

**Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration  
Regional Partners Workshop Report  
Nairobi, Kenya  
March 25-27, 2014**



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April 28, 2014

## Background

*Farmer managed natural regeneration (FMNR)* is all about reforestation WITHOUT planting trees. Its birth place is Niger - some 30 years back in an area where the Sahara desert was taking-over what little arable land that remained. It is rooted in the failure of development strategies that promoted the establishment of seedling nurseries and tree planting campaigns; and the simple observation that many tree species continue to live after being cut down. This phenomenon has been coined, "*the underground forest*".

By selectively allowing this "*underground forest*" to regenerate and with some simple maintenance (i.e., pruning) an area can be fairly quickly re-greened - and with this re-greening agriculture also begins to flourish.

*FMNR* is currently enjoying wide spread interest all around the world. It has received some impressive endorsements by a diverse range of agencies - from the CGIAR agency ICRAF, to the Rio + 20 global summit convened in Brazil. World Vision Australia (and *FMNR*'s principle staff person, Tony Rinaudo) are involved in a global campaign to promote *FMNR*. Members and partners of the CFGB network have been hearing about *FMNR* - primarily thru the work that Tony Rinaudo pioneered in Niger.

CFGB has for several years now, heavily committed itself to promoting sustainable agriculture technologies and approaches. Conservation agriculture is being widely disseminated within the CFGB network. More recently, CFGB has been promoting the use of green manure and cover crops in the farming system. In CFGB's investigations of other complementary technologies that are considered to be supportive of sustainable agriculture, it was deemed appropriate to also consider the incorporation of *FMNR* within the menu of CFGB programming responses. Hence, it was proposed that CFGB would offer training to interested members and their partners on an experimental basis. Current thinking is that, should partner response prove to be positive, consideration would then be given to future training events. Additionally, it is expected that *FMNR* would be incorporated as a component in future 'ag & livelihood' project proposals.

Twenty-four participants attended the event representing seventeen partners - coming from six countries (Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Somalia, Tanzania & Uganda). For all participants *FMNR* represents a new and unfamiliar technology. This training would constitute the first in-depth exposure to *FMNR*.

"Farmer managed natural regeneration is a 'no regret' technology. There is nothing to lose - and everything to gain".  
Quote by Tony Rinaudo

## Objectives of the *FMNR* Regional Partners Workshop

The objectives of the workshop were as follows:

1. As a capacity building initiative, to plan and conduct a 3-day workshop (in Nairobi) on *Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration* for CFGB's East Africa network of partners.
2. In support of CFGB's sustainable agriculture and livelihood program, provide opportunities for partner agencies to be exposed to the key concepts and implementation methods of *FMNR*.
3. Based on level of interest and commitment, determine the way forward in promoting mass promotion of *FMNR* in partner areas of operation.

## Workshop Overview

The workshop was facilitated by Tony Rinaudo, an internationally recognized expert in *FMNR*. Tony is employed by *World Vision Australia*. It should be acknowledged (with thanks) that *World Vision Australia* has kindly agreed to let Tony facilitate this training for the CFGB network. As was evidenced during the training, Tony is a man of faith and a man with a passion to share his knowledge and experience. The participants in their evaluation of the training rated the training as being inspirational, participatory and practical.



Figure 1: Tony Rinaudo - training facilitator

In terms of content, the training event drew extensively from Tony's many years of experience with *FMNR*. The presentation materials and documents were largely based on Tony's experience in Niger and Ethiopia. There were important sessions on the "do's and don'ts of *FMNR*"; as well as a presentation on the challenges of *FMNR* promotion and farmer adoption.

Each day started off with a devotional time. The format of the training involved a combination of

in-class lectures; showing of videos and PowerPoint presentations.

There was time set aside for participants to share of their experience with "natural resource management". And on the second day we all piled into a small bus and were taken to the World Vision Kiambogoko ADP - near Nakuru. This Area Development Program has been heavily promoting *FMNR* for one year - with some impressive results to show-for.

On day three, the focus was on preparing *FMNR* 'action plans'. The participants were split into smaller groups - according to the country where they came from. The key objective of the action plans were to have participants think critically about what they had heard and seen - and to come up with some innovative ideas on how *FMNR* could be adapted and adopted in their context.

