

REGREENING AFRICA QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER



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World Vision



2019 IN REVIEW: A TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE...



Participants at the project's third steering committee meeting



Written by May Muthuri

The last quarter of the year 2019 was a time to fine-tune scientific and implementation strands, and perfect the agenda of restoring degraded ecosystems across the eight countries where the [Regreening Africa project](#) is ongoing. Committed to restoring one million hectares and improving the resilience of 500,000 households across sub-Saharan Africa, it was time to pause and check the project's pulse rate.



Mark Schauer, Coordinator for the ELD Initiative's Secretariat at GIZ



Leigh Winowiecki, Soil Systems Scientist, ICRAF

There were some nail-biting moments among attendees during the 3rd Steering Committee meeting as the verdict on whether or not the initiative was moving in the right direction was going to be presented in 48 hours. It was held at the European Commission's conference room in Brussels, Belgium. Let's take a brief trip down memory lane...

It all started with the realization that there was a [missing middle](#) between global commitments and local action on land restoration, during the Beating Famine Conference in February 2019. Business as usual, where research and development normally took different paths, was not yielding the desired results. Conference participants therefore began asking the question: what was the step in the right direction?

The solution could be to combine research with development, hence making evidence-based decisions for the varied socio-economic and biophysical landscapes of eight countries. But then again, what does this entail?



Djalal Arinloye, ICRAF Representative Sahel/West and Central Africa Region, presenting the progress of the value chain component during the steering committee meeting in November 2019.

We are talking about multiple conversations with numerous actors, which in most cases, took place in different languages and dialects that were unique to each country. This ensured that the chosen options took into consideration the unique context within which agroforestry interventions could be implemented. In the field, **spaces** were created where farmers could propose local innovations that have worked for them over the years; after all, daily interaction with a challenging environment had forced them to be creative to ensure survival.

Incorporating scientific knowledge into their systems could enhance the restoration approaches that were being promoted. For example, in Niger and Rwanda, other restoration practices beyond FMNR, such as zaï pits and terraces, were added to the menu to enhance restoration impacts. The combination of such local experiences with scientific knowledge generated a **recipe** for sustainability and created a win-win situation for the project and its beneficiaries.

Behind desks and in sophisticated labs, scientists scrutinized data from way back and linked the **findings** to today's context. What could have caused the sorry state of desertification and degraded landscapes? Are there ways to overcome it? And if farmers have already been disappointed in the past with theories that were sold to them, why should they believe us now? Which incentives could be put in place to encourage farmers to switch to more sustainable farming practices such as agroforestry and FMNR?

These and other difficult questions triggered light bulb moments during which scientists, in collaboration with development NGOs and farmers, first identified hotspots of land degradation, then designed effective interventions to restore soil health, and tackle longstanding challenges of agricultural productivity and human nutrition, while countering the effects of climate change.

These were further reinforced through several workshops and training sessions on land degradation surveillance framework, value chain, grafting, tree nursery establishment and maintenance. Furthermore, the **Regreening Africa App**, a mobile-based application that helps the project with real-time monitoring of households and hectares reached through tree planting and FMNR, tree nurseries established, and training sessions conducted, was developed, translated into French and launched across the eight countries. We are super enthusiastic to see the data that will be coming from the field!



Mieke Bourne, ICRAF SHARED, presenting during the steering committee meeting in Brussels



Alex Mugayi, World Vision Rwanda Project Manager, receiving a certificate for outstanding performance in 2019

There is definitely a spring to the steps that were initially draggy as commitments are being made at community level. With leadership from village elders, Imams and/or priests, by-laws in place propose hefty fines for those who cut down trees or allow their livestock to graze freely. How effective will these by-laws be? We are keen to witness their impact on land restoration.

Within the project, links with stakeholders from different organizations have also been strengthened, coalitions established, and weaknesses and strengths of existing policies identified. Countries that have made progress on agroforestry policies and strategies include Rwanda, Ethiopia and Kenya. But did you know that Ghana has had an Agroforestry Strategy in place since 1986? As social and governance experts, led by the World Agroforestry (ICRAF), look at these policies through the research component, it will be interesting to see what impacts these have had on adoption of agroforestry.

At the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) Conference of Parties (COP) 14 held in New Delhi, India, Economics of Land Degradation (ELD) and ICRAF scientists came together to organize a successful side event dubbed *Halting Land Degradation by Scaling Up Proven and Cost Effective Land Management Practices*. The project was also at the forefront at the Global Landscapes Forum event in New York in September 2019, during the UN General Assembly, at a session dubbed, *Resetting the Restoration Agenda*.



