



From Vision to Practice and Beyond: Insights from the Final INSSPIRE Conference

Connecting Classrooms Across Borders: A COIL Conversation with Marina Vives Cabré (URV, Spain)

EU Delegation Visits Makerere to Explore Impact of INSSPIRE and Other Projects

From Classrooms to Communities: INSSPIRE's Theory of Change in Action

INSSPIRE Achievements (2022–2025)

Testimonials



Visit our website

<https://www.insspire.net>



Preface

As the world moves into ever uncertain waters, the need for education that prepares students for a future in which they are the decision makers is greater than ever. This is particularly true for African students, as Africa is gaining importance as a continent where many of the much-needed resources are located, which holds great potential, but only if handled by wise hands. At the same time, threats to security and food security in this continent are very real, and need to be confronted in a way that is sustainable, in the social, economic and environmental meaning of the word.

The INSSPIRE project, with its mission to inspire and shape the future of higher education and inclusive, collaborative learning is an important element of this preparation. I had the privilege to witness the achievements of the project in November 2024,

and I was particularly impressed by the statements of the students that highlighted their awareness of the need to learn “soft skills” next to textbook knowledge.

INSSPIRE has been a true inspiration for all those involved, integrating this learning of soft skills with the acquiring of topic-related knowledge, in a way that also brings students much closer to the lived reality of people outside the university walls, and teaches them how to think in terms of collaboration, within country boundaries or beyond.

We hope this newsletter will also convince readers who cannot physically experience the enthusiasm and impact of the achievements of INSSPIRE, and the promise it holds for higher education in the future.



Written by Dr Lia van Wesenbeeck, Associate Professor Development Economics and Director of the Amsterdam Centre for World Food Studies at VU Amsterdam

Content

From Vision to Practice and Beyond: Insights from the Final INSSPIRE Conference

Connecting Classrooms Across Borders: A COIL Conversation with Marina Vives Cabré (URV, Spain)

EU Delegation Visits Makerere to Explore Impact of INSSPIRE and Other Projects

From Classrooms to Communities: INSSPIRE's Theory of Change in Action

INSSPIRE Achievements (2022–2025)

