

## Chapter 10

# Monitoring and evaluation

### Summary: Monitoring and evaluation

- Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of FMNR projects is important for:
  - understanding how FMNR works in different contexts;
  - ensuring the project and FMNR are meeting people's needs;
  - identifying opportunities for improvement in the project; and
  - sharing evidence of outcomes and impacts of FMNR.
- When project M&E is shared, it can contribute to the spread of the broader FMNR movement by:
  - tracking the spread of FMNR in communities and across countries;
  - identifying factors that influence the effectiveness of FMNR in different contexts and for different groups of people;
  - sharing evidence of outcomes and successes on a large scale;
  - showing contribution of FMNR to national and global initiatives; and
  - building a strong evidence base to inform policy and funding decision-makers.
- FMNR M&E activities should involve all stakeholders in the community to be able to understand the project from all perspectives, as well as to enable learning and improvement of FMNR practices.
- Including the nine FMNR core indicators in your project will be a strong start to your M&E design, and will allow projects to be compared consistently around the world.

### Resources

- [Collecting FMNR Data to Monitor Change](#)
- [Annex 8](#) contains FMNR Core Indicator Definitions
- [Additional FMNR Indicator Definitions](#)
- [FMNR Evidence Gap Analysis](#)

## Why monitor and evaluate FMNR projects?

**Well-designed monitoring and evaluation of FMNR projects is essential for a number of reasons. Project M&E can demonstrate the effectiveness of different methods of promoting FMNR, assess the work of the organisation and staff doing the work, and document the success of FMNR in different contexts and conditions. M&E also provides the necessary data for reporting to donors the outcomes of their investments, such as impacts on income, food security, water availability and other critical outcomes, and for policy makers to make informed decisions.**

Evaluation of how well the project met its goals, and what benefits the community and other stakeholders gained from investment in FMNR, is growing in importance as a means of:

- demonstrating value and cost benefits;
- increasing visibility of and interest in FMNR for funding decisions;
- providing data for policy decisions;
- troubleshooting practice and approaches to promoting FMNR; and
- capturing lessons to improve projects in the future and increase the spread of FMNR.

Evaluations are often done by analysing changes identified between the baseline and endline assessments of the chosen indicators. Data to inform these assessments will depend on the indicators selected, but in FMNR projects this often comes from household surveys and possibly satellite imagery to assess tree cover (more on this below).

Evaluation of FMNR projects should also assess the sustainability of the project and what contribution it has made to the broader FMNR movement. For example, is there evidence of spread beyond the project area?

Note that some very structured projects, such as carbon sequestration projects, may have relatively complicated M&E requirements to ensure that agreements between the community and the buyers are met. Detailed instruction on carbon sequestration projects is beyond the scope of this manual. Some resources for those seeking further information are suggested above, but organisations interested in using FMNR for carbon sequestration will require specialised technical capacity or consultation.

### Contributing to the FMNR movement

A critical value of monitoring and evaluating FMNR work is generating new evidence to demonstrate the impacts of FMNR. Communities all over the world are aware of the benefits of FMNR, but until recently there hasn't been a great deal of focus on collecting evidence in structured ways. Structured, replicable evidence, however, is important to donors, policy makers, governments and other organisations that can help to increase the momentum of the FMNR movement. More studies and evaluations with strong scientific rigour will enable the movement to expand further, increase access to funding and help us to work toward enabling policy environments at all levels, so that local communities and the global climate can benefit from FMNR.

For this reason, the FMNR movement needs to build a body of evidence that:

- demonstrates its outcomes are not by coincidence;
- shows that change is greater with FMNR than without;
- explains clearly what has been done, so that the same practices can be tried in other environments; and
- objectively explores both positive and negative, successful and unsuccessful outcomes.

