



oting weeds at the RRC in Gatsibo District in Rw

Regreening Africa Joint Reflective Learning Missions 2020

Country field visits and virtual events to reflect on evidence and experience for joint annual planning

Summary by C. Neely and M. Bourne



Introduction

Funded by the European Union (EU), Regreening Africa is an ambitious five-year project that intends to reverse land degradation among 500,000 households, across one million hectares in eight countries by incorporating trees into agricultural and pastoral landscapes. After three years of implementation and in the midst of the COVID 19 pandemic, face-to-face and virtual joint reflection and learning events were designed using the Stakeholder Approach to Risk Informed and Evidence Based Decision Making (SHARED, See Box 1) method.

The purpose of the Joint Reflective Learning Missions (JRLMs) was to create an innovative monitoring, reflection and learning opportunity between implementing Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), World Agroforestry (ICRAF) scientists, partners engaged in oversight at the national level and community members.

The reflective missions provided the opportunity to jointly query and learn from one another's evidence and experience, build upon project momentum and consider revised implementation approaches and focus.

> Image Below: An FMNR farmer, David, tending to his crops in Ghana. Photo: Abena Agyei-Boateng, World Vision Ghana.



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The objectives of the JRLMs that took place in August and September 2020 included:

Agree upon the next steps

> Agree upon improvements that can be made to the 2020-2021 work plan

Image Belo grafting tree seedlings Photo: Charles Odhian

Carry out country field site visits (as allowed based on COVID 19 restrictions)

Consider

activities that

scale and ensure sustainability

beyond the life of

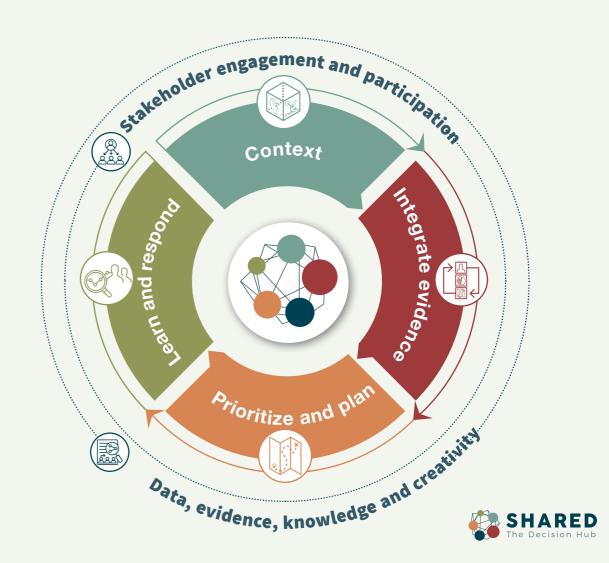
the project

To review and reflect upon findings from implementing partners and field visits

Review, reflect and integrate findings from the ICRAF technical component teams into the next planning cycle and subsequent project implementation

Discuss leverage, behaviour change and policy influence

Box 1. The SHARED Decision Hub



The JRLMs were designed using the SHARED method, which is a key component in the project with a focus on crosslearning, wider practice and policy influence and tracking. Key elements of the SHARED method include:

- a people centred and demand driven process;
- space for addressing power asymmetries, building trust and collaboration;
- deliberative dialogue and communication, co-learning, and negotiation;
- brokered knowledge exchange, recognising different knowledge sources;
- a systems approach that appreciates complexity and inter-relationship;
- addressing root causes and behavioural drivers; and
- enhanced decision making capacities for transformative change.



• tailored and rigorous cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder engagement structure and



Process

The 2020 JRLMs consisted of two parts:

Field visits

Virtual national/global events

Country teams and National Oversight and Coordination Committee (NOCC) members carried out field visits to project locations in order to monitor and reflect upon the implementation process and progress, understand key challenges and to identify what practices or catalytic actions could be further developed to increase scaling to meet project goals. These field visits were followed by virtually facilitated events focused on the remaining objectives.

The field visits provided critical insights from the farmer leaders and project implementors to positively influence uptake by women and men related to:

Field Interactions

The on-farm field visits and facilitated interactions were guided by the lead implementing partner in close collaboration with other implementing partners in each country to enable dialogue between implementers, NOCC members, local field staff and farmers/community members. A JRLM Year 3 guide (see Annex 1) outlined the purpose and process of the field visits. The purpose of the field visits were to better understand the challenges and opportunities facing farmers and implementing partners in order to discuss and co-design strategies to reach project targets. Technical experts and scientists came to the field prepared to not only ask questions but to share their expertise, which can be valuable to the farmers. Engagement strategies were considered to foster productive discussions.