Susan Chomba, Regreening Africa project manager, discussing the progress of the project with European Commission delegates during the steering committee meeting in November 2019.

Other outreach sessions took place at the World Congress on Agroforestry in Montpellier, France, Global Soils Week in Nairobi, Kenya, Global Landscapes Forum in Accra, Ghana, and the International Tree Fair in Burkina Faso.

The **Economics of Land Degradation**, which spearhead the projects' first component on strengthening the capacities of national governments and other partners to assess the costs and economic benefits of investments in sustainable land management, recently launched a **campus** meant to serve as a free knowledge platform for teachers and students, as well as a summer school, to create stronger restoration foundations for the future generations.

So, is the project on the right track? The Steering Committee, recognizing the tremendous efforts and significant accomplishments made in Year 2, as well as the synergies created among partners, seems to think so! The European Commission expressed their appreciation to the entire team, and special recognition, with awards, to Rwanda and Niger teams for their outstanding performance in implementing regreening activities.

Looking ahead, the European Green Deal coupled with the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration, and the ongoing Decade of Family Farming, just to name a few, will provide platforms for the project to springboard the great achievements in land restoration in the year 2020. You may need your sunglasses, as the future is promising to be bright and hopeful!



Hamed Constantin Tchibozo, Niger World Vision Project Manager receiving an award for outstanding performance in 2019

EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL IS... A BIG DEAL



Written by Patrick Worms

2020 presents vast opportunities, including the recently launched European Green Deal that strives to make EU climate-neutral by 2050!



While the call for a Green New Deal (GND) is a long way from becoming global policy, the European Green Deal is going to be European Policy. And, it's breathtakingly ambitious.

According to Mrs. von der Leyen, President of the European Union Commission, the goal is to be the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. "The Deal is Europe's new growth strategy, pushed by the Commission through research and blended finance," she noted.

The Commission hopes that this will mobilize a cool trillion euros over the next decade. There's something for everyone in there: emissions trading, renewable energy and a circular economy boost. However, for us, what matters most is the significant role that agroforestry will play in helping achieve the agenda for the green deal.

The comprehensive [plan](#) was released on 11th December 2019. It included proposals to "review all existing legislation affecting agriculture and forestry to ensure that they are in line with renewed climate and biodiversity ambitions". Expect your work to be rolled out across Brussels, as Exhibit A, of the Regreening for the Climate argument. The new European Parliament gets it already.



HIGHLIGHTS IN AUGUST



Farmers taking part in the nationwide tree planting campaign in Ethiopia



Moses Munjuga demonstrating collection of scions for grafting mango seedlings



Elated farmers from Bugesera, Rwanda, upon receiving avocado scion seedlings



Soccer tournament in Homa Bay County, Kenya to encourage youth to plant trees

Written by May Muthuri

In August, **Kenya** kicked off her activities with training workshops on tree nursery management and vegetative propagation. ICRAF staff shared information on how to set up and manage successful tree nurseries. Following the exercise, participants were optimistic about the future as you'll find out [here](#). The youth were especially encouraged to plant trees in their communities. Unfortunately, agriculture is associated with punishment in schools, but World Vision Kenya got creative by associating tree planting with soccer tournaments. It is high time youth got to know that 'dirt' is good!

In Ethiopia, a nationwide campaign to plant 200 million tree seedlings in one day was initiated by the country's Prime Minister, Abiy Ahmed, as part of a wider reforestation campaign dubbed "Green Legacy". Pretty ambitious, but 353,633,660 tree seedlings were planted in just 12 hours, according to [CNN Inside Africa](#). Talk about aiming for the moon and landing on the sun!

Teams from Catholic Relief Services and World Vision contributed to the campaign by supplying high quality tree seedlings and conducting training workshops and sensitization programs. Communities in project implementation sites were also mobilized to plant trees in private and communal lands. The project team also organized experience-sharing visits to foster cross-learning across different sites. The aim was to promote the adoption of agroforestry practices and home garden management of high-value trees at household level. Details of the 2019 highlights are available [here](#).



Farmer being interviewed by local radio station in Niger

HIGHLIGHTS IN SEPTEMBER

In September, all roads led to New Delhi, India, for the 14th Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 14) which focused on restoring land to sustain life. The Regreening Africa project organized a side event dubbed, *Halting Land Degradation by Scaling Up Proven and Cost Effective Land Management Practices*. This set the stage with experts from World Agroforestry, The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and Economics of Land Degradation (ELD), University of Leeds, Kenya's Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, Rwanda Natural Resources Authority and Senegal's Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development.