## Evaluation – Participants Assessment

An evaluation of the workshop was given to the participants to determine if the objectives were met and provide feedback to the CFGB network. Following are some of the key findings from the evaluation.

The participants generally gave the *FMNR* workshop high ratings.

\* The participants found the subject matter interesting and relevant. The following presentations received the highest ratings: "*FMNR in Niger Story*"; "*technical*



Figure 2: FMNR applied to a farmer's field

*explanation of the benefits of FMNR"; "Field meeting with practitioners".*

\* Tony's teaching style was appreciated. He presented his message with "passion". He was very conversant with the subject matter and very practical.

\* The video and PowerPoint presentations were very effective and powerful in communicating *FMNR* principles and management practices.

\* Each participant attending the workshop received a USB 'flash drive' full of relevant reports + the workshop presentations.

\* *FMNR* is appropriate for the resource-poor farmers that partners work with as it does not require significant investments in inputs.

Evaluation responses indicated that participants were very impressed with the simplicity of the *FMNR* technology and the fact that it did not require large budgets to be implemented. As suggested by its name, it is very much 'farmer-led' and farmer managed. There is explicit recognition of the importance of indigenous knowledge.

In terms of suggestions for improvements, the most common comments made by the participants referred to: the long drive to/from the field-day site visit; the lack of variety at meal times; and the very poor internet service. A few participants expressed disappointment with the quality of accommodation. A notable observation was the lack of gender balance amongst the workshop participants.

The one day field visit made a big impression on the participants. Not only was it about listening to the experience of the World Vision staff - but, perhaps more importantly, visiting a few farmers' fields where *FMNR* was being practiced. The practical demonstration on 'how-to-prune' trees was also very helpful.

Promoting *FMNR* will involve challenges. It is not just about communicating the technology to farmers, but also the reasons for doing it. In order for it to be successfully adopted, *FMNR* must appeal to the hearts and minds of the farmers. As a practical suggestion, when starting out with *FMNR* it might be advisable to apply it on marginal land - as farmers may be reluctant to do *FMNR* on productive farm land. It is yet another example of a knowledge intensive approach in support of sustainable agriculture development.

#### Message to CFGB from workshop participants

- *FMNR* is an appropriate tool for sustainable agriculture/livelihoods
- *FMNR* is a low cost intervention with the promise of large scale results
- There is complementarity between *FMNR* and what CFGB is already doing with CA - and is very cost effective
- A significant advantage of *FMNR* is that it can easily be integrated into ongoing programs
- It is an 'easy' intervention that can contribute to food security
- *FMNR* is very pro-poor
- *FMNR* is a farmer-focused and farmer managed approach
- CFGB is encouraged to provide opportunities to partners to get training on this 'new' technology - and share experiences with people from different countries
- With technology such as *FMNR*, there is potential to scale-up and CFGB should look to expand funding for *FMNR* as a part of its food security program

## Final Comments

CFGB's first ever *Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR)* training is now history. Participants left the workshop inspired to apply what they learned. However, it will be very important that these individuals receive the support required in order for them to apply the teachings and promote *FMNR* in partner operational areas.



**Figure 3: participant trying his hand at pruning**

There is now a critical need for CFGB members, together with partner management to show a commitment and ownership of this process that has been initiated. This first training is an investment in capacity building of the participating partners. The hoped-for outcome is that there will be sustained momentum in popularizing *FMNR* in future agriculture and livelihoods projects – as a significant contribution to sustainable agriculture/livelihoods.

Partners represented at this workshop prepared brief “action plans” - done as a small group exercise. These “action plans” involved documenting practical next steps – as well as

longer-term strategies that would involve the partner organization AND the CFGB member agency. These “action plans” can serve as a practical starting point for future discussions.

In informal conversation with Tony Rinaudo, he has expressed an interest to remain in contact with CFGB. Providentially, Tony has on-going projects that he visits on regular basis in East and Southern Africa. CFGB staff are currently vetting the idea of a *FMNR*-focused member delegation.

Finally, a word of thanks is in order for the support that MCC Kenya management and staff rendered in making the necessary preparations for this training event and for hosting the event.



**Figure 4: World Vision manager experience sharing on FMNR**