The availability and need for tree nurseries and sources of quality seeds and seedlings, particularly indigenous species

Tree species that work best in their contexts and their desired benefits and return on investment

Photos: Photos of field visits in different Regreening Africa Countries (Left) Mali, Mohamed Dicko (Right) Somaliland, Aadan Maxamed Caqli

The integration of native and nonnative species into value chains and markets

The maintenance of trees once established given local conditions

> In most countries, good mobilization efforts, women inclusion, passionate youth, support from communities and local authorities and good relationships among the partners was evident.

Each of these experiential elements fed into the evidence interactions which are discussed in the next section.

Photos: (Top Left) Ethiopia, Eyob Getahun (Top Right) Senegal, Joseph Bidiar (Bottom Left) Niger, Hamadou Halidou (Bottom Right) Kenya, Charles Odhiambo





The multiple dimensions of capacity development that are needed to ensure success and going to scale

•• Trees are like children, when they are small you nurse and protect them, but when they grow, everyone benefits.

Safora Abdulai, lead farmer, Garu District, Ghana





To jointly review the country teams' progress and field visit results, as well as the findings of the World Agroforestry components, the SHARED team designed country focused virtual events bringing the broader range of stakeholders together who could not travel due to COVID 19. These events were carried out using Zoom, a Miro web-based whiteboard, and for Senegal, Mali and Niger simultaneous interpretation. Dates and participant numbers in each of the virtual events are shown in Table 1.

Dates of country virtual JRLM events, participants and presence of NOCC and EU members. Ethiopia Mali 18 August 2020 7 September 2020 32 Participants 31 Participants EU Delegation engagement NOCC engagement NOCC engagement Senegal Somalia 4 August 2020 31 Participants 31 August 2020 32 Participants NOCC engagement EU Delegation engagement Ghana NOCC engagement 14 August 2020 Kenya 37 Participants EU Delegation 31 August 2020 NOCC engagement ngagement 27 Participants Niger Rwanda 6 August 2020 31 July 2020 31 Participants 31 Participants NOCC engagement NOCC engagement



Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) showed uptake survey results where these were available (Rwanda and Kenya) and baseline results from Somaliland and Puntland. For the remaining countries, projected farm income results combined with tree species diversity and composition data were presented to prompt discussion on species, density, value chains and income.



Land Degradation Dynamics (LDD) presented the results from the Regreening Africa App in the country, including tree species planted and regenerated, also the location of planting and survival rates. In countries where the App had been used extensively the data was overlaid with land health information showing the opportunity to learn more from the data.



Design and Technical support to project implementation (DTI) shared a summary of the support provided, value chains of interest and options, information on tree nurseries from the App, including species. Also, the seedling production and opportunities for improvement based on the App data.



SHARED presented the outcome mapping results so far to lead a conversation on wider practice and policy, where more effort is needed and where outcome mapping needed to be updated. The country teams also shared information on their policy engagements. Decision dashboards were discussed for five countries with agreement to review prototypes before the end of the year.



Communications outlined the objectives of communications, summarised the country efforts in terms of visibility and behaviour change, including statistics on reach, as well as outlining the next steps.



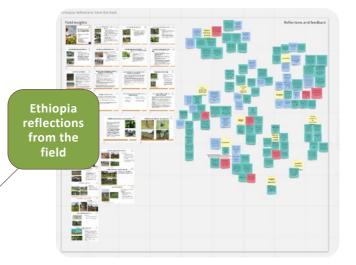
Miro Evidence and Interaction Board from the Ethiopia virtual JRLM

Key elements of the board

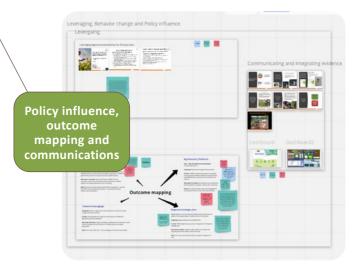


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Virtual Events









In this section, we summarize broadly the cross-country results related to achieving the country targets and key aspects of the projects that were highlighted as successes, challenges and priorities for further attention. Detailed reports resulting from each country JRLM were developed and can be made available upon request.