Testimonials

Closing words from INSSPIRE coordinator



Follow us on social media



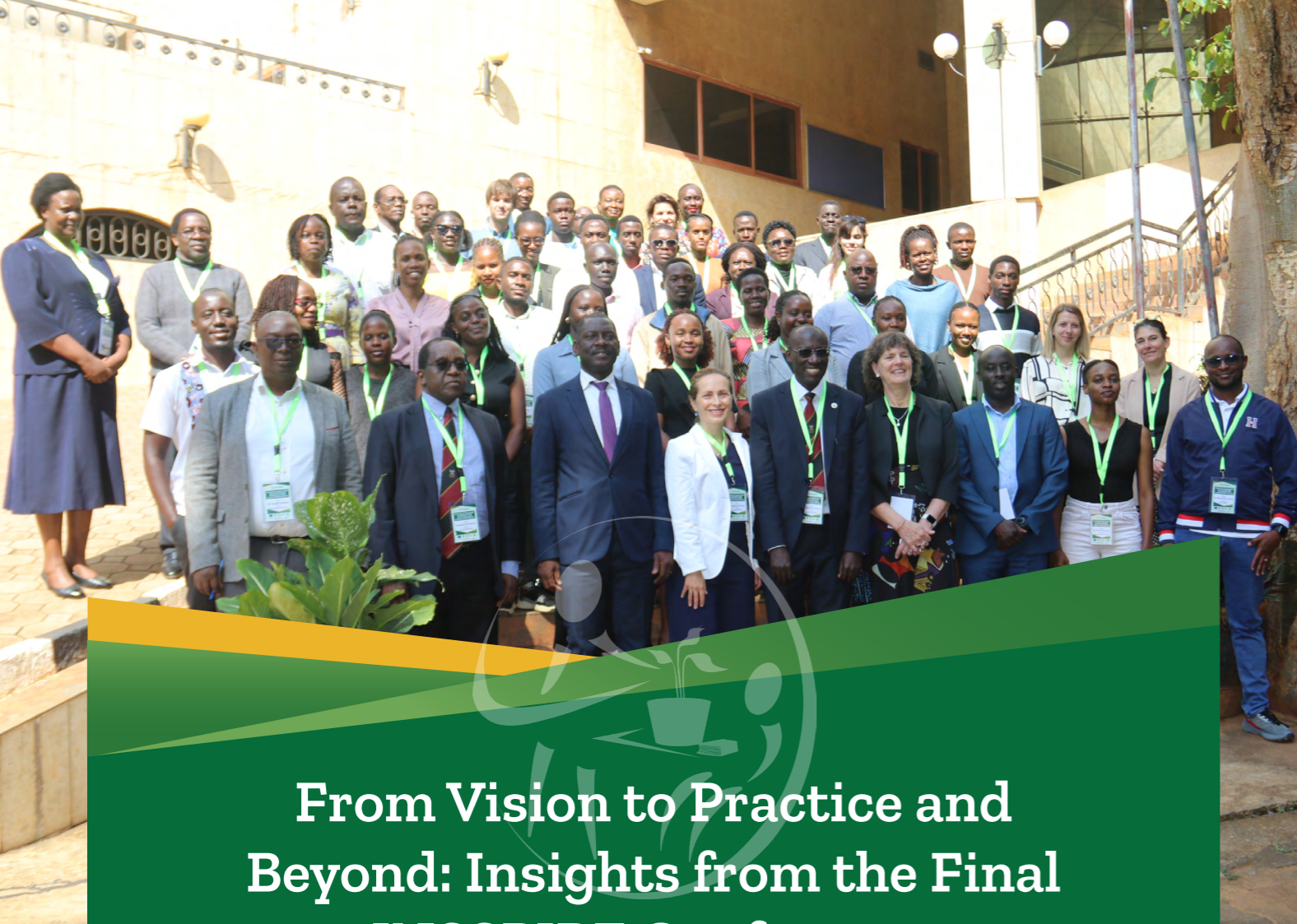
@INSSPIRE



insspire_project



@Insspireproject



From Vision to Practice and Beyond: Insights from the Final INSSPIRE Conference

On 18 November 2025, the Final INSSPIRE Stakeholder Conference took place in Kampala, hosted by Makerere University. Diverse group of academics, students, policymakers, and practitioners convened to reflect on three years of collaboration. Under the theme “Advancing Evidence-Based Inclusive Education for Food Systems and Climate Action,” the conference created space to look back, exchange perspectives, and look ahead. Through keynote insights, interactive exhibitions, and reflective dialogue, participants explored how education can meaningfully contribute to more resilient, climate-smart food systems — and what comes next beyond the project’s formal conclusion.

“Collaboration is the future of knowledge co-creation.” — participant

“I truly enjoyed how students and stakeholders have been truly active through the day.” — participant

Keynote Reflections: Learning from Africa’s Food Systems

Prof. John David Kabasa, Distinguished Professor of Veterinary Medicine at Makerere University and former Principal of CoVAB, opened the conference with a keynote that challenged how African food systems are often understood. Using stories from his grandfather, born in 1859, he reminded the audience that pre-colonial food systems were not defined by permanent scarcity, but by locally controlled, ecologically grounded production that could sustain wealth and resilience. Furthermore, he showed that hunger has often been driven as much by governance, conflict, and market control as by climate stress itself.

Linking past and present, Prof. Kabasa highlighted emerging threats such as invasive pests, climate extremes, and global food price shocks, while also pointing to local innovation as a source of hope. Examples from CoVAB included turning agricultural waste into income through mushroom production and insect-based protein systems. He closed by stressing resilient, climate-smart food systems — from diverse production to circular innovation — and urged African universities to lead the transformation.

“Transformation is not a wish... it’s work.”

— participant

“Governance issues are critical.”

— participant



Three Years of INSSPIRE: From Vision to Practice

The conference also invited participants to reflect on what INSSPIRE had delivered over three years, structured around the project’s three core objectives:

- Intra-university capacity – strengthening education on food systems and climate change and making it relevant for the labour market.
- University–community collaboration – co-creating knowledge and sharing solutions with society.
- Inter-university partnerships – fostering cooperation across universities to support evidence-based education.

Small mixed groups of INSSPIRE partners reflected on achievements and outcomes, while stakeholders, looking with fresh eyes, imagined what success would look like from their perspective. This dialogue sparked lively discussions, drawings, and creative visualisations.

Key Highlights from the Working Groups:

Objective 1: Strengthening universities from within

Participants and stakeholders alike highlighted curriculum enrichment as a key achievement. Over 850 students and 60 lecturers were involved in 23 courses across 19 departments, breaking disciplinary silos and embedding food systems and climate change into existing programmes. Stakeholders stressed the importance of grounding curricula in real community challenges, using evidence and baseline data, and equipping students with competence-based, labour-market-relevant skills. They also pointed to the need to keep programmes future-proof, for example by integrating emerging themes such as artificial intelligence and evidence-based decision-making. Capacity building for teaching staff was seen as essential in ensuring these topics are taught effectively and remain relevant.

"We are all knowledge co-creators."
— participant

Objective 2: Connecting universities and communities

Real-Life Learning Labs (RLLs) were widely recognised as one of INSSPIRE's most tangible contributions. Stakeholders shared concrete examples of how collaboration inspired communities and led to practical, low-cost solutions—such as dairy farmers improving mastitis control by replacing conventional bedding with rice husks that were later reused as organic fertiliser. Looking ahead, stakeholders expressed a desire for deeper and more sustained engagement: more on-farm demonstrations at household and smallholder level, expansion of RLLs to crop production, and a stronger focus on responsible consumption and production (SDG 12). Policy engagement, environmental stewardship, and partnerships with local organisations were seen as critical to sustaining impact beyond the project's lifetime.