In 2016, a review of the existing evidence ([FMNR Evidence Gap Analysis 2016](#)) was completed to document what we know, and what we need to learn more about with regards to FMNR. A number of gaps in evidence were identified, but many of these can be filled with robust evidence from project M&E. Specific gaps that should be prioritised include:

- Evidence from diverse geographic regions where FMNR has been introduced more recently than in West Africa, in particular:
  - East Africa
  - Southern Africa
  - Southeast Asia
  - Pacific
- FMNR's impact on:
  - community empowerment;
  - improving women's well-being, rights, equality, income and assets;
  - crop and livestock yields, and soil fertility;
  - community income and sustainability of livelihoods;
  - reforestation;
  - carbon sequestration and climate change adaptation and mitigation;
  - increasing biodiversity; and
  - enhancing the hydrological cycle.

Evidence on these topics can sometimes be gathered through good project monitoring and evaluation, such as impacts on community incomes, empowerment, access to income and assets, and even impacts on crop and livestock yields. Some topics are more complex and may not be able to be addressed through normal project M&E, as they require specific technical expertise often held by research institutions, or require longer timelines to identify changes. It may be possible to partner with these organisations on collaborative research activities in conjunction with your FMNR implementation project to gather evidence on topics such as impacts on biodiversity, carbon sequestration or the hydrological cycle.

## How to monitor and evaluate FMNR projects

### Who is responsible?

FMNR monitoring and evaluation, like FMNR itself, should be **participatory and inclusive**. This means involving all relevant stakeholders in the monitoring and evaluation activities to ensure their perspectives and experiences are included, and that they receive and understand the results in ways that are useful for their needs.

The community implementing FMNR is the primary stakeholder of all FMNR work, and should be actively engaged in all aspects of the project, including M&E. Monitoring should assist the community to improve and replicate their practice, share their learning and experience for the benefit of others, and see clear evidence of their progress.

Key stakeholders in the FMNR process, and their typical use of monitoring and evaluation information, include:

- community members – for continuous improvement and adaptation of technique;
- project staff – for continuous improvement in project design, delivery and reports to donors;
- partner organisations, managers and leaders – as evidence and as an advocacy tool for scaling up FMNR adoption, and for reports to donors; and
- government staff and decision-makers – for continuous improvement and adaptation of technique, evidence building for increased adoption of FMNR, and to influence policy.

### How to do M&E?

Many organisations have established project monitoring and evaluation processes and standards. If your organisation or project does not have these already, you may wish to consult resources such as [Better Evaluation](#) for advice.

Everyone doing FMNR would benefit from monitoring and reflecting on their practices in some way. This can be as simple as keeping records and taking some before and after photographs, and reflecting on how and why the land has changed.

### When and what to monitor and evaluate?

In general, monitoring and evaluation involves understanding how things were **before the project** (the baseline), how things are done **during the project** (monitoring) and what has changed at the **end of the project** (the endline or 'end of project evaluation').

As we have discussed previously, the only truly successful FMNR project is one that works for the people managing the trees. Therefore, monitoring and evaluation of FMNR should focus on the **social, economic and environmental** outcomes of the practice for these people. The FMNR theory of change in [Chapter 9](#), or your project's customised theory of change or logframe, can be a good way to identify the likely outcomes you are looking for. Indicators should be identified for a range of the changes, or outcomes and impacts, that you anticipate occurring as a result of your FMNR project.

### Core FMNR indicators

We use indicators to help determine what data needs to be collected to help assess the progress of a project, and whether it is on track to achieving its goals and objectives. The best indicators for tracking progress will depend on the project goals. Ideally, the nine core indicators listed in the table on page 136 should be included in every FMNR project, regardless of location or goals. By consistently monitoring these indicators across projects, we learn a great deal about the variations and benefits of FMNR around the world. Everyone involved with the FMNR movement can help to continually increase its evidence base.