The **Rwanda** team, on the other hand, received 3,100 Fuerte and Hass avocado scion seedlings as part of the project's goal to transform avocado production in the country; majority of the nursery operators had no access to quality fruit scions. Next time you make a trip to Rwanda, specifically to Bugesera, Gatsibo, Kayanza and Nyagatare districts, you may be lucky enough to be served a scrumptious meal of cassava with some juicy avocado as an accompaniment. The team also participated at the World Bank Conference for Food Security. This event aimed at developing concrete methods of strengthening and accelerating support to food security programs in Africa, as well as promote climate adaptation through increased partnerships and coordination.

In **Niger**, the team prioritized training on grafting and tree nursery establishment in 17 villages. This was a huge success as summarized in their monthly [newsletter](#).

In **Mali**, training sessions on tree-based value chains such as Shea, moringa and baobab took centre stage. In addition, ICRAF's Monitoring and Evaluation team spearheaded uptake surveys in partnership with Oxfam, CRS, Sahel Eco and World Vision.

In **Somalia**, activities began with community mobilization and consultative meetings in a bid to break regreening barriers and brainstorm on locally suitable solutions to regreen 20,000 hectares. This was replicated across 27 sites in the country, and suitable tree species identified.

It was evident that land restoration will only happen if smallholder farmers buy into the idea that it is crucial for their livelihoods. COP 14 hosted nearly 6,000 participants from all over the world, and a [declaration](#) was adopted in which parties expressed commitment to a range of issues revolving around drawing life to land.



Happy farmer from Rwanda after receiving Gliricidia seedlings

HIGHLIGHTS IN OCTOBER



EU Climate Diplomacy Week in Ghana

Regreening Africa also participated in the Global Landscapes Forum which took place during the UN General Assembly. The event which was graced by 800 participants drew interest beyond the confines of the UN walls, as it emerged as the highest trending subject on Twitter, gaining over 175 million impressions in New York. Closer home, this translated to 9,661 impressions, 76 project mentions by various individuals and organizations, 20 new followers and 163 profile visits. What a way to crown the month! Missed it? Listen or read about it [here](#).

Puntland, a former conflict zone, is undergoing a slow but gradual renaissance through land restoration activities. All these aim to diversify income, ensure food security and create livelihood opportunities. Having experienced the perils of conflict and nature's unforgiving vengeance, the citizens of Puntland are keen to regain what they lost. Can the project play a key role here? There is only one way to find out. Click [here](#).

Highlights from other countries include the following:

- The team from **Ghana**, led by World Vision, took part in the **European Climate Diplomacy Week** where various events that foster dialogue and cooperation on climate change were held. The aim was to inspire further action on landscape restoration.
- **Ethiopia** held a National Oversight and Coordination Committee (NOCC) meeting and set targets for Year 3 of the project.
- **Mali** ran comparative trials and conducted household training sessions on grafting techniques.

In **Kenya**, the month began with EU's Climate Diplomacy Week. The project's contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and in particular SDG 15 which calls on the world to sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation and biodiversity loss, were highlighted.

In **Ethiopia**, the team participated in the Watershed and Agroforestry Platform Workshop, which was spearheaded by the **SHARED** team. An annual reflection and learning session was convened to plan for Year 3 activities.

In **Ghana**, the team was privileged to be part of the country's National Culture event which revolved around tree planting. They also participated in the **Global Landscapes Forum in Accra**, where they built on discussions that had been initiated in New York. It was evident that farmers have to be included at the design stage of each initiative to ensure adoption of new technologies.



Farmer seeking refuge from the scorching sun in Niger



Teams from World Vision and Catholic Relief Services in Ghana, participating in GLF Accra

Niger was part of the Degraded Lands Reclamation Week, a national event organized by the Ministry of Environment. More highlights on activities by the team can be accessed [here](#).

Rwanda launched its 4th National Oversight and Coordination Committee meeting to reflect on Year 2 of project implementation and plan for Year 3 activities. The Land Degradation Dynamics (LDD) team generated data on soil that will be used to inform activities in the country.

Somalia, on the other hand, welcomed teams from ICRAF. Field visits revealed that bare land can be transformed by planting trees and farmers were eager to learn more about this.

[Here's](#) a piece on *Gliricidia sepium* to close the month.

