

ECCP Track: Practice Meeting 2

13 April, 9h CET, Zoom

[Link to zoom recording](#)

Presentation on Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR)

- Introduction by [Dr. Alan Channer](#):
 - FMNR has enormous potential. It's a community-led approach that tunes into the self-healing power of nature, while at the same time fostering relationship building.
 - We are called on as peacebuilders to amplify the co-benefits of models like FMNR. We've seen huge areas of degraded land that are prone to conflict.
 - "You can't eat peace," a frustrated Kenyan peace worker told Alan. If there's no water and grazing potential, you will continue to perpetuate the root causes.
 - Peacebuilders without ecological understanding will miss key conflict dynamics.
 - There are all kinds of environmental technical solutions, but it's essential that we combine those skills with the expertise of peacebuilders who navigate conflict dynamics with care.
- Presentation by [Tony Rinaudo](#):
 - [Link to PPT presentation](#)
 - I started my career in Niger, and you can see it was a hostile environment from the photos on the slides.
 - Regular, frequent droughts combined with deforestation led to hunger, displacement, and in some cases, conflict.
 - I became passionate about reforestation, read everything I could, and consulted the experts. It was tough - nothing worked.
 - People weren't very interested in what I was doing, and called me "the crazy white farmer."
 - One day, I saw a bush on the side of a track. The shape of a leaf of any plant is an indicator of what it is... and discovered that it was not a bush, but a tree. That was the moment when everything changed.
 - There were millions of these bushes across the landscape.
 - It wasn't a matter of money or technology. It was just a behavioral change that was required for regrowth.
 - FMNR is the systematic selection of plants and the management of their regrowth, including pruning, thinning, and protection from threats.

- We reduce the competition, cut the excess number of stems, prune the lower branches, and then as a community agree on how to minimize the number of threats. (Cutting, grazing, etc.)
 - We call it an underground forest - if you cut a tree down, 50% of the tree is still alive under the ground. FMNR is just a means to release the potential.
 - In 3 years, landscapes moved from desert conditions to a dryland forest.
 - It has good ecological benefits: soil fertility, lower temperatures, lower wind speeds.
 - In Niger, it spread at the rate of ¼ trees per year for 20 years. After 20 years, 5 million hectares of farmland were regenerated without planting a single tree.
 - There's a behavior change element to it, too. People won't do the technical side unless they are convinced that it is in their best interest to do the work.
 - It's about helping people change perspective to see everything they need is under their feet.
 - FMNR is about the restoration of hope.
- Presentation by Irene Ojuok:
 - [Link to PPT presentation](#)
 - FMNR is one of the most important land restoration models, arriving at a time where our realities in Africa are so challenged.
 - People are losing lives because of drought, migrating, do not know how to continue a livelihood as a pastoralist, etc.
 - Climate change deepens these challenges and environmental degradation.
 - There is enormous frustration, and a lack of hope.
 - Land degradation and climate change can inflame conflict.
 - As people move with their livestock to get water, they are armed to protect themselves. They lose livestock because of drought.
 - The dynamics of degradation are putting people into conflict with one another.
 - Why FMNR?
 - It's low-cost, simple, a sustainable land regeneration practice, restores the land, increases productivity, and builds resilience relatively quickly and efficiently.
 - And it is people-centered. This is the most important.
 - People decide what to restore, when to restore, and how to restore.

- Marsabit County, Kenya has made the news in the past decade for record drought. Organizations and governments gave up on tree-growing there because of drought conditions.
 - FMNR was introduced. As a part of a nutrition project, they worked with the community to regrow trees and saw a significant change within 6 months.
 - That built the confidence of the community as a whole, who saw that it worked, and then they used the method on a wider scale moving forward and restored their landscape.
 - There are endless opportunities for tree-based value chains in these areas.
- I saw FMNR in 2014 for the first time, learning it from an old woman. I couldn't understand, given my university background studying the environment, how I missed the opportunity to release a forest underground. I dedicated myself to doing FMNR work, both in communities and in research.
 - I went back to Marsabit last year, after we'd started the project in 2019. There was a clear difference in tree growth, but I also saw a difference in the quality of relationships between community members and the empowerment and sense of hope of the women doing the work.
- We need to liberate ourselves from the false idea that tree planting is the only way to get trees in landscapes.
- Song on FMNR from Tanzania: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t9oE9mSRSd0>

Discussion:

- Can you share more about what was happening on the community level? Was anything else contributing to or driving degradation, apart from lack of knowledge?
 - Drought conditions. Consistent drought conditions have had a big impact.
 - Uncontrolled grazing, driven by land governance issues.
 - Lack of livelihood options pushes people to charcoal production, which further reduces the quality of the landscape.
- If there would be one priority area that a policymaker could act upon to support this, what would that be?
 - Incorporate FMNR as a potential land-restoration opportunity. It's usually excluded in policies, in favor of tree planting.
 - Educating policymakers that FMNR exists, and that the only solution is not just tree planting.
 - Changing tree and land ownership, and user rights.
 - There's no strong sense of responsibility - if I maintain this land and improve it, there's no guarantee that I will be able to stay on it long term.

- There needs to be a protected sense of ownership and connection to the land.
- How can you convince people to move from charcoal production to protecting the trees to grow? Charcoal is a source of income, so how can people be convinced to move away from that to maintaining trees?
 - You can grow the tree, and then benefit from it. If you grow it to become big enough, you can even cut parts of the tree (or byproducts of pruning) for fuelwood while maintaining the tree as a whole - sustainable charcoal production.
 - In Somalia, you could start FMNR on the prosopis weed. And that could be a fuel source.
 - Backgrounder on charcoal in Somalia: <https://climate-diplomacy.org/case-studies/climate-change-charcoal-trade-and-armed-conflict-somalia>
 - You can also pair FMNR with energy-efficient cookstoves, which reduce the quantity of wood that is used for cooking. Governments can subsidize this and provide other options.
- How does FMNR relate to similar initiatives, like with BioVision? Or the UN convention combating desertification? How can we promote the idea that tree-planting is not the only solution?
 - FMNR works best with complementary activities, like water harvesting, small loans and savings, etc. It's important to remind audiences that it doesn't need to be a standalone activity.
 - The modes of communication are growing but still need to grow.
 - We are finding more and more experts who are interested in exploring FMNR, researching it, asking key questions to refine the method, etc.
 - People in local communities are starting to communicate with their governments to articulate the model.
 - FMNR has spread because of the productivity/abundance of the land when you work with it, as opposed to against it. It's led by people themselves, regardless of government or NGO intervention.

Next Steps:

- Our next practitioner's dialogue will be held on 30 May at 10h, featuring a presentation from colleagues at the Snow Leopard Trust on their PARTNERS principles for community-based conservation. You can register here: <https://share.hsforms.com/1uAuoEkglRyuNKsy9cKPVLQ4eopz>