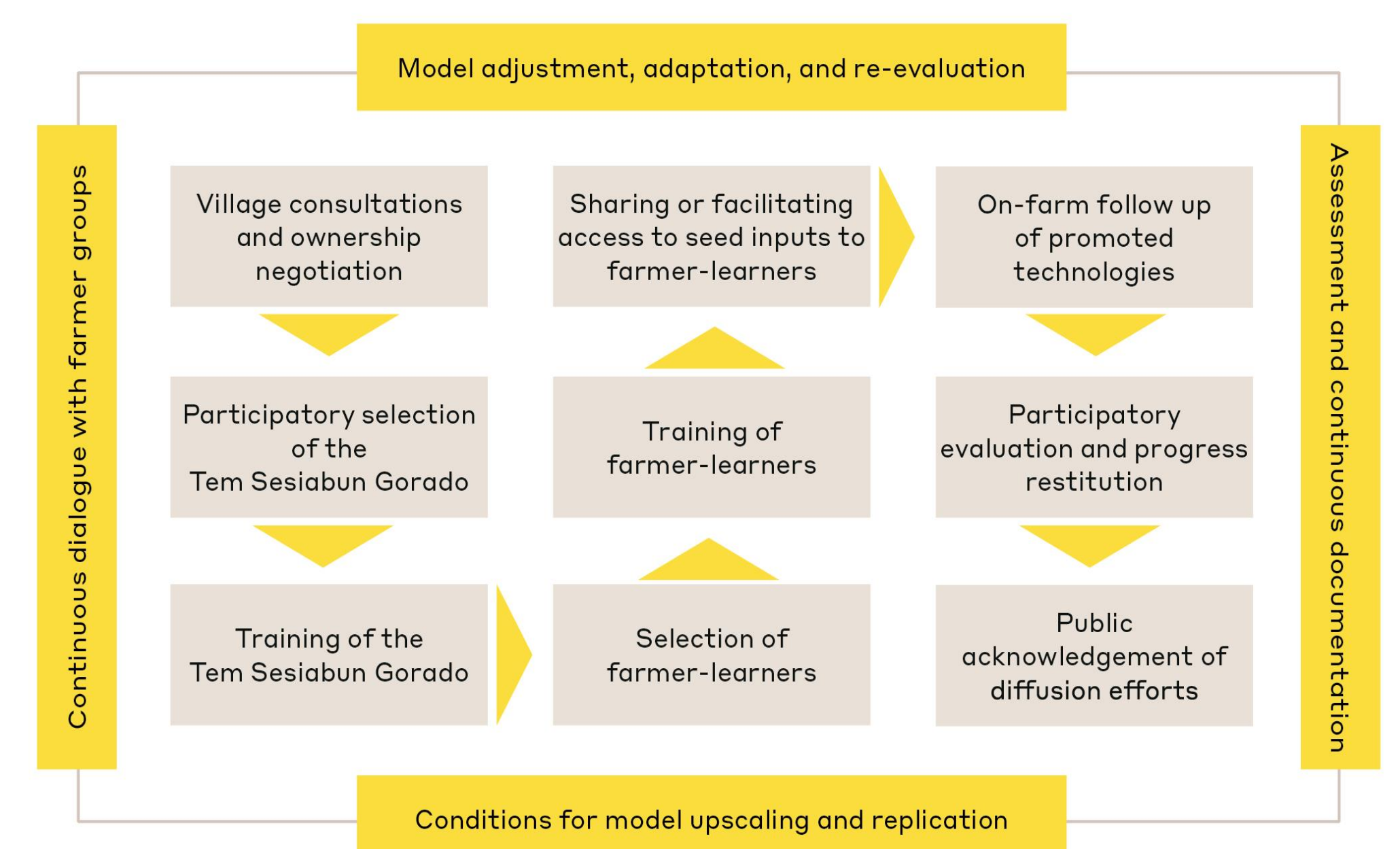Fig 3: Framework of the Tem Sesiabun Gorado diffusion model

Fig 4: Implementation approach of the TSG diffusion model

Wave-like diffusion scheme centered around the Tem Sesiabun Gorado

- … who are elected agents, mandated by peer-farmers to be trained and supported by SLM project on behalf of the whole community -Take-up of **social debt**