Many organisations, however, have standardised indicators to ensure their evaluations are comparable across programs or meet specific donor needs; if you are part of such an organisation, you will naturally need to use your required indicators as well.

| FMNR core indicators  | Minimum measurement requirements  |
|---|---|
| 1 Number of individuals (male, female, total) trained in FMNR.  | Project monitoring data – Training records  |
| 2 Number of individuals (male, female, total) adopting FMNR.  | Project monitoring data – Project participant records   |
| 3 Number and proportion of households that have adopted FMNR in the target area.  | FMNR adoption records   |
| 4 Coverage (hectares) of FMNR in the target area.   | Landscape-scale analysis of tree cover (remote sensing and ground truthing)<br>+<br>Project monitoring data (FMNR site assessments)<br>+<br>Baseline and endline household survey |
| 5 Average tree density change in the target area (in hectares). Differentiate between cultivated land, grazing land, degraded forest and other (specify).                   | Landscape-scale analysis of tree cover (remote sensing and ground truthing)<br>+<br>Baseline and endline household survey   |
| 6 Number and proportion of households with year-round access to sufficient food.  | Baseline and endline household survey   |
| 7 Number and proportion of households (and women) with access to forest products: firewood, timber and non-timber forest products, including honey, fruit, nuts and leaves. | Baseline and endline household survey   |
| 8 Total household income (from crops, livestock and FMNR-related products).   | Baseline and endline household survey   |
| 9 Proportion of parents or caregivers able to provide well for their children.  | Baseline and endline household survey   |

The definition and supporting information for each of these core indicators can be found in [Annex 8](#).

### Additional FMNR indicators

FMNR work should also be evaluated on how well the community has been supported to implement its social and physical aspects; and the nature and extent of impacts they are experiencing as a result, especially in relation to their goals for FMNR. Community engagement is paramount to any FMNR project, however it can be more difficult to measure than factors like number of trees or hectares of coverage.

A comprehensive list of additional FMNR indicators you may wish to choose from is located in [Annex 9](#) and many of these have recommended definitions available for download from the [FMNR Hub website](#). This contains examples of project activity indicators and possible impacts, and these are aligned to the simplified FMNR theory of change presented in [Chapter 9](#). We suggest looking through the list and selecting those most relevant for your community and project. You may need to pick a few indicators to present a robust picture. Ensure that you include indicators across the range of different levels in your theory of change, such as activity indicators, short-term impact indicators, medium-term impact and longer-term impact indicators.

Additional indicators can be added based on the community and project's specific objectives. The lists referred to above are not exhaustive; they're intended to give project managers options to choose from. You may also wish to add your own indicators as needed. The [Indikit website](#) also provides an excellent range of indicators, with directions on how to use them.

## Monitoring FMNR activities

Once you have selected indicators to track your project's progress, you will need to plan how those indicators will be monitored. Monitoring is the collection of information on a regular basis throughout the project. Not all FMNR indicators are suited to regular monitoring; tree cover, for example, is best assessed before and after a project – over a three-to-five year interval – as change is slow and not easy to identify. However, FMNR activities and some short-term outcomes may be suited to regular monitoring, such as:

- participation in training activities;
- participation rates in bylaw development;
- participation rates in community groups or organisations;
- rates of adoption of FMNR – who is doing it, and where; and
- activities of FMNR champions and other extension services.

Monitoring these activities will allow the project team to identify problems early, such as an under-representation of a certain group of people or low adoption rates in a certain area, and make changes to remedy the problem before the end of the project.

Depending on the location and types of FMNR practices being used, some outcomes of FMNR may be quickly identified, such as increased grass cover, or increased fodder or firewood availability through pruning. These outcomes can be monitored during the project. Other outcomes, such as soil fertility or household food security, may take longer to be realised. To ensure M&E activities are not over-burdensome, these are probably fine to assess at project completion.

Monitoring results should be shared verbally and in writing with all stakeholders, for discussion and action for correction of problems and continuous improvement. Discussion and dissemination of monitoring results ensures that knowledge and learning creates a feedback loop that includes all stakeholders, rather than being 'extractive' that is, only taking information away from the project to provide to donors, etc.