"Community is a key aspect in implementing any project."
— participant

Objective 3: Strengthening inter-university partnerships

On inter-university collaboration, stakeholders and partners shared a forward-looking vision. COIL was recognised as a powerful tool for connecting classrooms across Africa and Europe, enabling joint learning without travel. Stakeholders proposed expanding student and staff exchanges, co-supervised research, shared demonstration farms, and joint innovation events hosted across partner universities. Ideas such as a shared data repository and

more harmonised teaching programmes were seen as ways to make collaboration more visible, practical, and sustainable over time.

Across the groups, a clear picture emerged: INSSPIRE has built more than outputs—it has created lasting connections between universities, students, lecturers, and communities.

"Problem solving requires ideas from different disciplines." — participant



Matching Expectations with Reality: A Joint Assessment

Building on the working group reflections, the conference concluded with a joint assessment session comparing stakeholder expectations with INSSPIRE's actual achievements. Designed as an interactive moment rather than a formal

evaluation, the session reinforced the project's emphasis on participation and shared learning.

Participants first captured their main takeaway in a single word or symbol. Terms such as inspiration, partnership, hands-on, interdisciplinarity, and impact stood out, reflecting how the project was experienced across different audiences.



In mixed-group discussions, stakeholders noted how closely INSSPIRE’s outcomes aligned with its original objectives—from curriculum innovation to community engagement—and expressed appreciation for the project’s ability to deliver concrete results within three years. Approaches such as Real-Life Learning Labs and COIL were highlighted as particularly effective in translating educational concepts into practice.

At the same time, participants openly discussed gaps, including questions around long-term sustainability, broader visibility, and the involvement of additional disciplines. Overall, the session confirmed that INSSPIRE has not only met but in several areas exceeded expectations, while also offering clear directions for future development beyond the project’s formal lifetime.



An Interactive Walk Through INSSPIRE Exhibition Booths

The INSSPIRE exhibition booths offered participants a dynamic “walk-and-talk” experience, showcasing the project’s key achievements, teaching innovations and methodologies. Organised in themed corners, the booths invited visitors to move freely between displays, discuss methodological approaches such as Real-Life Learning Labs and COIL, watch videos on RLLL experiences, and engage directly with staff and students involved in their implementation.

The informal setup encouraged open conversation, peer learning and networking, allowing participants to not only see concrete outputs but also discuss how ideas could be adapted or scaled within their own institutions. In total, six booths were presented: a general overview of INSSPIRE’s achievements, a methodology booth focusing on RLLL and COIL, and institutional showcases from Maseno University (MSU), South Eastern Kenya University (SEKU), Makerere University (MUK) and Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST).



Looking Ahead: Beyond the Project

The closing roundtable, moderated by Dr Joanne Kisaka (Makerere University), invited partners and stakeholders to reflect on how INSSPIRE’s achievements can be sustained and scaled beyond the project’s lifetime. Panel members included Dr Denyse Snelder (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam), Prof. John David Kabasa (Makerere University), Dr Victoria Tibenda (National Agricultural Research Organisation, NARO), Dr Ronald Twongyirwe (Mbarara University of Science and Technology) and Prof. George Mark Onyango (Maseno University).

Panelists highlighted Real-Life Learning Labs (RLLs) and Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) as INSSPIRE’s most impactful approaches in curriculum enrichment — connecting universities with communities and enabling inclusive, climate-conscious international collaboration. They stressed the importance of embedding these



approaches in formal curricula and institutional strategies, supported by leadership buy-in, so they can continue beyond individual projects.

Looking ahead, the discussion called for stronger links between research, education, policy, and practice through multi-stakeholder platforms. It also emphasized scaling INSSPIRE’s proven methods across universities and regions. The shared vision was clear: build on INSSPIRE’s foundations to strengthen evidence-based education and accelerate food systems transformation under a changing climate.

 *Written by Mekky Zaidi, Communication and Dissemination (WP6) co-lead (VU Amsterdam).*



Connecting Classrooms Across Borders: A COIL Conversation with Marina Vives Cabré (URV, Spain)

Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) has been at the heart of INSSPIRE's efforts to strengthen meaningful international collaboration beyond physical mobility. In this interview, Marina Vives Cabré from Universitat Rovira i Virgili (URV), COIL expert and co-lead of INSSPIRE WP5 on Inter-university partnership, reflects on three years of implementation, shared learning across cultures, and the lasting impact of COIL on students, faculty, and institutions across Europe and East Africa.

Looking back at the three years of INSSPIRE, what did you hope COIL would achieve when the project started, and how has that vision evolved?

