Regreening Africa

OUTCOME STORY FOR PUNTLAND, SOMALIA

Integration of Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) and Pastoral Managed Natural Regeneration (PMNR) into land restoration policy

Summary of the change

In East Africa, large-scale tree planting events are one of the main land restoration practices sponsored by governments. In dryer areas, such as Puntland State in Somalia, challenging climatic conditions make it difficult to conduct such tree planting campaigns successfully and cost-effectively. According to a Bill of Quantities (BoQ) realised by the Natural Resources Management project in Puntland in 2016, planting and fencing a single tree could nearly cost USD 100 (NRM project, 2016). Yet, Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR[i]), a nature inspired solution to restore degraded lands, especially in drylands is known for higher return on investment as it does not require significant labour inputs or financial investment. FMNR also presents greater chances for tree survival as the trees grow from seed in the soil or stumps, and the species are ecologically and environmentally adapted to the area. Despite these benefits, FMNR is not well integrated into the government's environmental policies and practices. Thus, the Regreening Africa programme[ii] through its implementing partner Care initiated advocacy processes for the integration of FMNR and Pastoral Managed Natural Regeneration (PMNR) into government's restoration policy and practice. Through sensitisation, consultative meetings, capacity building, and workshops with local communities and governmental agencies, FMNR was mainstreamed into government's policy at all levels. At local level FMNR champions were identified, trained, and entrusted with the cascading of the practice to other farmers. To further support and sustain the FMNR mainstreaming process, a FMNR manual was produced and disseminated to various stakeholders.

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[i] Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) involves the selective pruning and management of naturally regenerating trees and shrubs from stumps, roots, and seeds in the soil to restore land at low cost. Land managers can select the trees and shrubs they wish to remain on their land during field preparation and prune the shoots and protect them to allow them to grow.

[ii] 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.

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Context

Puntland is a semi-arid region in northeast Somalia. Following conflict challenges and underlying degradation of the environment, the region is making important progress to restore its degraded landscapes and rebuild people's lives and livelihoods (Muthuri 2019). Promising and scalable land restoration practices in Puntland include farmer or pastoral managed natural regeneration (FMNR/PMNR), a practice that can help empower individuals and communities in restoring their lands and livelihoods including firewood provision and non-timber forest products (Regreening Africa 2021). FMNR champions/lead farmers were identified, their capacity built on FMNR practices, and put in charge of cascading the training to other community members. Community nurseries were also promoted to support enrichment tree planting in FMNR sites.

Social fencing according to customary law Xeer and the promotion of land enclosures have proven effective to support FMNR in the programme sites. Soil and water conservation practices such as the soil bunds, half-moons, and check and rock dams have also helped retain runoff rainwater, thus enabling the regeneration of vegetation cover in crop and rangelands. Despite these benefits of the practices, various challenges limit the potential of FMNR/PMNR in the region: FMNR is not sufficiently integrated into government's interventions, its enabling conditions are not met in state policy and strategy documents. In addition, different policies and laws regarding environmental protection and land tenure governance exist but are not fully supportive of the practice of FMNR.

To sustain and extend the benefits of this effective and low-cost restoration practice the Regreening Africa programme in Puntland has advocated for the integration of FMNR and PMNR into government's environmental policy and practice.

Description of the outcome process

To help address the limited enabling policy environment for FMNR/PMNR in Puntland State, the Regreening Africa programme and partners advocated with the ministries in charge of the environment to integrate FMNR/PMNR into the state policy and strategy documents, and create enabling conditions for their implementation. The targeted stakeholders were key ministries and technical agents, local authorities, and village committees. The engagement strategy included continuous awareness raising, trainings, field visits, and peer-to-peer learning to support government experts, development agents and local communities. Consultative meetings and mission with federal and state level government officials were also organised to discuss the mainstreaming of FMNR/PMNR into existing national policies. These meetings aimed to provide a forum where relevant actors and parties can discuss the mainstreaming modalities, conditions, opportunities, and constraints.

In addition, a policy engagement workshop held in Garowe helped integrate FMNR/PMNR language into the state rangeland management policy. Success stories on PMNR were shared and discussions were held on the need to review and integrate PMNR into Rangeland Management Policy. The workshop recommended the building and strengthening of communities and governmental agencies' capacity on FMNR/PMNR. These recommendations were endorsed by higher level policy makers. Other advocacy sessions held with the ministry of environment and agriculture, local authorities, and farmers helped improve knowledge sharing and contributed to perception and behavioural change toward the practice of FMNR/PMNR in the country.

To support continuous learning and extend FMNR/PMNR, a FMNR manual was developed by the Regreening Africa program, and translated into local language for greater accessibility (Obwocha et al. 2022). Targeted stakeholders included other restoration projects and organisations operating in land restoration. The manual was validated through a workshop and disseminated to various stakeholders.

Significance of the outcome

The outcome is significant as it involves a shift in awareness, perception and behaviour of the governmental officials, and communities regarding the practice of FMNR/PMNR in the country. It acknowledges that natural regeneration can offer a sustainable restoration practice particularly compared to massive tree-planting campaigns in dry areas.

In addition, the elaboration and dissemination of the FMNR manual, as well as extending the momentum to 'sister projects' further consolidated the FMNR/PMNR movement in Puntland. The local level engagements that led to the establishment of farmer champions and the social fencing of FMNR/PMNR sites according to the Xeer customary system helped reinforce the sustainability of the investments. Thus, land allocation for FMNR has increased as more stakeholders and communities appreciate more FMNR/PMNR benefits.

Contribution of Regreening Africa

The Regreening Africa programme provided financial means to support the meetings, workshops, and various policy engagements at state and local levels. Particularly, the Stakeholder Approach to Risk Informed and Evidence-based Decision-making (SHARED) methodology was used to design the engagement and process for incorporating FMNR/PMNR into environmental policy in Puntland. The programme also supported technically the development of the FMNR manual, stakeholders' training, and overall capacity building on FMNR, and related restoration practices.

Next steps

Continuing with the sensitisation, awareness raising and stakeholders' capacity building by the sister projects and governmental technical services is important for sustainability. The commitments of the farmer champions to continue engagements with their peers is critical to maintain the momentum and keep the restoration movement growing on site.

Suggested citation

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References

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