## Methods of data collection

Data for monitoring and evaluation of FMNR projects often comes from:

- field visits;
- project monitoring tools to record who participated in trainings and project activities, and adoption of FMNR practices;
- focus group discussions with different groups in the community;
- key informant interviews with individuals, such as a sample of participants, FMNR champions, project staff, partner organisation staff, community leaders and leaders from beyond the project area;
- household surveys of both participating and non-participating households;
- literature reviews and research reports;
- tree cover, tree measurements and tree count sampling; and
- fixed point and/or GPS referenced photographic records.

## Monitoring trees and tree cover

Many development organisations have well-established methods for collecting social data through interviews, focus groups and surveys. Collecting information about trees may be more unfamiliar. For organisations with less experience in collecting information about trees, monitoring activities are often a great opportunity for partnering with local forestry or environment departments, research institutes or universities. This not only allows these organisations to share their skills and experience in trees and agroforestry with the community, but also exposes these organisations to FMNR and its benefits by seeing first-hand the changes that occur.

It is important these measurements stay focused on the information most useful to the community in tracking and learning about their FMNR activities, and related to the project theory of change.

### In-field tree surveys

As communities begin to practise FMNR, data should be collected on what trees, stumps and seedlings are present in the field. Record what species are present, how many stumps or seedlings are being protected, and how existing tree species are being managed and used. Also make sure you record the total size of the farm or area being managed with FMNR in hectares, as this is important when calculating tree density.<sup>1</sup> You can also record other observations such as how the land is being used, and if there is evidence of erosion or poor ground cover or weeds. Using photo points is also a good way of tracking changes in tree cover and the condition of the land over time. See the text box on page 141 for information on how to establish photo points for monitoring.

If you would like to make some calculations about the growth rates of the trees, or the amount of carbon being stored in the regenerated landscape, you may also need to record the height (in metres), diameter of the tree at breast height (1.3 metres above the ground) in centimetres or the diameter of the tree's crown. See the [FMNR Hub resources page](#) for a guide on how to take these measurements for a carbon project.

Depending on the size or number of land users engaged in your project, it may not be possible to do in-field tree surveys on every participant's land. In this case, a sample of land users can be selected. Depending on how your project is organised, it may be possible to record this information on FMNR champions' farms, or a random selection of 20 percent of land users who are participating in the project. If you are using a sampling technique, ensure that you have sites from all different landscapes in the project area.

### Sample plots

If the FMNR sites are particularly large (for example, degraded forest areas or communal grazing land), it may not be practical to try to record all trees and seedlings across the entire site. In this case, you can establish a number of sample plots to monitor that will represent changes in the overall area.

The number and size of the sample plots required will vary based on how variable the site is, and how precise you need the data to be. For measuring tree dimensions, approximately 15-20 trees in a sample plot is recommended.<sup>2</sup> Factors to be considered when locating the sample plot include:

- Plots should not be located on the edge of the site or take in abnormal features (such as dams).
- If trees are on the edge of the sample plot, they are counted as 'in' if the centre of the stem is in the plot.
- All information collected should be checked before leaving the plot.
- Plots will be marked by GPS record at the centre of the circle or the four corner points of a square plot.
- If appropriate, sample plots can also be created by marking paint on rocks or tape on trees.

<sup>1</sup> For properties that are small (<10ha), it is logical to consider the entire farm as being managed by FMNR. We accept this as a land manager who has adopted FMNR, and who has changed their mindset about working with nature, rather than against it. While they may only begin with FMNR on a small area, we regularly see this area increase rapidly, and FMNR principles being applied across the property. Land users with larger properties, or working on large areas of communal land, may more realistically start with a specific area and increase this gradually over time as resources/time become available. As such it is more important to specify the area of FMNR in these cases.