As a strong advocate of COIL and its potential—when well implemented—to foster learning through care and mutual respect, I believe it offers meaningful benefits. These benefits are evident from both student and faculty perspectives. For this reason, I was very excited about the opportunity INSSPIRE offered, both to the consortium and to me as a coordinator, to strengthen inter-institutional exchanges

and partnerships beyond traditional mobility opportunities.

Are there particular outcomes—educational, institutional, or personal—that stand out to you?

I may be biased because of my professional and personal interests, but one of the most lasting impressions for me was discovering the great sense of humor of our East African partners. The friendly jokes between colleagues from Uganda and Kenya, combined with laughter, hard work, and strong commitment, made every INSSPIRE meeting truly memorable and unforgettable.

Was there a moment during the project when you felt especially proud or impressed by how COIL was adopted or implemented? (A class, collaboration, or reaction that made you think: "this is really working.")

The COIL task force had been meeting virtually on a monthly basis for some time before the on-site Training of Trainers (ToT) took place. This allowed us to use the training not only to learn how to become COIL trainers, but also to share where each team stood, including their progress and key learnings. I was particularly impressed by how some groups had overcome challenges along the way. At the same time, I appreciated how partners adapted COIL implementation to their own needs and contexts—something reflected in the fact that many continue to implement COIL this year, demonstrating its sustainability as a methodology.

Several African universities embraced COIL during the project. Could you share a brief example of the impact or unique contribution from each institution?

I believe all institutions demonstrated strong progress and successful implementation. Southeastern Kenya University (SEKU, Kenya), for example, carried out two COIL projects—one with Makerere University (MUK, Uganda) and the University d'Abomey Calavi (UAC, Benin), and another with URV. Despite political instability, strikes, and connectivity challenges, both projects were successfully implemented. SEKU is now conducting in-house trainings to expand the number of faculties capable of integrating COIL into their courses.

Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST, Uganda) and Maseno University (MSU, Kenya) both engaged in bilingual collaborations with UAC,





developing innovative approaches to communication across languages. In addition, MSU combined COIL with RLLL, bringing community voices into the process and enriching the collaboration beyond the classroom.

MUK, in turn, hosted the Training of Trainers and involved several COIL practitioners in the workshop, fostering strong commitment and supporting sustained implementation.



What has surprised you most about working with COIL across such diverse institutional and cultural settings?

You always learn something from your partners. One experience that particularly struck me—despite having read about it and even explained it in many trainings—was witnessing firsthand how different cultures approach decision-making, perceive time, understand institutional hierarchies, and communicate. These lived experiences reinforced the importance of cultural awareness, which we deliberately addressed by including guidance on working with diversity in our COIL manual.

From your perspective, how has COIL changed the learning experience for students involved in INSSPIRE?

As is often the case, COIL helped students think beyond the box—not only in terms of learning outcomes and objectives, but more importantly in how they view the world. COIL projects are typically designed as challenge-based initiatives that address real-life problems through collaboration with peers from another university and country. This strong connection to real-world issues and diverse cultures creates a first-level impact experience, as confirmed by MUK students who attended the INSSPIRE final conference. COIL encouraged them to move beyond their usual boundaries and comfort zones.



As INSSPIRE comes to an end, how do you see the future of COIL at the partner universities?

I truly hope COIL continues to grow across all partner institutions. Through the project, we carefully analyzed institutional needs and diverse contexts, identified suitable courses for COIL implementation, brought together many academics through the Training of Trainers, and successfully implemented COIL projects at all partner universities. Importantly, each institution has already gone on to train additional faculty beyond the initial ToT participants. We have the talent, and I believe the need is clearly there. I envision a strong future for this consortium and its potential, including expanded COIL and virtual exchange opportunities.



EU Delegation Visits Makerere to Explore Impact of INSSPIRE and Other Projects

The International Relations Office and the Grants Administration and Management Support Unit (GAMSU) recently hosted a delegation from the European Commission's Education and Culture Agency. During their visit, the

EU partners toured EU-funded project sites at Makerere University and engaged with principal investigators to better understand the impact of these initiatives on both the university and surrounding communities.



EU delegation with project team leads at Makerere University.

On December 17, 2025, Dr. Charles Kato, INSSPIRE institutional coordinator at MUK, presented the project's achievements in the Council Boardroom. The delegation was impressed by INSSPIRE's contributions, particularly in curriculum enrichment and the implementation of Real-Life Learning Labs (RLLs). They requested to meet students and staff involved in the project; however, this was not possible as students had already begun their holiday break.

The delegation also learned about other EU-funded projects at Makerere. Notably, three additional projects aligned with INSSPIRE's focus on food systems and climate change. The visitors encouraged closer collaboration, suggesting that GAMSU establish regular platforms for these projects to share insights, experiences, and best practices.

The visit highlighted the growing impact of EU-supported initiatives at Makerere and underscored the potential for synergies between related projects to strengthen research, teaching, and community engagement in sustainable food systems.