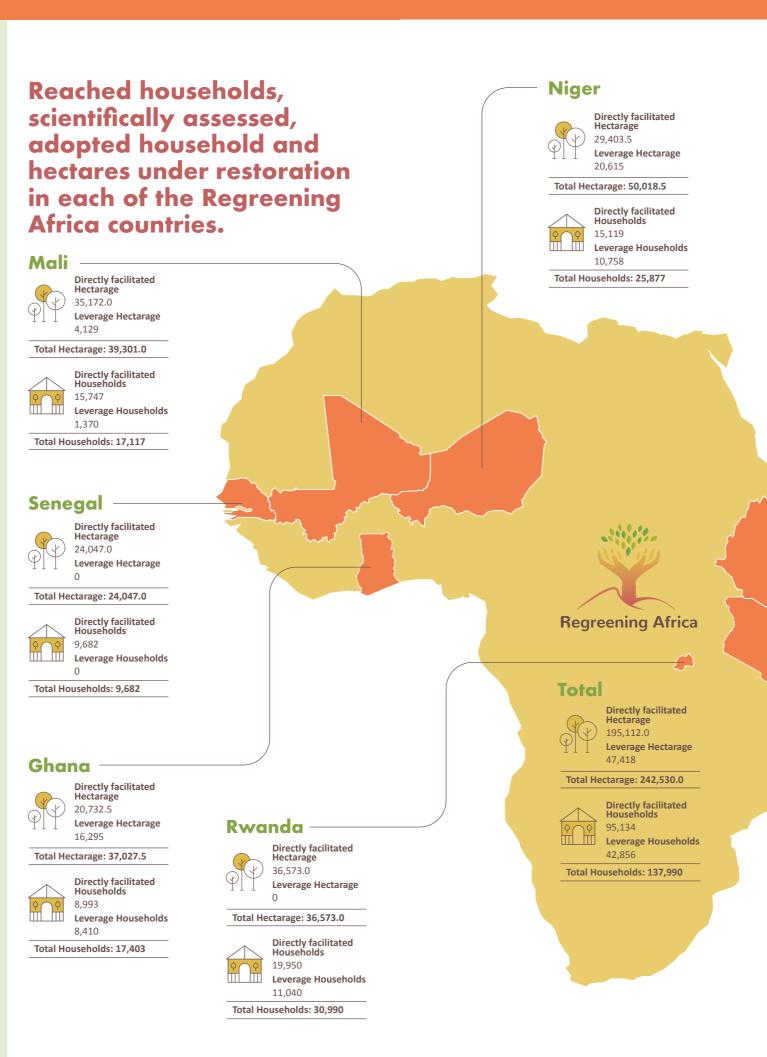
Across the program, success that emerged included:

- A Excellent mobilisation of lead farmers and farmer groups in all countries and uptake of FMNR, tree planting, soil and water conservation techniques, grazing land management methods, energy saving stoves, enclosures in Ethiopia, etc.;
- B Increased levels of inclusive participation as a result of an intentional focus on women and youth;
- **c** Scaling models (how to reach more farmers) are becoming clear across the eight countries;
- Great engagement with local and national government for scaling;
- An increased global profile of the program as a game changer in Africa with evidence based decision making; and
- **F** Good use of the Regreening Africa App which will provide more credible ways for verifying our targets.

Challenges that were highlighted included:

- A Insecurity: Somalia, Niger, Mali;
- B Insufficient budget to meet the ambitious targets (all countries)—late onset of the project— even more pronounced in Somalia;
- **c** COVID 19—all countries (interrupted field-based activities, travel and monitoring of activities); and
- P Factors determining the adoption of restoration practices are complex—some require long-term engagement to overcome (e.g. policies on land and tree tenure) and complex behaviour change (e.g. around free livestock grazing in arid and semi-arid areas) and economic drivers e.g. poverty; and e) fragmentation and lack of coordination of nationally led mechanisms such as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and AFR100, which strains the lean project team in coordination and mainstreaming our efforts.

As the project moves into Year 4, an important dimension was to understand the progress of each country towards its regreening target households and hectares within the broader project target of 500,000 households and 1,000,000 hectares (see Table 2 for summary). Progress against the household targets ranged from 23%-62% and against the hectare targets ranged from 4%-61%.



