



“Turning swords into pruning-knives”

Catalysing human security and climate resilience with farmer-managed natural regeneration

With **Tony Rinaudo & Irene Ojuok**

Brief Report of a Roundtable and Workshop

Thursday 27 October 2022
Geneva Centre for Security Policy

Background

Farmer-managed natural regeneration (FMNR) has been described as ‘the largest environmental transformation in the Sahel and perhaps in the whole of Africa.’ *
A type of community-based natural resource management, FMNR consists of the systematic regrowth by farmers of indigenous trees and shrubs from stumps, sprouting root systems and seeds. The approach does not require external inputs; rather, it depends on changes in the management of trees, especially the protection of stumps and saplings from cutting, grazing and fire, in conjunction with selective pruning.

Trees regenerated by FMNR improve livelihoods by reducing soil erosion, improving soil fertility, and providing firewood, fodder and shade, as well as fruits and medicinal products. Further, trees regenerated by FMNR sequester carbon and can improve the microclimate.

As a community-based approach, FMNR has the potential to bring conflict actors into collaboration to safeguard the natural environment on which all parties ultimately depend. There is growing evidence that it can catalyse a virtuous cycle leading to environmental and social recovery.

This Roundtable and Workshop presented a chance to explore the synergies between FMNR, peace, human security and climate resilience with Tony Rinaudo, ‘father of farmer-managed natural regeneration’ and Irene Ojuok, a pioneer of FMNR in Kenya

* Chris Reij, World Resources Institute

Key takeaways

- Much of the contemporary climate security conversation focuses on risks, threats, and challenges. FMNR presents a concrete opportunity to foster and ecological and social restoration – and the synergies between them - concurrently.
- FMNR is often community-driven; it requires and helps to forge community agreements. So, at the same time as it strengthens environmental resilience and improves livelihoods, it also strengthens community cohesion.
- FMNR is powerful because it taps into the intrinsic self-healing power of Nature (in comparison to those environmental restoration approaches which depend on external inputs).
- Because regenerated indigenous trees benefit both pastoralists and farmers, FMNR can mitigate pastoralist-farmer conflict. Peacebuilding actors can encourage this.
- FMNR can be empowering for women – for example, when trees regenerate close to homesteads, women have less far to walk to collect firewood.
- FMNR is part of an approach that can be termed ‘green security’; in drylands there is evidence that a return of vegetation is correlated with a reduction in insecurity and conflict. This is an area which peacebuilding actors could explore further.
- Apart from its benefits in terms of improved rural livelihoods and increased climate resilience, it is urgent to implement FMNR because the approach depends on a critical degree of ecological and social ‘memory’. The longer areas that have been left degraded, the less that tree stumps, underground roots and seeds in the soil have the capacity to regenerate. Similarly, the longer indigenous communities have been removed from their traditional lands, the less they are able to use and build on their traditional knowledge.
- FMNR is not a top-down or an externally imposed model. On the contrary, it emulates and builds on traditional practices and finds due expression in vernacular languages according to context. In Tanzania it is called “Kisiki Hai”, meaning living stump. In the Francophone Sahel It is called ‘Régénération Naturelle Assistée’, a term that embraces mobile pastoralists as well as sedentary farmers.
- FMNR has massive potential for climate change mitigation, through carbon sequestration.
- The drive to offset carbon from the private sector in the Global North may incentivise the uptake of FMNR by rural communities but it also comes with risks associated with the pressures of exogenous investments. Peacebuilding, community development and human rights actors may have insights and advice that can help make carbon programmes involving FMNR more successful.

FMNR needs the peace & security sector and vice-versa: FMNR can build community cohesion and reduce conflict over resources on the one hand; it is also more likely to succeed in socially fragile contexts when community-building dynamics are respected, conflict risks are understood and dispute resolution mechanisms are integrated.

Next steps

- Creating and nurturing an FMNR/peacebuilding interest group in Geneva to explore, build on and advocate for the synergies between FMNR, peacebuilding, human security and climate resilience.
- Interested persons can contact Annika Erickson-Pearson at annika@gpplatform.ch.

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