

## Chapter 8

# FMNR partnerships

### Summary: FMNR partnerships

- The community is your most important partner, and is central to any FMNR project. However, to make FMNR sustainable and extend it beyond your project area, it is necessary to partner with other organisations.
- Educating potential partners on FMNR empowers them to become supporters of your work and reduces the risk of their work harming your project, or of conflicting messages reaching the community.
- Other agencies and groups can support, enable and enhance the FMNR work of the community. They may also be able to provide other services that can combine with FMNR effectively. FMNR projects may also have a lot to offer potential partners to assist them to reach their goals.
- Partnerships that are likely to be valuable to FMNR projects and the spread of the FMNR movement more generally include those with:
  - traditional leaders and local government authorities;
  - faith communities and religious leaders;
  - schools and education departments or ministries;
  - universities and research institutions;
  - state, county and national governments; and
  - non-government and civil society/community-based organisations.
- Partnerships can be bilateral, local or regional. Even national networks of partners can be established, or if relevant networks already exist, these can be harnessed to further support your FMNR work.
- These partnerships are critical for supporting the spread of the FMNR movement, and have already played a significant role in raising the profile of FMNR to where it is now.

### Resources

- A stakeholder analysis template ([Annex 3](#)) can be used when identifying potential stakeholders in an FMNR activity, and guide how best to engage with them.
- The [FMNR Hub website](#) and social networking sites are good places to find relevant partners or networks in your area.

### **“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together” – African proverb**

**It is possible to regenerate and protect trees alone, but FMNR works best in partnership – from community collaborations that build awareness and win support to collaborations with government, universities and international organisations. Partnerships help us improve the outcomes from FMNR work while fuelling the spread of the movement.**

Because community members are the main practitioners of FMNR, and stand to benefit the most from its success, FMNR will not work without them. Engaging and supporting the community has been discussed extensively in [Chapter 5](#) and in the section on designing FMNR projects. If potentially important partners have not yet been identified, tools such as stakeholder analysis can assist with this. A template is provided in [Annex 3](#).

## **Building successful partnerships**

Partners should represent a diverse mix of entities and contribute to projects in a range of different ways. For example, partners can come from government, research or private sectors, international organisations, NGOs, community organisations, education institutions, faith-based organisations or civil society. Successful partnerships often have the following characteristics:

- Partners are included as early in the process as possible.
- Partners are considered based on shared values and contributions, not on traditional stereotypes.
- Information between partners is shared regularly and transparently. Transaction costs of working together are low.
- The capacity of partners to promote and support FMNR is built over time.
- Where possible, partners benefit from decisions and activities.
- Partnership agreements are documented as necessary. Note: it is not always necessary to formalise a partnership, particularly if neither party requires it. However, even a simple informal agreement document can be useful to set out common goals and agreed working relationships to prevent any confusion.

## **Important FMNR partnerships**

Important partners have the ability to contribute towards the success of FMNR. They can also take a strong interest in the community or the land and trees being managed in this way. Stakeholders that are both influential and interested should be managed closely, but those who are influential may not initially be interested. These partners should also be engaged and shown how FMNR may be relevant to them.

Some groups that are often important FMNR partners are described below, alongside suggestions on how to engage them.

### **Traditional leaders and local government**

Although traditional leaders and local government officials may also be members of the community, they hold additional roles beyond their personal practise and support of FMNR that make them important partners.

#### **Benefits of partnership**

- Endorsing and encouraging FMNR activities: their support sends a strong signal to local communities on the importance of FMNR.
- Working with the community to create a favourable policy environment for FMNR: they can help create bylaws and, where possible, assist in market chain development and establishing authorised FMNR product markets. This is essential to efforts to scale up FMNR work.
- They can be a powerful ally in advocating and communicating progress and successes to local- and national-level government.

- They provide authoritative intervention during disputes and breaking of bylaws, and technical assistance when monitoring, following up and encouraging FMNR practitioners.
- By adopting FMNR into annual planning, budgeting and their standard suite of agricultural and forestry activities, they can increase the impact and sustainability of the project far beyond what the community themselves, or another partner organisation, can achieve.

Community leaders are very influential and can make or break an FMNR initiative by lending or withholding their support. Chief Biliya-mnamaltenga, of Tongo Beo village in Ghana, explained how *“the arrival of FMNR in my village has enabled me to fulfil the meaning of my ceremonial name, which is ‘Tintuug Lebge Tii’, meaning ‘the small shrub becomes a tree.’”*

Chief Biliya-mnamaltenga has led by example on his own land and used his authority to ensure that FMNR is widely adopted. His leadership has contributed significantly to the rapid uptake of FMNR in and beyond Tongo Beo.