Regreening Afric



Directly facilitated Hectarage 32,131.0 Leverage Hectarage 800





Directly facilitated Households 13,740 Leverage Households 500

Total Households: 14,240





Directly facilitated Hectarage 878.0 Leverage Hectarage 980

Total Hectarage: 1,858.0



Directly facilitated Households 1,937 Leverage Households 460

Total Households: 2,397

Puntland



Directly facilitated Hectarage 1,645.0 Leverage Hectarage

Total Hectarage: 1,645.0



Directly facilitated Households 1,416 Leverage Households 1,000

Total Households: 2,416

Kenya



Directly facilitated Hectarage 14,530.0 Leverage Hectarage 4,599

Total Hectarage: 19,129.0



Directly facilitated Households 8,550 Leverage Households 9,318

Total Households: 17,868





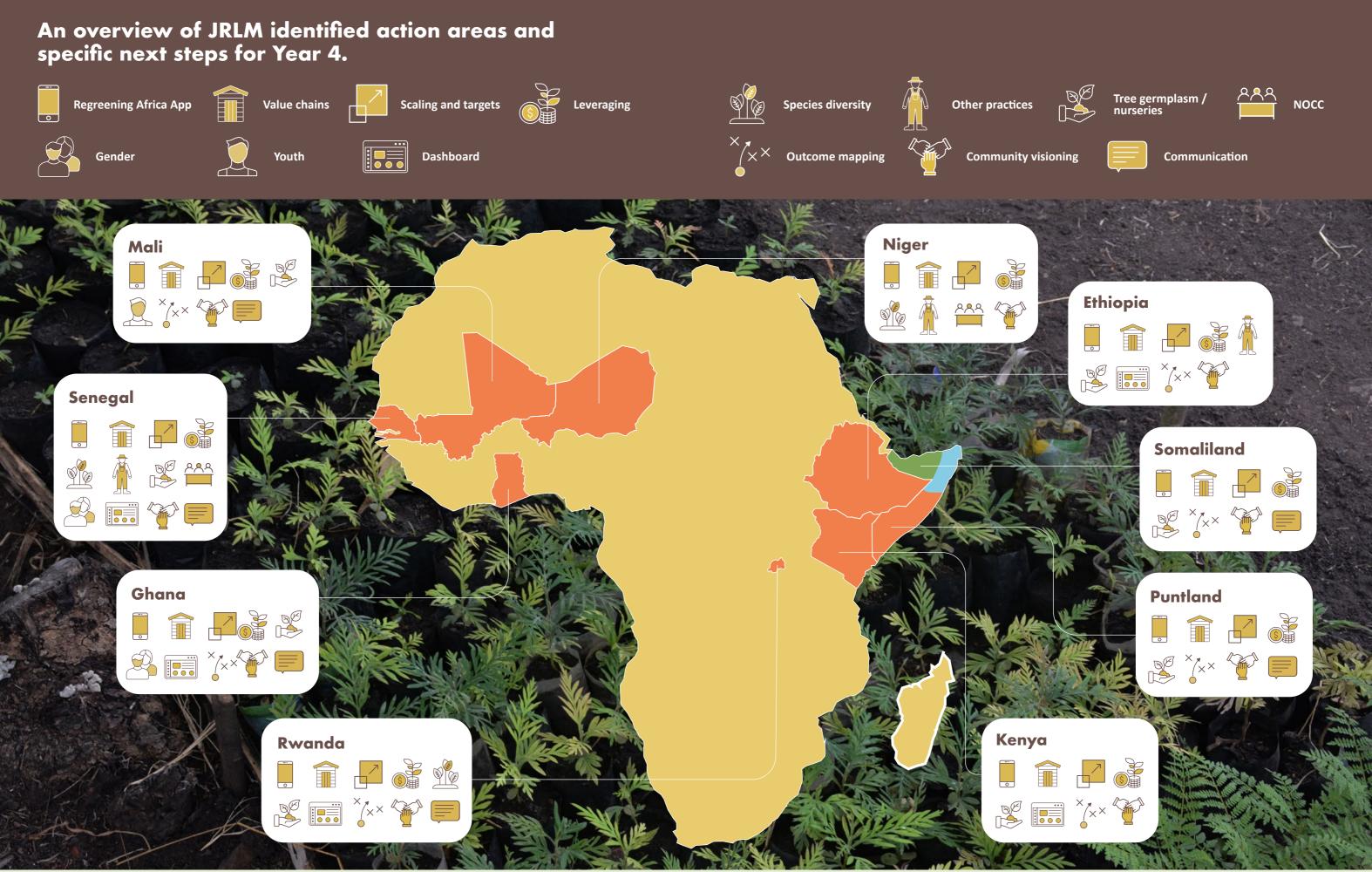














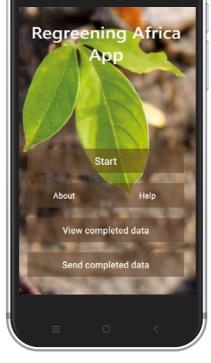


Image Above: Moses Munjuga demonstrating collection of scions for grafting mango seedlings. Photo: Agnes Gachuiri, World Agroforestry

Reflections on key focus areas for year 4, two main elements of the Regreening Africa project were highlighted as needing immediate attention in all countries. These included:

- The harmonization of approaches to monitoring data to ensure the robust measurement of outputs toward the targets; and
- Development of viable value chains that can help support land restoration.

In terms of activity monitoring, the project is supported through the Regreening Africa App - a mobile-based android application that helps users to collect information on how farmers are planting, managing and protecting trees on their farms, nursery management and related trainings (click here to download the App). The App serves as a complementary tool to household uptake surveys that are carried out in 3 countries. Follow up discussions among the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning team and the Land Degradation Dynamics team will take place to ensure that their efforts are complimentary.



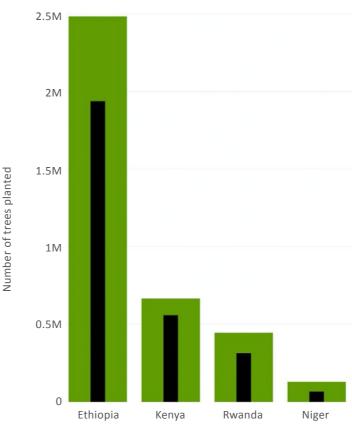


Figure 1: Uptake of the Regreening Africa App among project partners in 2020. The app is also being used by scientists, extension agents, lead farmers and nursery managers.

There was increased appreciation by all implementing partners on the role of tree-based value chains in making restoration more beneficial to communities and thereby helping contribute to overall project sustainability. A number of local actors involving public, private and community based organizations have shown willingness to engage in value chain based approaches to better utilize and invest in tree production activities. Prioritization of viable options across all countries has mostly helped primary actors such as producers, cooperatives, women groups and local traders better understand challenges and opportunities to developing successful enterprises.

