



Regreening Africa



# OUTCOME STORY FOR GHANA

## The Mion Bylaws on Environment



### Summary of the change

The Mion District Assembly was established in 2012 with the vision of maintaining a clean and environmentally friendly district where both women and men have access to quality and sustainable health services, education, economic resources, and the right to participate in decision-making processes. To achieve that vision, the Mion District Assembly developed the Mion bylaws, which address environmental concerns in the district. These bylaws, consisting of twenty-eight sections, were adopted and officially published in the Local Government Bulletin on Friday, 1<sup>st</sup> November 2019, covering issues such as Environmental Health and Development Control. Despite the existence of these bylaws, human activities in the district continued to contribute to environmental degradation. To combat this, the Mion District Assembly, with the support of Catholic Relief Services (CRS) through the Regreening Africa programme<sup>i</sup>, initiated inclusive platforms for the development and promotion of sustainable environmental management in the district. As a result, the Mion District Environmental Management Committee was formed to implement and enforce the environmental bylaws, focusing on three major sections of the Mion bylaws:

1. the control of forest and tree cutting, section two;
2. the control of charcoal processing, section six; and
3. the bush fire management, section thirteen.

<sup>i</sup> Regreening Africa is an ambitious five and a half year (2017-2023) programme supported by the European Union. Implemented by World Agroforestry (ICRAF) and a consortium of organisations including World Vision, Catholic Relief Services, Oxfam, Care and Sahel Eco, the programme aims to reverse land degradation among 500,000 households across 1 million hectares in eight Sub-Saharan African countries. By integrating trees into croplands, communal lands, and pastoral areas, Regreening Africa seeks to improve smallholder livelihoods, food security and resilience to climate change. The programme leverages science and research to measure impact, enhance social inclusion and livelihood efforts, and creates a sustainable enabling policy environment for land restoration at national and sub-national levels.





## Context

The Mion District Environmental Management Committee oversees the implementation and enforcement of environmental bylaws in the district. The formation of the committee was a key ambition for CRS under the Regreening Africa programme. The committee not only contributes to scaling up restoration technologies and practices but also ensures sustainability, making it a major contribution to sustainable land management.

The committee has the following key responsibilities:

- **Advising the Mion District Assembly:** The committee provides guidance to the Mion District Assembly on environmental regulations and policies. They offer recommendations on addressing pressing environmental issues within the district.
- **Coordinating Activities and Communication:** The committee acts as a central coordinating body, facilitating communication between the Mion District Assembly and various environmental management entities, including government agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). This ensures collaboration and synergy among different stakeholders working towards environmental sustainability in the district.
- **Regulatory Body:** The committee serves as a regulatory body for the implementation and enforcement of the district's environmental bylaws. They monitor compliance with these bylaws and take appropriate measures to ensure their effective implementation.



## Description of the outcome process

The Mion District Environmental Management Committee was established through consultative and inclusive stakeholder engagement processes (Regreening Africa, 2022). These processes aimed to involve a wide range of stakeholders, including community members, governmental agencies, NGOs, and other relevant organisations. The committee was officially launched by the Mion District Assembly on Tuesday, 8th June 2021 and it is formally recognised by the assembly as a governing body responsible for promoting and regulating the sustainable use of environmental resources in the district.

The committee holds regular meetings to discuss and address key environmental issues. These meetings serve as platforms for collaborative decision-making, problem-solving, and planning of environmental management initiatives. By addressing pressing concerns and taking appropriate actions, the committee aims to contribute to the restoration and sustainable management of the district's environment.

The Committee members include the following:

- District Coordinating Director-Mion District Assembly (Chairman)
- Planning Officer-Mion District Assembly (Secretary)
- District Director- Department of Agriculture
- Yendi District Manager-Forestry Commission
- Yendi Municipal Fire Commander-Ghana National Fire Service
- The Regional Director-Environmental Protection Agency
- The Presiding Member-Mion District Assembly
- Chief Iddrisu Mahama- Traditional Authority
- District Coordinator-National Disaster Management Organization (NADMO)
- Agriculture sub-committee chairman- Mion District Assembly
- District Director-Environmental Health and Sanitation-Mion District Assembly
- Information Officer-Mion District Assembly
- Regreening Africa Programme Coordinator-CRS-Ghana



## Significance of the outcome

The Mion bylaws play a crucial role in regulating activities that impact the environment in the Mion District, such as tree cutting, charcoal production, and bush fires. The committee's implementation of these bylaws is essential for protecting natural resources from unsustainable exploitation. The bylaws specifically address three areas of environmental management.

### Tree cutting:

1. Cutting trees without an assembly permit is prohibited;
2. Assembly permits provide guidelines and modalities for authorised tree cutting;
3. Violating these regulations can result in a fine of 200 penalty units, six months imprisonment, or both.