**Figure 1** Chief Biliya-mnamaltenga of Tongo Beo, Ghana, is an influential FMNR leader (2015). Photo: T. Rinaudo

## Faith communities and religious leaders

In the quest to ensure that FMNR is sustainable, churches, mosques, synagogues, temples and other centres of worship can be ideal partners. These centres have existed in most communities long before the arrival of any government office or development organisation, and they will remain long after any project ends. As a result, they are very influential.

### Benefits of partnership

- Faith communities can provide mutual support and build the foundations of community, which is essential for successful FMNR.
- They may be very aware of the challenges their congregations struggle with and are able to contribute to a greater understanding of the community context.
- Religious leaders are often strong influencers of opinion in a community. By adopting the FMNR movement early, they can encourage their community to experiment with its practices.
- Faith communities may be able to provide space for FMNR meetings, trainings and even demonstration plots on the grounds of their place of worship.
- Faith provides a theological foundation for creation care, opening up discussions regarding appropriate care and improvement of the environment.



### FMNR and faith

Throughout all major religions of the world, and their sacred texts, there is a common thread about care and compassion for the natural world. Resources to support natural resource management or environmental messages from major faith groups can be found on the [FMNR Hub Resources Page](#) or at these links:

- [Environmental Protection in Islam](#)
- [Alliance of Religions and Conservation](#)
- [GreenFaith.org](#)

## Schools and ministries or departments of education

Schools and ministries or departments of education are also important partners in FMNR. Like places of worship, schools tend to be central locations for communities to come together. Schools are a physical reminder of the future that communities seek to build for their children, and are places where people are accustomed to learning and to accepting new ideas.

While we adults may be resistant to change, children often find it exhilarating; they can be passionate activists who inspire adults to test new concepts. At the start of the FMNR project in Humbo, Ethiopia, some community members feared their grazing rights and freedom to harvest wood and make charcoal would be permanently lost. But after the project partnered with local schools, their children told them to be patient and explained the importance of regenerating the forest. Because those adults agreed to try FMNR for one year, the community now has more fodder and firewood than they imagined possible from once barren, rocky land.

### Benefits of partnership

- Children exposed to the benefits of FMNR take these knowledge and skills into adulthood, when many will be in positions of influence.
- Children are powerful advocates for FMNR to parents and adults in general, so school projects on FMNR can help shape the whole community.
- Children will grow up to be additional practitioners of FMNR.
- Environment clubs or FMNR lessons can increase opportunities for children and youth to learn, and to use that knowledge to improve their lives.
- Schools may have open space available that can benefit from FMNR and related projects, and can provide space for community discussions or even act as FMNR demonstration sites.
- Ministries or departments of education can adopt FMNR into their science, environment and life-skills curricula, increasing knowledge of FMNR across their areas of influence.

Resources for including FMNR in schools can be found in [Chapter 7](#).

## Community-based and non-governmental organisations

CBOs and NGOs, or community-based and non-governmental organisations, are important allies for FMNR work, particularly those working in natural resource management, agriculture, micro-enterprise, development and similar fields.

### Benefits of partnership

- CBOs and NGOs can promote FMNR in additional communities.
- They can support joint FMNR initiatives, increasing collective capacity and strength.
- Building the awareness of other CBOs and NGOs around FMNR helps to avoid other activities undermining FMNR efforts.
- National and regional implementation can occur more quickly than it would with only one community or organisation promoting it.
- Other organisations provide additional types of capacity needed in an FMNR project.

## Universities and research institutions

By partnering with universities and research organisations, an FMNR project can contribute towards more outcomes, explore more innovations and increase the evidence base for their work. For example, partnering with a university may allow a project to measure important data that they would not have the staff, time or technical expertise to measure on their own.

### Benefits of partnership

- Universities and research organisations can assist with monitoring and evaluation, which can increase a project's evidence of impact and provide research to guide promoters and managers on the most cost-effective forms of intervention.
- They may help to generate data to influence policy makers, or adapt FMNR in the best way for the local needs and context. Increasingly, donors are demanding quantitative impact studies to justify funding requests.
- They can assist in testing the value of innovations or integration with other interventions.
- Skilled interns may be available to support FMNR projects as part of their research.
- By building FMNR into curriculums, universities can help increase knowledge and adoption of FMNR by future program staff, leaders and government officials.

### State, county and national governments

Relevant institutions include government departments responsible for policies related to land and tree ownership and rights to use and benefit from FMNR products. Departments or ministries of environment, forestry and agriculture are particularly relevant, but it is often also wise to engage with departments related to community development, finances and social welfare. These departments will value both the outcomes that FMNR can produce and its high return on investment. They can be strong allies in gaining support for FMNR.