There is need to focus efforts on helping improve production volumes from limited local resources while raising producer appreciation of marketing opportunities and business orientation skills. In the past most products have been used to serve predominantly domestic household uses with little sale value. Prioritization work has shown a preference for developing short term value chain options such as fruits (Ziziphus, Balanites, mango, cactus), nuts (shea, Parkia, Balanites) and leaves (Moringa, Rhamnus/gesho).

Production of fuelwood, poles and timber products is also highly demanded in countries like Ghana, Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Kenya which have large rural populations and acute shortages of construction materials. In Year 4, the



			Number of trees planted
			Number of trees survived
-			
Ghana	Mali	Senegal	Somalia

project will focus more on supporting producer groups market linkages as well as product refinement to increase market attractiveness. Already, work in Mali and Ethiopia has shown great progress in shea, honey, and bamboo furniture production where the establishment of local product sales outlets in collaboration with local actors is underway.

As the project moves into its fourth year, the Project Management Unit and the SHARED team introduced the option of integrating community vision mapping for sustainability effort. The objectives of the community vision mapping efforts are to:

Create opportunities for longer term thinking in the communities:

- Identify key interventions for the final years of the project to support sustained efforts after closure; and
- Identify how other partners can support the community to achieve their vision. The discussion centred around if and how this has been done by the implementing partners in the countries and how useful it would be as part of an exit strategy for the project. This approach will be further developed and piloted in Year 4.





Image Above: Farmers and field staff engage in discussions during a quarterly review meeting to assess lessons, successes, challenges and next steps. Photo: Abena Agyei-Boateng, World Vision Ghana

Participatory Evaluation

The SHARED team carried out a participatory evaluation of the JRLMs to understand what worked well and what worked less well with respect to both the in-country field visits and the virtual event. The responses to key questions are shown below. In general respondents (n=18) found the overall JRLM to be good or very good (94%), the field trips to be good or very good (86%) and 82% found the online format to be satisfactory.