Written by Dr Kato Charles Drago, MUK Institutional Coordinator

From Classrooms to Communities: INSSPIRE's Theory of Change in Action

Universities are emerging as powerful catalysts for climate-resilient food systems and the INSSPIRE project has shown how. Over three years in Kenya and Uganda, the project applied a Theory of Change

approach to explore how higher education can transform learning, research, and community engagement to address real-world food system challenges.

INSSPIRE focused on three interconnected pathways:

1. Intra-university transformation – reshaping curricula, pedagogy, and institutional practices.

2. University–community engagement – turning communities into co-creators of knowledge.

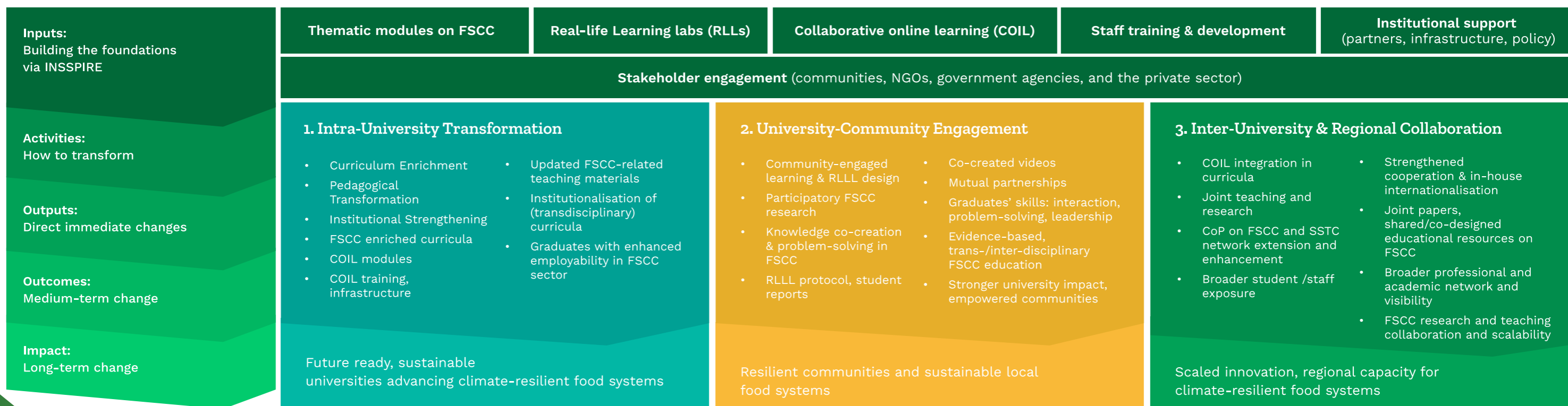
3. Inter-university collaboration – fostering cross-border learning and research partnerships.

3-Pathway Theory of Change for Transformative Higher Education on Food Systems & Climate Change (after)

Integrated Analysis of Transformative Outcomes

Student-Level Transformation. Students gained practical and transdisciplinary skills through enriched courses and Real-Life Learning Labs (RLLs). From food system and groundwater mapping to satellite data sourcing and analysis, these hands-on experiences bridged theory and practice. Participation in RLLs and Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) initiatives strengthened critical thinking, teamwork, leadership, and intercultural competence.

Students also developed digital collaboration skills, self-direction, adaptability, and confidence, preparing a new generation capable of addressing complex climate and food system challenges both locally and globally.



Cross-cutting enablers supporting all three pathways: transdisciplinarity, digital innovation, and stakeholder engagement

Staff and Faculty Development.

Faculties benefited from training-of-trainers workshops, participatory pedagogy, and collaborative course design, which encouraged transdisciplinary, interdisciplinary and experiential teaching approaches. Engagement with RLLs and COIL networks strengthened research skills, subject expertise, and cross-border collaboration, while also promoting co-authorship, peer learning, and sustained professional networks. Importantly, faculty translated these experiential insights into enriched curricula, helping to ensure that innovations in teaching contributed to broader institutional transformation.

Institutional and System-Level Transformation.

At the institutional level, INSSPIRE catalyzed cross-department collaboration, curricular flexibility, and alignment with labor market and societal needs. RLLs were institutionalized in some universities and piloted in others, enabling practical engagement while maintaining policy compliance. Inter-university collaboration

amplified these effects, creating Communities of Practice, joint research networks, and a culture of shared learning. These reforms embedded sustainability, climate resilience, and food system perspectives into university strategies, positioning institutions as climate-responsive, future-ready hubs.

Societal and Community Impact. **Communities** were central to INSSPIRE's approach: farmers, NGOs, and local stakeholders co-designed curricula, research questions, and learning outcomes, transforming universities into partners rather than solely service providers. RLLs and collaborative projects worked towards evidence-based solutions, strengthened climate adaptation capacity, and fostered trust and mutual respect. South-South and Triangular Cooperation networks further extended these efforts, fostering cross-border knowledge sharing and broader partnerships. By integrating community input into teaching and research,



universities increased social relevance and contributed to positive change[SD(3)] s in local food systems.