<sup>2</sup> [forestry.ac.nz/euan/inventory/plotLayout.htm](http://forestry.ac.nz/euan/inventory/plotLayout.htm)



Sample plots of various sizes can be established based on the following dimensions. On sloping ground all distance measurements should be horizontal.

| Probable stems/ha | Plot area (ha) | Plot radius for circular plots (m) | Plot side for square plots (m) | Plot diagonal for square plots (m) | Plot factor (for conversion to /ha) |
|-------------------|----------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 80                | 0.25           | 28.21                              | 50                             | 70.71                              | 4                                   |
| 100               | 0.2            | 25.23                              | 44.7                           | 63.25                              | 5                                   |
| 200               | 0.1            | 17.84                              | 31.62                          | 44.72                              | 10                                  |

**Annex 10** contains some templates to assist in the collection of this data. There are also electronic tools under development to assist with this data collection, which will be accessible on the [FMNR Hub website](#) once available.

### Remote sensing to monitor tree-cover change

To be able to see how tree cover across the landscape is changing, it is necessary to take a birds-eye view. Aerial photography and satellite imagery has such good resolution now that individual trees can often be distinguished, and therefore counted. There are a range of tools that can assist with this process, from powerful Geographic Information Systems, through to simply looking at photographs of an area in the past and comparing with what it looks like currently.

**Collect Earth** is one such tool developed by Open Foris to facilitate the interpretation of high and medium spatial resolution imagery available in many free online mapping tools, such as Google Earth. The tool helps users to analyse the imagery and map trees, land uses or other points of interest. Collect Earth uses a sampling approach, and therefore allows for very detailed analysis as well as more rapid analysis over larger areas. The tool has been designed to be very user friendly and no qualifications or significant experience in mapping systems are required.

Mapping of tree cover or land use through Collect Earth has been completed through 'mapathons', involving university students mapping large areas over the course of a week. Collect Earth not only allows for the mapping of tree cover from current satellite images, but also historical and contemporary images as they become available. In this way, it is a valuable tool for establishing tree-cover baselines (this can also be done retrospectively if appropriate historical imagery is available), and identifying changes in tree cover at the end of the project. If using Collect Earth to do this, be aware that tree cover changes are not always identifiable from low or medium resolution satellite images (that is, not very detailed imagery) while trees are small. After four or five years, however, many landscapes may have canopies large enough to be identified, depending on how the FMNR trees have been managed, and how good the quality of available imagery is.

To ensure the data being collected through Collect Earth accurately represents the reality on the ground, it is good practice to establish a number of reference sites for ground truthing where in-field tree surveys (see above) have been done. These sites should be selected in a number of different locations, covering the range of different land use types. Record the location of the site using both GPS references as well as a clear description (photographs can help with this) so that it can be revisited throughout the project. At the site, record the number, species and size (diameter at breast height and height) of the trees present. You may also wish to record any other activities or land uses occurring in the area to cross-reference with the mapping that has been done.

Collect Earth and support information can be found here: [openforis.org/tools/collect-earth](https://openforis.org/tools/collect-earth)



**Figure 1** Satellite image of FMNR champion's farm (Year 1 of project) showing their FMNR trial site, photo point location and two photos of the site from ground truthing. Nakuru, Kenya (2018). Photo: A. Muller

## A simple guide to photopoint monitoring for FMNR

Taking regular photos at a set point can be a very successful way to monitor changes over time and the effectiveness of projects such as FMNR. Setting up [photopoint](#) monitoring can be fast, simple and inexpensive.

The most important element of photopoint monitoring is to **keep returning to the same position** and take a photo in the **same direction**, so that comparisons can be made of the physical change at a given location. For a project that is five years long, these photos should be taken at a minimum of every 12 months.