When asked whether physical or virtual JRLMs were preferred, the majority chose the physical events (47%) versus 12% that chose the virtual events, while 41% chose both (Figure 2). Some 82% of respondents felt that the online format was satisfactory and could be used next year if travel is still influenced by COVID 19; however, the teams did feel that having an ICRAF presence on the field trip was still important.

Some suggested ways in which the JRLM could be improved included:

- Dividing the session into two with clear breaks (as most of the virtual events were five hours in length),
- Ensuring that key questions are answered during
 - the event rather than at smaller follow up meetings, where possible, and

interventions.

Ensuring government authorities had time to make

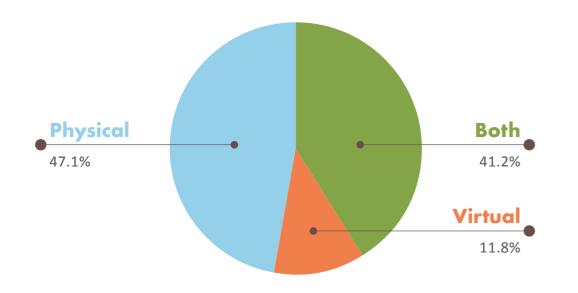


Figure 2: Participant preferred format for JRLM events.

The respondents rated the Evidence and Interaction Wall (Miro) as good and very good, 50% and 29%, respectively (see Figure 3). Specific comments related to the Evidence and Interaction Wall ranged from its value in terms of

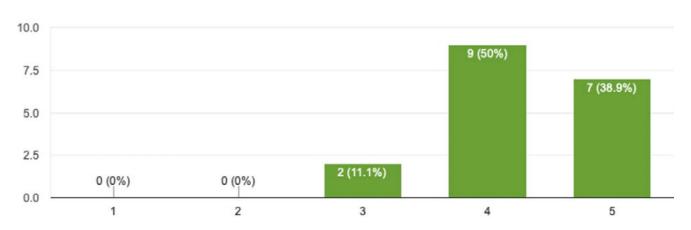


Figure 3: Respondent ratings of the use of the Evidence and Interaction Wall for evidence exchange.

Reflecting on their main learnings and changes for Year 4, people noted the need for a greater role for the NOCC, inclusion of new practices such as direct sowing, greater use of the App, cross-learning visits between communities, greater focus on value chains and engaging the private sector as well as including interaction with other projects. Strengthening communication and enhancing effort in areas with low adoption were also mentioned.



Image Above: Elizabeth, a lead farmer from Ghana watering her tree seedlings.



organization and communication to a desire to make it more participatory such that JRLM participants can also edit the Wall - adding sticky notes directly to it.

The main areas recognised for support in Year 4 were monitoring of leveraging adoption, App use, value chains – including connection with the private sector and germplasm access.





Method and Toolkit to carry out a Joint Reflection and Learning Mission

The purpose of this document is to provide a guide to carrying out a Joint Reflection and Learning Mission (JRLM) for the Regreening Africa Project. The document builds upon the feedback provided following the JRLMs held in 2019 and provides a suggested schedule, guidelines, meeting agenda and templates for documentation and reporting. It also takes into consideration the unique challenges and opportunities presented by COVID 19 and makes room for flexibility and adjustment of schedules as per the situation in each country.

Purpose of the JRLM:

To consolidate findings across Country Project Teams and ICRAF, reflect and learn to inform improvements to the 2020-2021 Work Plan.

Field Visit (Two-four days depending on

depending on each country's size and logistics)

Overall Process

The JRLM will consist of two-four days of participatory field work where this is possible and a ½ day of virtual interactive discussions on evidence and experience per country.

Purpose. The purpose of the field visit is to better understand the challenges and opportunities facing farmers and implementing partners in order to discuss and co-design strategies to reach project targets. Scientists and technical experts will come prepared to share expertise that can be valuable to the farmers, taking into account engagement strategies to foster productive discussions. The field visit should elucidate what is working, what is not working and how the country team can increase farmers' adoption of regreening practices (which regreening practices are farmers most interested in and why, which tree species are farmers most interested in and why, what scaling model is working best to reach more farmers, etc).

Participants in the Field Visit

It is important that key project stakeholders take part in the field visit where government regulations on travel during COVID 19 allows. These include all implementing partners, ICRAF country representative(s), NOCC members, EU delegation and farmers.