- … and publicly agreed to share gained knowledge and competencies with five new farmers during one to two growing seasons -R**epayment of the social debt**
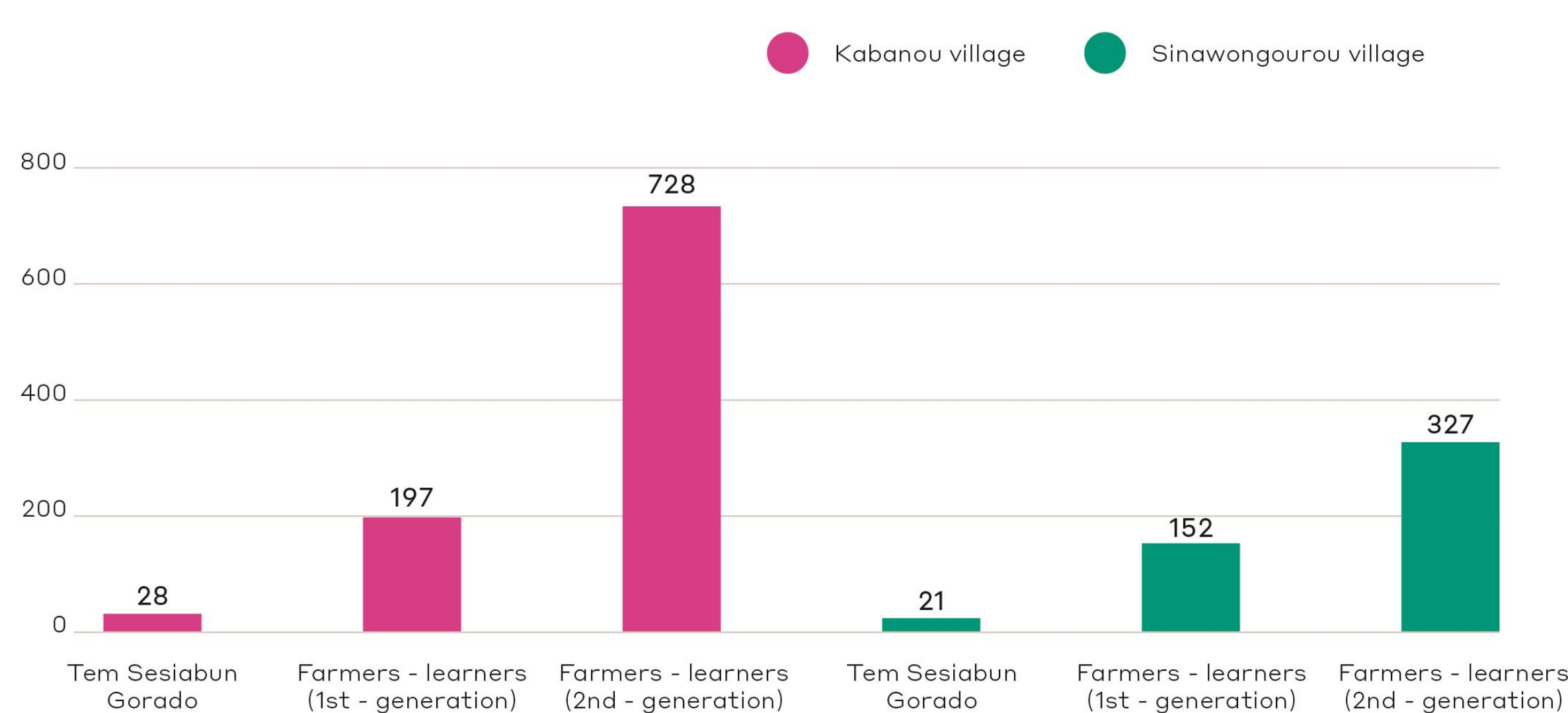
Results

Fig. 5: Reach of new farmers after two growing seasons (y axis: number of farmers)