A good way to engage partners at this level is by establishing national FMNR networks or working groups, where representatives of different departments, NGOs and research organisations can all come together to share experiences and formulate joint plans.

### Benefits of partnership

Raising awareness of FMNR within governments can:

- promote FMNR as a low-cost, effective method of meeting many government objectives;
- secure support for FMNR through government departmental staff on the ground, reducing the likelihood of conflicting information reaching land managers and increasing accessibility of FMNR knowledge and skills throughout the country;
- lead to the inclusion of FMNR in national and regional investment plans and strategies, such as national targets and commitments to restoration or climate change mitigation or adaptation strategies; and
- increase access to funding for FMNR through national and international investment and financing programs available to governments, such as the Green Climate Fund.



## Case study

### Uganda FMNR Network

On 4 June 2015, the Uganda FMNR Network was officially launched. The network was born out of a national FMNR conference hosted by World Vision Uganda, held a year before. A wide range of NGOs, the World Agroforestry Centre and government departments were represented at this conference, and the need for a mechanism to work together to more effectively scale up FMNR across the country was clear.

Network members are exceptionally committed and have worked closely together to develop a five-year strategy and work plan to roll out FMNR nationally. With no allocated budget for the network, they have devised ways to share the resourcing needs, such as by rotating which organisation hosts meetings.

This approach successfully shares costs and responsibilities, and in the process, draws in managers of participating organisations who may not normally attend meetings or be involved with the network. It builds the sense of ownership and responsibility amongst member organisations in a way that individual participants may not be able to alone. Each organisation has committed to covering individual task force members' costs and supporting the appointment of an intern to assist with network liaison and coordination tasks.

Tony Rinaudo, FMNR pioneer, was present at the network's launch event and addressed the audience with these words. *"I only know of three other FMNR networks in the world and they struggle financially, motivationally and structurally. Even though the Uganda FMNR network is new, from the work the task force has done you have laid a firm foundation for a successful network."*

*"By forming the network you have pronounced that by working together we can achieve much, much more than by working alone or in competition with each other."*

Since its launch, the Uganda FMNR Network has continued to grow. In 2017, 25 organisations were represented including government, research institutions, teaching institutions, civil society organisations and NGOs. Network members have established a workplan, logframe and monitoring program which tracks their combined FMNR contributions and achievements. The network has also facilitated training sessions for farmers, cultural leaders and community facilitators beyond the current FMNR project areas.

## Benefits for partners

Since building successful partnerships requires all partners to gain from their combined work, let's also consider the benefits FMNR projects can offer potential partners.

- The process of implementing FMNR can help strengthen and build capacity for weak or inexperienced organisations, or those new to the area.
- Working with FMNR can improve a partner's knowledge of sustainable management of natural resources.
- The environmental outcomes of FMNR can help governments and other organisations achieve any goals that depend on a healthy natural resource base.
- The community engagement and empowerment outcomes of FMNR help organisations achieve goals that depend on the knowledge, capacity, social capital and prosperity of the community.
- Improved governance structures and collaboration can decrease conflict between communities and government ministries, decrease illegal tree use and poaching, and potentially reduce community need for emergency support.
- The community becomes an ally, not an adversary: the technical expertise of land users, FMNR champions and project managers can contribute to the capacity building of government staff, outreach, training of instructors and extension needs.
- They can reduce conflict over use of resources and breaches of forestry regulations, which allows ministry staff to focus more of their attention on other priorities.
- They can increase program integration and sustainability of outcomes.
- Opportunities for increasing staff capacity and knowledge around both regeneration and community engagement can be created.
- They provide opportunities to empower faith communities: many religions include a strong sense of responsibility for the natural world, or include mandates for their followers to ensure the well-being of the most vulnerable; FMNR helps faith communities better fill these stewardship roles by improving forest and agricultural production, as well as income generated from these sources.
- Wood, forest products or income resulting from FMNR can contribute directly to supporting the needs of partner groups, places of worship, schools, etc, through income-generating projects and immediate use.
- By increasing the availability of firewood and food for the school kitchen, more time may be available for teaching and learning.
- FMNR can also be incorporated across the educational curriculum, providing practical exercises in arithmetic, science, language, agriculture and most other subjects, as well as providing valuable life skills.
- FMNR projects may provide research and internship opportunities for university students and faculty members.
- Universities and research organisations benefit by building connections and gaining easier access to locations of interest to them, as well as access to the experience and knowledge of the community, and to sources of data relevant to their research interests.