The local leaders (district/County/ Woreda/region official) should be informed before the field trip and invited to the field if they have their own means of transport, rather than having a courtesy call. This will help turn them into champions of regreening work in their jurisdictions and overcome challenges related to the time needed for courtesy calls reported during the JRLMs in 2019.

Where possible, other key partners from leveraging sites can be invited, including from within the NGO implementing organisations. If key partners are not able to join you in the field, it would be valuable to meet them after the field visit and provide an update.

All planning and communication about the field visit should be done in good time to ensure full participation for project team members



Timeframe and Sites

The field visit is suggested to take place over two-four days depending on the sites to be covered and travel distances. The sites should be chosen to reflect those that are progressing well and those for which the progress is lagging behind. It will also be important to visit a leverage site(s) and include sites from all implementing partners.

Approach for Field Visit

These notes below on approach arose from the JRLM feedback in Year 2.

Prepare a plan for the field visit early and share with all partners.

Before going to the field have a small meeting with all members of the team to explain where you are going and what will be seen and agree on various talking points or areas for discussion. Each person should be asked to fill a template (see next page) to capture feedback.

If the team reaches the field in a convoy of large cars, it may be valuable to park some ways away and walk to the farmers instead of driving up to them. This will prevent a grand entrance and help the team be more on the farmers' level.

Providing an inclusive space for farmers - women and men

 to share their insights and questions or demonstrate their land restoration options will be important.

The approach in the field should be farmer-centred. The visiting team may develop some guiding questions together prior to going to the field. It is important to meet male and female farmers separately and in groups (balanced between well performing and low performing) to have an in-depth discussion, including observing the activities implemented and soliciting perceptions on technologies/practices introduced so far; challenges being faced, and farmer-driven proposed solutions.





Questions for field visits

Some indicative questions for the field are outlined below. Please print these questions and circulate a sheet to each field participant. To make the discussions orderly and to ensure that discussions are not dominated by a few people in the field, you might want to assign different questions to different people. Everyone must familiarise themselves with the questions they are assigned to ensure they are not reading them out but that the discussions are flowing in a natural manner as far as possible.





Key Practices

What regreening/land restoration practices are farmers taking up (e.g., tree species planted or FMNR activities and where, associated land management (soil, water, etc.) practices)?

What are the farmers interested in or enthusiastic about for restoring degraded lands and why?

What are the perceived benefits of the ongoing regreening efforts – for the household (may be different for men, women and youth), community, environment?

Besides the practices being promoted by the project, what other regreening/land restoration practices would farmers like to implement?

Products and Marketing
What are the key products

that can be processed and

marketed in the different

What are the key barriers

profitable and sustainable

markets for these products?

Which of the barriers is the

project addressing (or could

address) through the value

chain component?

to the development of

sites?

Gender and Youth Dimension

What has been the role of women in regreening/restoration efforts (e.g., planning, tree planting/ management, FMNR, etc.)?

What kind of barriers prevent women from engaging in regreening/ land restoration in the sites visited?

What has been the role of youth in regreening efforts (e.g., planning, tree planting/management, FMNR, etc.)?

What kind of barriers prevent youth from engaging in regreening/land restoration in the sites visited?

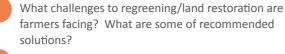
Training and Knowledge Sharing

Which training approaches have the farmers most enjoyed and why? Which knowledge sharing events and techniques have been most useful?

What additional trainings would they like to receive that can support their regreening/restoration efforts?

Have the farmers shared any of the received trainings with family members or other community members? If no, why not? If yes, what did they share and with whom?

Which trainings and knowledge transfer have worked best for the farmers? What has been the greatest learning from the trainings? p p o o (' ' V V F F c c a a t t



Challenges Faced

What is the level of awareness of land degradation?

What are the main causes of land degradation based on farmers' knowledge?

What are the perceptions on the number of trees in the local area, are there enough? What is missing in their view?



Messaging and Influence

- What have the project staff and community found to be the most effective messaging approach (by them and by the trainers/ technical staff)?
- Has the Regreening Africa project influenced other projects/ investments in the country? If yes, which ones and how?
- All participants should try the Regreening Africa App in the field.
- Field visit template (one template per person per site visit then combined into one for the report by the project manager of the lead implementing partner and reviewed by the ICRAF country coordinator)—please print enough copies of these two pages to be handed out to each person going to the field.