- Year 1: From 10 to 17 hamlets and neighborhoods covered by TSG model
- Year 2: From 17 to 21 hamlets and neighborhoods covered by TSG model
- About 90% spatial coverage (village hamlets/neighborhoods) within 2 growing seasons
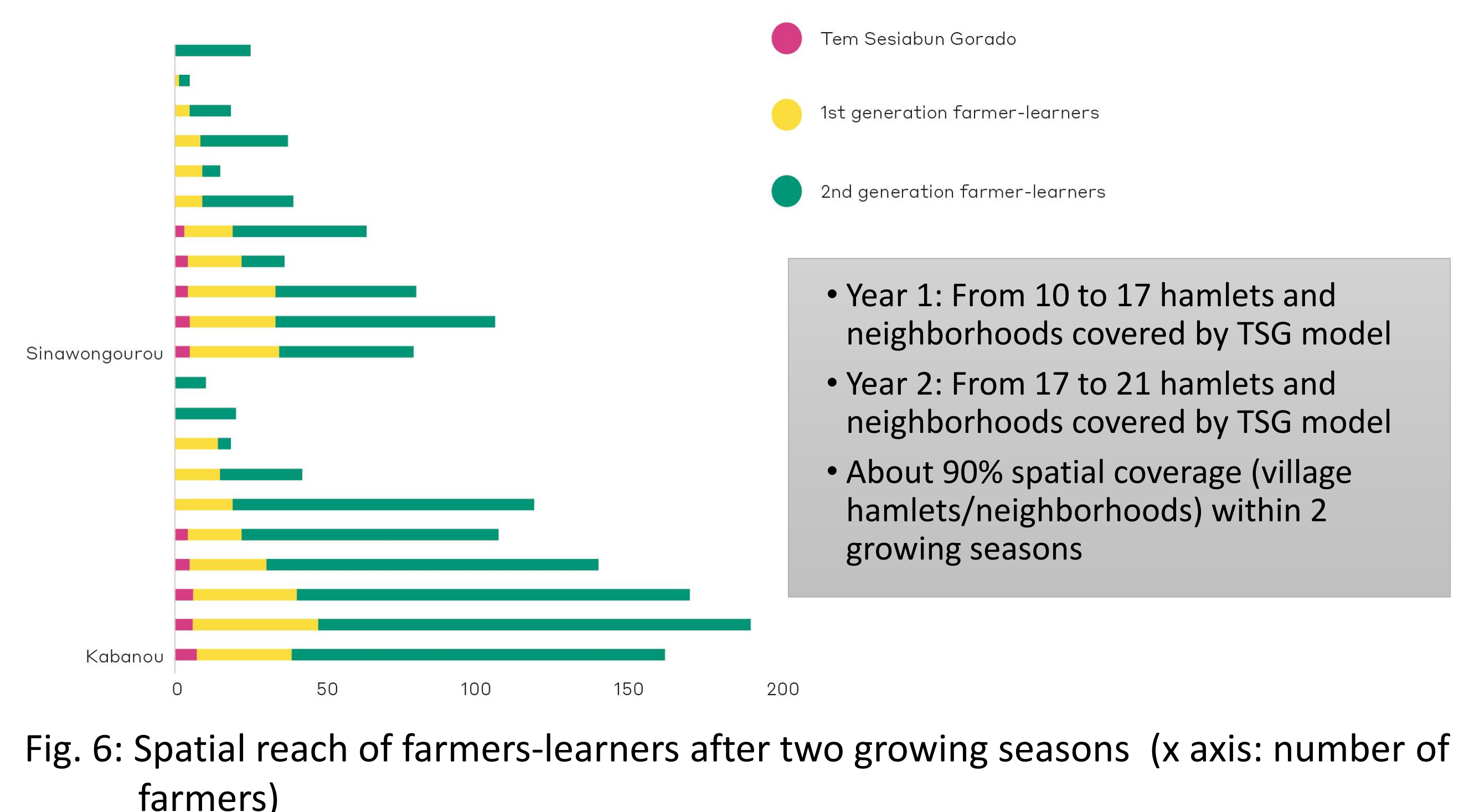
Fig. 6: Spatial reach of farmers-learners after two growing seasons (x axis: number of farmers)
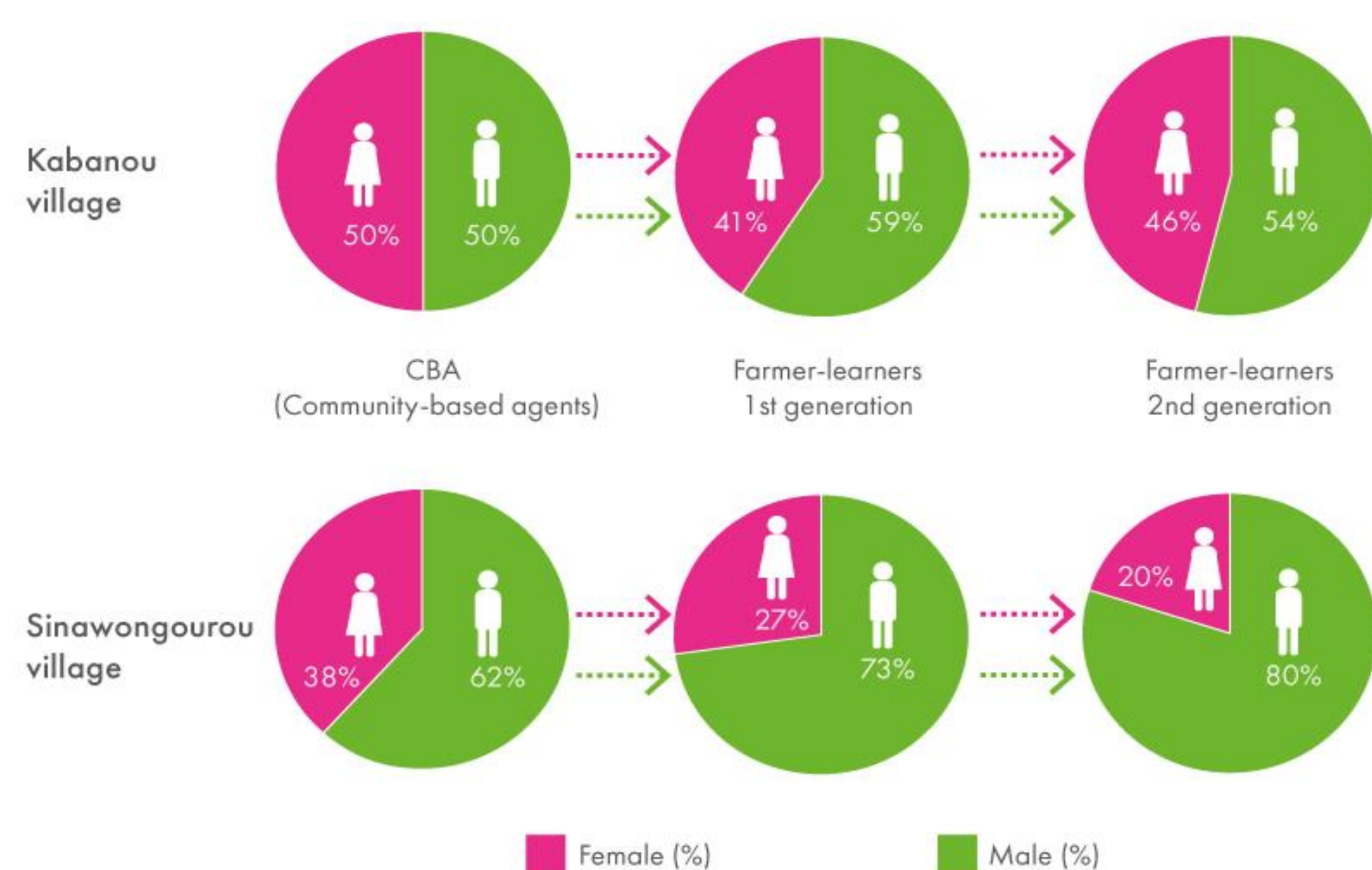

Fig 7: Reach of female farmers after two seasons

Conclusion/Key messages

- **Key message #1**: Technologies don't travel naturally! We need to devise appropriate mechanisms that stimulate knowledge sharing among farmer groups, and account for local socio-cultural contexts
- **Key message #2**: Promoting women's leadership in technology diffusion reduces gender inequalities among farmer-learners
- **Key message #3**: Farmer-to-farmer extension requires room for reflection, capacity-building, and accountability mechanisms between model farmers and the community

Key message #4: Ensuring farmers' agreement on the principle of 'social debt' builds commitment and reinforces accountability in knowledge transfer

Key message #5: Realistic expectations on TSG ensure long-term motivation and ease the repayment of the social debt

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