HIGHLIGHTS IN NOVEMBER



Besides the Steering Committee meeting, the project team participated in [EU's Info Point in Brussels](#), where they had the opportunity to share insights on links with the Great Green Wall Initiative which aims to restore degraded lands. Presentations were also made at the Global Restoration Platform meeting where examples of scalable and complementary monitoring methods to track restoration were discussed. Members of the project team also held a meeting with the Department for International Development (DFID) where they deliberated on the potential for further collaboration and funding.



Delegates from European Union in Rwanda pose for a photo with project staff and community members after a successful tree planting day spearheaded by the Commission

In **Ghana**, monitoring activities revolving around farmer-managed natural regeneration (FMNR) were carried out, as well as comparison trials and evaluation on shea, jujube, baobab and balanzan.

In **Mali**, training on the need to diversify tree species in the field and FMNR enhancement were carried out, while in **Niger**, scoping meetings with community radio stations were held to ensure that key messages are broadcasted far and wide. Sketches on FMNR, agroforestry value chains and gender involvement were also produced.

HIGHLIGHTS IN DECEMBER

Teams in **Rwanda** and **Mali** geared up for tree planting events organized by delegations to the European Union. In the same fora, advice on suitable next steps were shared. The Land Degradation Dynamics team was also busy, bringing together scientists and partners from Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, Cameroon and Mali to explore the value of data collected thus far using the Land Degradation Surveillance Framework.

In **Niger**, Basic Land Commissions (COFOBs) were set up as avenues to prevent conflict on land ownership. Thirteen (13) COFOBs were established and training workshops organized on conflict prevention and transaction



Farmer poses for a photo besides a jackalberry, in Mali



Regreening Africa project staff from Mali, Niger and Senegal pose for a photo during the land degradation surveillance framework training

deed procedures. Each group's leadership committee comprises a president (village chief), secretary, farmers, pastoralists, youth and women representatives, and an Imam.

Somalia, once again, welcomed the Monitoring and Evaluation team to carry out uptake surveys. They also conducted training sessions on data collection for teams from Puntland and Somaliland.



Judith Oduol, Agricultural Economist at ICRAF, conducting a training session on data collection in Puntland

KNOW THEIR STORIES...



10 lead farmers from Homa Bay County, Kenya, tell transformative stories through their own lenses. How? [Watch](#) to learn more...



Farmers in Niger are determined to regreen the country despite very challenging conditions. Neither their spirits nor the seedlings have withered... Click [here](#) to watch.

WHO TALKED ABOUT US?



COP 14 DAY 1: SETTING THE TONE TO ACHIEVE LAND DEGRADATION NEUTRALITY TARGETS.

[Click here](#)



AS AGRICULTURE RESURGES IN SOMALIA, CGIAR CENTRES, GOVERNMENT, FAO AND DONORS PLAN TO HELP IT THRIVE

[Click here](#)



SCIENCE FOR RESTORATION OF DEGRADED LAND

[Click here](#)



WHEN WE PROTECT NATURE, NATURE PROTECTS US

[Click here](#)



PRAGMATICS TAKE PRECEDENCE IN SCIENTIFIC APPROACH TO LANDSCAPE RESTORATION

[Click here](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS



PROJECT MINI WORKSHOP

20 - 24th January 2020

World Agroforestry (ICRAF), Nairobi Kenya



PROJECT VALUE CHAINS WRITESHOP

10 - 13th February 2020

Nyeri Kenya



FMNR CONFERENCE

May 2020

Nairobi Kenya



BMZ/ ELD WORKSHOP (TBC)

June 2020



EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENT DAYS

9 - 10th June 2020

Tour & Taxis, Brussels, Belgium

[Learn more and register here](#)



NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS CONFERENCE

7 - 9th July 2020

University of Oxford, UK

[Learn more and register here](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS



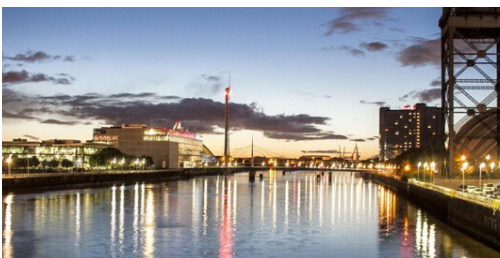
FTA SCIENCE CONFERENCE

15 - 17th September 2020
World Agroforestry (ICRAF), Kenya
[Learn more and register here](#)



2020 UN BIODIVERSITY CONFERENCE

5 - 10th October 2020
Kunming, Yunnan, China
[Learn more and register here](#)



2020 UN CLIMATE CHANGE CONFERENCE (UNFCCC COP 26)

9 - 20th November 2020
Glasgow, Scotland, UK
[Learn more and register here](#)

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