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Country	Write a response to each row below
Date of field visit	
Your name	
Your organisation	
Name of site (Please indicate if it is a direct intervention or leverage site)	
Observations and discussion around	
successful regreening practices observed (summarise)	
Observations and discussion around challenges to regreening observed (summarise)	
Observations and discussion around value and method of training (summarise)	
Observations and discussion around tree products, markets and value chains (summarise)	
Observations and discussion around gender (youth, women and other groups) inclusion (summarise)	
What are 2-3 important quotes from the field including from farmers? (please write full quote and the name of person it is from)	
Comments on the	

Photographs

Each country team should also share at least 10 of the best photos from the field trip with captions. Great photos capture people in action rather than standing or posing and capture an outstanding image of a practice or product. Photos of farmers (women and men) with a smile or carrying out an activity are very powerful.

Photos of government officials engaged with farmers or project officers, or EU delegates in action/discussions are useful. Think about what message you want to send out with the photos. Ensure there are good cameras (phones with good cameras) and designate someone to take photos so that the rest of the team is not distracted and continues to focus on the field visit.



Interactive virtual webinar (via Zoom)

Participants: All those who took part in the field visits, partners' head quarter (HQ) representatives (e.g., World Vision Australia representative, CARE Netherlands representative, Oxfam GB representative, CRS US representative), EU Delegation and NOCC representatives, ICRAF component leaders in HQ, country representatives and project management units.

Purpose: The purpose of the virtual interactive meeting is to:

Review and summarize the observations from the field visit:

Review different evidence sources generated in the project (LDD, gender, value chains, MEL, data collected from implementing partners);

- Review monitoring, evaluation and learning approach;
- D Review and enhance the leveraged scaling approach;
- Review and advance policy engagement efforts;

Discuss budgets and financial reports; and

G Discuss the way forward and inform needed improvements and activities to be included in the 2020-2021 Work Plan.

Time Frame: For JRLM Webinars with Country Teams (Very late July - Early August). Each JRLM Country Call will be three hours and proposed dates will be shared.

Approach: The virtual event will be facilitated by the SHARED team through innovative online platforms including Zoom, Prezi and Mentimeter (instructions will be provided prior to the calls).

Proposed agenda for the

meeting: (please note that this is a draft that is likely to change with time)

Time (East Africa Time) Session outline 14.15 - 14.30 Everyone coming online 14.30 - 14.45 Introductions Opening Remarks Outline Agenda Logistics of Call Review Expected Objectives and Outputs 14.45 - 15.35 Reflections from the field and what needs to be strengthened. Update from field, focused on the implications. • To be presented by the project manager from the lead organization on behalf of the whole country team (10 minutes with additions from the team for 5 minutes). • ICRAF country coordinator to provide additional observations and comments by components (15 minutes). • Discussion on what is working, what needs to be strengthened and included in Year 4 (15 minutes). Introduction to the community visioning proposal for sustainability (5 minutes). 2-minute stretch 15.37 - 16.25 • Component data integration, interpretation, and reflections on what this data means for Year 4 planning. Virtual data wall on baseline/uptake surveys, LDD and Regreening Africa App, and DTI (20 minutes). Reflections from Project Teams (15). Discussion on what is working, what needs to be strengthened and included in Year 4 (8 minutes)? 16.30 - 16.55 Leveraging, behaviour change and policy Influence. Review leveraging strategy and progress, outcome mapping, dashboard, and policy engagement as well as what must be considered for Year 4 (25 minutes). 16.55 - 17.10 Brainstorm on scaling (15 minutes).

ICRAF will have a team to capture this information during the call.

Session	Summary notes
Country	
Date	
Present at the meeting	(can be a list of na copy of the particip
Reflections from the field	Presentation
and what needs to be strengthened	Discussion
sirengmened	Agreed points for i
Common and share	Presentation
Component data integration, interpretation and reflections	Discussion
and reflections	Agreed points for i
	Presentation
Leveraging, behaviour change and policy influence	Discussion
Influence	Agreed points for i
B	
Brainstorm	
Summary and next steps	

17.10 - 17.25

Summary of Next Steps.

17.25 - 17.30

Next Steps and Closing Remarks.



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inclusion in Year 4

inclusion in Year 4

inclusion in Year 4











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