Despite initial start-up challenges, implementation progressed steadily once systems were in place and INSSPIRE demonstrated that empowered staff, flexible institutions, early community involvement, and sustained partnerships are key to embedding practice-based, transdisciplinary learning. As the project concludes, its legacy is clear: by combining experiential learning, community co-creation, and international collaboration,

universities can better prepare graduates for climate-resilient food system careers and contribute to sustainable societal transformation.

 *Written by Mekky Zaidi, Communication and Dissemination (WP6) co-lead (VU Amsterdam).*



INSSPIRE

Achievements (2022–2025)

Evidence-based inclusive education for food systems & climate action

“The INSSPIRE project champions hands-on skills development and experiential learning, fostering practical expertise among students.”

— Steering Committee member

INSSPIRE in numbers

>60 lecturers actively engaged

>850 students reached through enriched courses

>500 community stakeholders engaged

18 universities across Africa and Europe involved



What we achieved?

01

Building intra-university capacity (courses & institutions)

- 23 enriched courses across 19 departments
- Enrichment tied to labour-market profiles & competencies
- A stepwise methodology for curriculum enrichment developed and tested at 10 African universities
- >60 staff trained

“Shared understanding is helping move teaching and learning beyond disciplinary silos.” — External Evaluator



02

Strengthening university-community collaboration (societal relevance)

- Real-Life Learning Labs (RLLL) Protocol developed & 10 Training-of-Trainers conducted
- 9 RLLs implemented and tested: Dunga lakeside community (MSU), Kyavonda livestock community (SEKU), Sight dairy farm (MUK), and Abatsyaba apiary & banana growing community (MUST)
- Stakeholder Platform launched

“The usefulness of the RLLs cannot be overstated.” — External evaluator

“Partnering with the university has increased our farm’s visibility and improved the way we farm. As a result, our milk production has increased.” — Community Representative

03

Enhancing inter-university partnerships (innovation & cross-cultural skills)

- Established a community of practice with 18 universities in Africa and Europe under the umbrella of South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) and Aurora alliance
- Submitted 2 Horizon Europe Research & Innovation Action proposals (2025) with focus on Agroecology and Generative Artificial Intelligence

Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) capacity built:

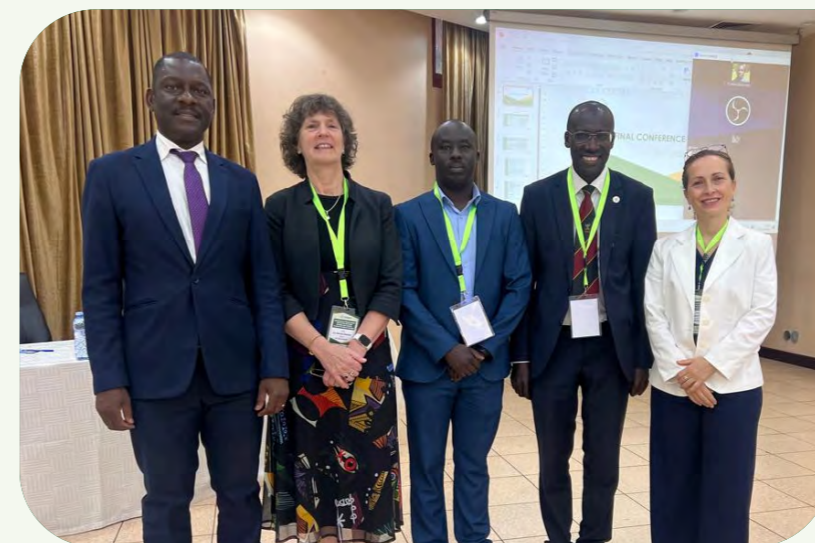
- COIL manual developed to support training of trainers and COIL practitioners
- 20 lecturers trained online
- 38 participants from 11 universities trained on-site during the Trainer of Trainers workshop in Kampala, Uganda
- 5 COILs set with SEKU, MUK, MUST, MSU, URV, VU and partners in Benin, Ghana and South Africa
- 22 lecturers implementing the COIL in their courses
- Over 400 students engaged



“The joint INSSPIRE, SSTC, and Aurora Community of Practice is a highlight of the project – cultivating international linkages and shared learning.”

— External evaluator

INSSPIRE Final conference





INSSPIRE Testimonials

Dr. Lesley Hope

Lecturer: Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, School of Agriculture and Technology, University of Energy and Natural Resources

I joined the INSSPIRE project through the virtual workshop on curriculum enrichment and later participated in the in-person Real-Life Learning Laboratory (RLLL) workshop in Uganda. This has been an enriching experience that has significantly enhanced my teaching practice. My students have benefited from participating in a summer school with peers from South Africa, gaining valuable intercultural exposure, confidence, and peer connections. The project has also increased my university's visibility, while my engagement with RLLL has sharpened my research focus and generated new research ideas. Thank you, INSSPIRE.