### Materials required

- digital camera (a camera with a built-in GPS, such as a good-quality smart phone, is ideal)
- computer for data storage
- GPS (if not included in your camera/phone)
- paint or ribbon to mark photopoint location (optional)

### Approach

- Select a location in the landscape that you expect will show some changes as a result of your project.
- Identify two objects that should not move, such as big trees or rocks, or a hillside in the background.
- Stand in front of one object, facing towards the other, and take a photo of the landscape. Make sure that the second object is included in the photo. If you can, mark your location on the first object with paint or a ribbon. Get the land user's permission first!
- If your camera records GPS locations, then make sure this is turned on.
- Return to the same place every 12 months and take another photo. It helps to bring a copy of last year's photo, to make sure you are capturing the same view of the landscape.
- Export your photos from the camera to the computer as soon as you return to the office. Label each file with the location name and date, and save them in a specially created folder. Make sure this folder is accessible from other computers too.
- Repeat this approach every 12 months so that you can build a pictorial record of changes in the landscape.

### Hints and tips

- Minimise sun glare by timing the photo when the sun will be behind you – between 9am and 3pm is best, depending on which direction you are facing.
- Taking photos on cloudy but bright days can help avoid strong shadows.
- Photos should be taken at the same point in the season each year.



**Figure 2** Comparison photos of a hillside overlooking Yameriga village, Ghana: a. Feb 2010, Photo: P. Akaribo; b. April 2014. Photo: A. Crawford

For more detailed instructions regarding photopoint monitoring, the following resource is recommended: [nrmsouth.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Photo-Monitoring-Fact-Sheet-NRM-South.pdf](https://nrmsouth.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Photo-Monitoring-Fact-Sheet-NRM-South.pdf).

You can also find a copy on the [FMNR Manual resources page](#).

## Sharing FMNR findings

There are hundreds of examples of communities and land users describing benefits and changes to their land and lives after implementing FMNR. There are also news media and other reports showing how communities live better, or cope with crises differently, after using FMNR to transform their landscapes. These reports are true. The authors have seen these changes with their own eyes, and have heard these reports from trusted colleagues.

However, these types of reports, in the forms of stories, case studies, interviews and testimonials, are difficult for policy makers, donors, leaders and decision-makers to apply. If you don't know the people reporting these stories, and you haven't seen such changes yourself, it is difficult to know what is true – what is definitely because of FMNR, rather than other factors.

One goal for the FMNR Manual is to encourage as many FMNR projects as possible to consider using a minimum set of nine FMNR core indicators, so that more projects across the movement will be able to compare their work and its impacts. Together, these projects will add up to an impressive story!

FMNR Manual users can contribute to building an ongoing evidence base by notifying the [FMNR Hub](#) of published evaluations, research and lessons learned from their FMNR work.

### Systems for tracking the FMNR movement

In order to track the spread of FMNR around the world, tools and systems are under development that will allow projects, organisations and individuals to share how they are supporting FMNR, who is doing the work, how and where it's being practised, and what the outcomes and impacts have been so far. These tools will include a web-based dashboard that can track the spread of FMNR around the world.

Stay in touch with the [FMNR Hub](#) as mobile apps, interactive maps, training, social media tools and an online dashboard become available.



## Case study

### Reflections from the field in Timor-Leste: how do we know if our work works?

Anne Crawford, World Vision Australia's Senior Research and Evaluation Advisor (Food Security and Climate Change), describes a typical project evaluation approach.

We lean forward to hear the soft voices of the women and our interpreter over the mid-afternoon tropical downpour. As the rain drums on the corrugated iron roof, I wonder briefly if we will still be able to safely cross the river back to town, before returning my thoughts to the meeting.

We're discussing how our Australian Government-funded FMNR project has benefited the women and men of Fahira village. Today, women have gathered at the home of the farmers' group leader to share their experiences.

Such meetings – or 'group discussions' – are one way that we collect information when evaluating projects as they come to an end. We've chosen to meet with women and men separately to allow them the space to share different project impacts and ensure that there is equal opportunity to speak.