### Charcoal manufacturing:

1. Individuals must obtain permission or a permit from the Mion District Assembly for charcoal production and sale;
2. Selling charcoal without an assembly permit is considered an offence;
3. Vehicles or machinery used for transporting charcoal without an assembly permit can be seized;
4. Violators may face a fine of 150 penalty units, three months imprisonment, or both.

### Bush burning:

1. Initiating fires for hunting purposes is punishable by a fine of 54 penalty units, six months imprisonment, or both.
2. The same penalties apply to individuals found near a bush fire or those who fail to report the perpetrators to the assembly bushfire control sub-committee or the police.

The formulation of these district environmental bylaws is important. However, the challenge lies in their implementation. To address this, the Regreening Africa programme, through CRS, plays a vital role in sensitising the Mion District community about the bylaws and the penalties for violations. As a result, the Mion community, especially farmers, benefit from the protection of the natural environment.

The full implementation of these bylaws will continue to catalyse regreening efforts in the Mion District. It will also ensure the protection of the environment and sustainable use of resources, leading to the transformation of unsustainable livelihoods and food systems, benefiting all members of the community, including the poor, men, women, youth, and children. For example, the district fire officer noted in one of the committee meetings that if the Mion District can effectively curb bush burning, crop yields would significantly increase within three years.



The committee's work also addresses the negative effects of commercial farming. The District Director for Agriculture emphasised that commercial farming poses a serious threat to the district's forests, with possibly irreparable damage if no action is taken. Commercial farming activities, such as land clearing, results in the destruction of many trees, including the endangered Dawadawa tree (*Parkia biglobosa*).

Furthermore, the Mion District's environmental management systems coordinated by the committee have shown better environmental outcomes compared to neighbouring districts like Zibila. However, as highlighted by a chief in one of the committee meetings, relaxation of management systems and unsustainable use of environmental resources could lead to a decline in the district's environmental state. The strict implementation of environmental management measures is achievable through the Mion District Environmental Management Committee.



## Contribution of Regreening Africa

The Regreening Africa programme, through CRS, continues to raise awareness among Mion District communities about the gazetted bylaws and their importance in regulating human activities that affect the natural environment. Through awareness creation and the prosecution of environmental offenders, the successful implementation of the bylaws is being facilitated.

CRS has members on the committee and played a major role in its formulation. Planning meetings were conducted between 2020 and 2021 to establish the committee. Information exchange took place between district communities, government teams, and non-governmental teams. A WhatsApp platform was also created to report and discuss environmental concerns in the district.

Sensitisation work by CRS was carried out in major towns in the Mion District. For example, a mobile cinema outreach programme was conducted between 13<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> April 2021, visiting communities to create awareness about environmental and sanitation bylaws. This campaign reached approximately 70 percent of the communities in the district. The sensitisation efforts were done in collaboration with the District Information Officer, the District Environmental Health Officer, and the mobile cinema operator. CRS has also shared their experiences and lessons with stakeholders through media coverage, radio discussions, and interviews.

In recognition of CRS's efforts in establishing an active committee and assisting communities with tree planting activities in Mion District, the organisation was awarded a certificate by the Environmental Protection Agency during the 2021 national celebration of World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought (WDCDD).

## Suggested citation

Regreening Africa. 2023. Outcome Story for Ghana: The Mion Bylaws on Environment. World Agroforestry, Nairobi, Kenya.

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## Next steps

Regreening Africa Ghana, through CRS, will continue to actively participate and contribute to committee meetings. The committee will operate with continued support from the Mion District Assembly, the Mion District community, and other stakeholders. There are plans to establish branches at the community level for better implementation. The Committee and the Mion District Assembly are considering involving volunteers or forming small committees in each community or clusters to enhance monitoring effectiveness. An information and communication strategy will be developed to improve the implementation of the environmental bylaws.

Sensitisation forums should be ongoing to communicate the importance of adhering to the bylaws. Political parties and traditional authorities should be engaged in the advocacy process. Obtaining permits for community members is no longer difficult and can be acquired in good time, if natural resources are used in a sustainable manner. To ensure environmental sustainability, discussions are underway on how to regulate commercial farming activities, especially land clearing.

If violations of the bylaws become problematic, military personnel may be involved to control illegal hunters, seize illegal vehicles and hunting equipment, and prevent bushfire. Additionally, discussions are being held on managing the interference of political leaders in the prosecution of environmental offenders.

## References

- <sup>1</sup> Regreening Africa, 2022. Facilitating adaptive learning and science, practice, and policy linkages through inclusive and evidence-based decision-making. Insights series volume 1. World Agroforestry, Nairobi, Kenya.



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