Dr. Ronald Twongyirwe

Senior Lecturer and Head of department in the Faculty of Interdisciplinary Studies at MUST

I joined the INSSPIRE project eager to participate in and learn from a diverse international community, and my aspirations were largely met. My understanding of curriculum design was strengthened, particularly in integrating cutting-edge content and international best practice. I added new content delivery approaches to my skill set, including Collaborative International Learning (COIL), Real Life Learning Labs (RLLL), and gamification, and successfully implemented COIL with colleagues in Benin and Kenya. Mbarara University of Science and Technology expanded its international partnerships, now leveraged for new research funding frontiers. A key highlight was witnessing meaningful community engagement and progress toward resilient food systems among the Abatsyaba banana and beekeeping community.

Dr. Gregor Cerinšek

*Head of department for applied social sciences
Organization: Institute for Innovation and Development of the University of Ljubljana*

INSSPIRE gave me a unique professional platform to further develop and test the Real-Life Learning Lab model I have worked on for 15 years, and to adapt it for the first time beyond Europe – in Kenya, Uganda, Ghana, Benin and South Africa. This is a major milestone in my career. Personally, the project changed me: I gained colleagues who became friends, and a deeper sensitivity to both our similarities and differences, especially through conversations with students as future agents of change. Beyond INSSPIRE, I am committed to continuing these collaborations, new research & education projects, and joint publications.

Dr. Felipe Koch

*Associate Professor
UNESCO Chairholder - Futures of Education for Health and Living Well
Vice-Dean AEI
International School at University Paris-East Créteil*

INSSPIRE brought me into the SSTC community of practice on evidence-based higher education for food systems and climate change, led by VU Amsterdam with FAO support. It turned cooperation into practice: peer learning, co-design, and staying accountable to local priorities. Joining the Uganda workshop on Real-Life Learning Labs (RLLL), and learning from UDS Ghana's long experience in community service learning, reshaped how I connect Futures Literacy with problem-based, demand-driven education. For AEI International School (UPEC), it strengthened our Aurora contribution to the network and opens room for joint teaching and mobility beyond 2025.

Prof. George Mark Onyango

Prof. George Mark Onyango, Professor School of Planning Architecture, Maseno University

Participation in INSSPIRE, grounded in South-South and Triangular Cooperation, reshaped my professional practice and institutional outlook. Personally, it enabled collaboration with colleagues across the global North and South, breaking disciplinary silos in teaching and capacity building, and fostering new pedagogical approaches at MSU. Institutionally, INSSPIRE strengthened co-production skills in food systems, integrated teaching on climate change across three Schools, and established Real Learning Labs linking researchers, communities, policymakers, and the private sector. A key lesson has been that effective teams emerge through patient engagement and iteration. Looking ahead, INSSPIRE has laid a durable experiential foundation for future partnerships in food systems, climate change, and community-centered knowledge co-creation.

Dr. Florian Kroll

*Researcher, DSTI-NRF
Centre of Excellence in
Food Security, University
of the Western Cape*

Since 2023, I have participated with the INSSPIRE project, attending in-person planning workshops, offering brief talks on food systems governance and knowledge co-creation, and contributing to various online meetings.

This introduced me to a network of highly motivated and capable researchers across Africa, which provided a valuable entry point to convene the African Food Systems Transformation Collective (AFSTC). INSSPIRE colleagues contributed to this network by leading and collaborating on the production of 19 issue briefs informing philanthropic donors on principles and priorities for ethical investment to promote agroecological food systems transformation in Africa.

These contributions enabled not only stronger alignment between INSSPIRE goals and the AFSTC project, but established a professional network built on excellence, competence, care and trust. The issue briefs will help to shape philanthropic strategy by providing evidence-based analysis and recommendations on a broad range of complex and interrelated issues.

Perhaps the most valuable lessons for me are the power of sustained professional networks and collaboration across multiple institutions bridging African and European countries, and the importance of effective communication and co-ordination to cultivate collegial collaboration.

Dr. Claude-Gervais Assogba

*Associate Professor in Agro-
Socio-Anthropology Lecturer-
Researcher Laboratory of
Research on Innovation for
Agricultural Development
(LRIDA) Faculty of Agronomy –
University of Parakou (Benin)*

My participation in the INSSPIRE project through the SSTC network strengthened my collaborations with colleagues from African and European Universities involved in the project and enhanced my capacity to develop course modules integrating food systems and climate change. Institutionally, it reinforced the Faculty of Agronomy's partnerships with several universities. Academically, it enabled the design and the implementation of a summer school on organic and ecological agriculture, using the RLLL and COIL approaches. The project also catalyzed collaboration with multiple institutions, including UPEC Paris and other partners, leading to a joint scientific seminar and the co-development of an AUF-funded proposal. A key lesson is that win-win partnerships generate sustainable impacts beyond project boundaries.