Evaluating a project in the remote communities of the Timor-Leste highlands during the wet season is not without its challenges, but the timing works well for the availability of community members. With the onset of the rains, they are less likely to be working in the fields and our evaluation is less disruptive to their daily lives. Instead, it throws up different logistical challenges for us – of which, 'making it there' is the greatest.

World Vision projects are usually evaluated by an external consultant, with the support of local staff, casual employees and sometimes a representative from an international office – in this case, World Vision Australia. Considerable pre-planning goes on: developing terms of reference for engaging the consultant, agreeing on key evaluation questions, designing the approach, drafting the tools for data collection, finalising the budget and arranging logistics of vehicles, accommodation, village visits and more.

Most projects have a baseline report for us to refer to, which summarises what conditions were like prior to the project starting. This, together with the project design, is important in framing the final evaluation.

Along with the focus group discussions, the consultant will usually undertake interviews with significant partners or stakeholders in the project – for example, local department of forestry staff or village leaders. Village walks provide the opportunity for land users to talk about the changes they have made, and show us their progress in managing the forest using FMNR and planting high-value tree species. Household surveys are also a commonly used tool for any agricultural or natural resource management program, as we seek to unpack the impact of the project with regards to new knowledge and awareness, adoption of improved methods of farming, household income and child well-being.

When used, the household survey is always the most significant undertaking of an evaluation, often involving a number of newly trained survey collectors, fanning out across the project's communities to survey randomly selected households over the space of a week or two. The completion of 400 of these surveys is not unusual, and sometimes it's many, many more. Schedules need to account for local market days, when no-one will be at home, as well as religious holidays and the distance between houses. For this evaluation, enumerators needed to understand the project and the questions, so that when we firstly design them in English, they can read them in Tetun, translate to a local dialect if required, and record the response.

We're also using tablets for the collection of household data instead of the more common paper-based survey. After some effort setting them up, the wins come at the end when the results are quickly downloaded into a spreadsheet, avoiding the time-consuming and sometimes error-prone process of manually entering all of the survey data.

Once all the data is collected, our consultant will start the task of building the story for this evaluation. Did we achieve the project goal and outcomes? Were the activities appropriate to the goal? What can we learn from this evaluation to inform future project designs? Have we made a difference to the day-to-day living for the families that we work with? Did women and men experience different impacts from the project? Our consultant will do this by methodically reviewing the project plan and proposed outcomes, and draw conclusions by analysing the different forms of data that have been gathered. Sometimes there is conflicting information, which will lead to further questions or hypotheses as to why this might be so.

Outside, the rain eases as the women's focus group discussion draws to a close. We say our goodbyes and, jumping puddles, make a run for the 4WD that will ferry us back to the local office. The time in Fahira has strengthened our understanding of the project and its impact, and sharpens our questions for tomorrow's focus group discussions.



**Figure 3** Meeting with project participants during a focus group discussion allows for insights about the project's impact. Photo: A. Crawford



**Figure 4** Village walks with project participants provide an opportunity for rich discussion. Photo: A. Crawford



### Some tips for FMNR project M&E

- Thinking about how you will assess the effectiveness of your project from the start means you will have the right information at the end.
- Many indicators of change are quantitative in nature, so you'll need to collect quality information about your community at the baseline for comparison at the endline.
- A good M&E plan will ensure that you know who is responsible for collecting what information, and how frequently.
- Indicators are important measures of the change that you wish to see. Don't forget to update your indicator tracking table with baseline values at the beginning of your project – otherwise, how will you know what the extent of change is?
- When collecting data, make sure it can be disaggregated into groups – such as male/female and people with disabilities – wherever possible. This is important to demonstrate the inclusiveness of your project implementation; it's helpful to describe what impacts are affecting who.
- It can be good to report results as both a proportion (such as the percentage of land users and households) as well as in numbers (such as the number of male and female land users), because often donors want to aggregate results to show impact.
- As a final check, it can be helpful to think about five key statements that would interest your donor at the end of your project – and make sure you will have the quantitative data to support these. Donors like numbers!