Prof. Saa Dittoh

*Professor, University for
Development Studies
(UDS), Tamale, Ghana*

INSSPIRE made critical thinking and inspired actions reality in my life, as I participated in course enrichments, Real-Life Learning Lab (RLLL) protocols and practices, and Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL). All were done within three years. Colleagues continue to marvel at the uniqueness in international networking by the SSTC/INSSPIRE family. On a personal note, the SSTC/INSSPIRE collaboration made it possible for me to publish Integrating Indigenous and Scientific Knowledge – The Plug-In Principle (Springer 2025 https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-85512-2_1). Five authors of Chapters of the book are from this 'family'.

Dr. Moses Mwangi

*Senior Lecturer in the
Department of Hydrology
and Aquatic Sciences,
South Eastern Kenya
University*

The INSSPIRE project provided a platform to learn by doing, transforming theoretical knowledge into practical skills and professional readiness. Resultant achievement makes learning more meaningful, deepens understanding, and develops crucial life skills beyond the standard academic curriculum. A most important lesson learned on the curriculum enrichment is that if correctly undertaken, it has the capacity to onboard societal demand driven ideas. On the whole, sustainable enrichment requires strong stakeholder involvement and institutional support, and a culture that values broader educational experiences. A lasting legacy at the university is the embracement of transdisciplinary teaching, making knowledge wider and more relevant.

Dr. Wilma van Staden

Research Associate,
Rhodes University

Participating in INSSPIRE has been an incredibly enriching experience both personally and professionally. It provided me with the opportunity to design and facilitate in collaboration with VU Amsterdam, engage in international mobility to the Netherlands and Uganda, and connect deeply with peers working on sustainability in agriculture and education. INSSPIRE supported the sharing of our rainwater harvesting and agroecology work through the Amanzi for Food initiative and helped build lasting networks. I've felt welcomed and inspired — and I'm confident these relationships and learnings will continue to grow beyond

Dr. Denyse Snelder

Acting Head of the
Centre for International
Cooperation at VU
Amsterdam (CIS-VU)

Participating in INSSPIRE has been an incredibly rewarding experience, both personally and professionally. Every time we gathered with our partners, I was amazed by their energy, enthusiasm, and unwavering commitment. While each institution faced its own challenges, the dedication of every team member ensured that INSSPIRE achieved outcomes beyond our expectations.

The project has strengthened collaboration, expanded capacity, and fostered innovative approaches to teaching and learning. Personally, working with such a motivated and passionate group has been inspiring and a true privilege.

One key highlight over the past three years has been witnessing the resilience and creativity of our partners, who consistently found ways to overcome obstacles and deliver impactful results. INSSPIRE has not only fulfilled its objectives but has also created lasting connections and lessons that will guide future collaborations.

Closing Remarks Global change starts with inspired people!

As we come to the end of the three-year ERASMUS+ CBHE INSSPIRE project, this moment offers both closure and perspective. The experience with INSSPIRE has shown that coordinating a project can feel almost effortless when working with a committed, experienced, and passionate team that shares a common vision.

At the same time, INSSPIRE was never meant to stand alone. It has been embedded from the start within a broader, long-term partnership: the South-South Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) network on food systems and climate change, bringing together 17 partners across Africa and Europe. Coordinating such a wide, multi-continental network, supported by multiple funding sources, has been - and continues to be - a far more complex endeavour.

Yet it is precisely this complexity that makes the partnership meaningful, resilient, and impactful.

Finalising INSSPIRE is therefore not only an opportunity to reflect on achievements and lessons learned, but also a moment to look ahead. The team remains strongly motivated to explore new funding opportunities and to build further on the solid foundations laid by INSSPIRE and the wider SSTC network.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the entire INSSPIRE team for the excellent work accomplished over the past three years, and for sharing a common vision of a long-term partnership dedicated to food systems transformation. The journey does not end here — it evolves, inspired by people who believe that global change starts with collaboration, commitment, and shared purpose.



By Dr Sabina Di Prima, INSSPIRE
Project Coordinator (VU Amsterdam)



INSSPIRE Project partners



The Netherlands

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU)



Kenya

Maseno university



Kenya

South Eastern Kenya University



Uganda

Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST)



Slovenia

Institute for Innovation and Development of University of Ljubljana



Uganda

Makerere University



Slovenia

The Faculty of Electrical Engineering at the University of Ljubljana



Spain

Universitat Rovira i Virgili (URV)



Co-funded by
the European Union

Co-funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

Project ID: 101083056 — INSSPIRE — ERASMUS-EDU-2022- CBHE



@INSSPIRE



@insspire_project



@Insspireproject