

Chapter 5

Community engagement to create a sustainable FMNR practice

Summary: Community engagement to create a sustainable FMNR practice

- Effective community engagement that helps a community to understand, be empowered, confident, innovative and share their experiences is critical for long-term sustainability of the FMNR movement.
- Community engagement generally covers six main areas:
 1. **Working with the community** to build relationships and trust when introducing the concept of FMNR, as well as understanding who to engage and how through a **stakeholder analysis**.
 2. Creating a community-led **FMNR action plan** to move from engagement to action.
 3. **Building capacity** in the community, not only to practise FMNR technically, but also to solve problems, negotiate, experiment, observe, advocate for policy changes, and communicate and share FMNR with others.
 4. Supporting **FMNR champions** to spread the movement and support the community to adopt the practice sustainably. This involves timely, regular follow-ups, particularly in the early stages.
 5. **Identifying, creating and implementing bylaws** to reflect the community's agreements about FMNR and how the resources should be managed.
 6. **Advocating for policy change** to help further enable the spread of FMNR.
- As each community is different – with different cultures, histories, politics and challenges – it will be necessary to work with them closely to design and implement both sensitive and effective community engagement activities.
- When community engagement in FMNR is effective, communities understand the link between their lives and the environment, and are fully empowered to identify, experiment, innovate and share the changes necessary in a sustainable way.

Resources

- [Guidelines for Facilitators](#), available through the FMNR Hub, describe one way to introduce and explore FMNR with a community and work towards developing an action plan for its implementation.
- The [FMNR action plan template](#) (Annex 2) can be used to plan FMNR activities with the community.
- The [stakeholder analysis template](#) (Annex 3) can be used to identify key influencers and groups to engage in FMNR activities.

For FMNR to become a sustainable practice embedded in everyday life, it requires a community that is empowered and interested to:

- understand their environment and identify what is needed to improve their lives;
- change the ways they think about and manage their environment;
- create and implement bylaws and other agreements on sustainable land management and income generation;
- when possible, work with government officials and others to create a favourable legal and policy environment in which they work and live; and
- share their experience and knowledge with others to ensure the spread of FMNR and its benefits.

This level of community understanding, empowerment, confidence, innovation and sharing is the result of ongoing, intentional engagement with all stakeholders in the community. In any FMNR project, this process starts with the taking stock assessment described in [Chapter 3](#) and continues through the following components of an FMNR project:

1. Working with the FMNR community.
2. FMNR action planning.
3. Building capacity.
4. Supporting FMNR champions.
5. Identifying, creating and implementing bylaws.
6. Advocating for change.

These components may be represented in different ways across different FMNR projects. The purpose of each component is described below; suggestions for ways to approach these are based on our experiences from many different projects.

Examples of community engagement activities

Whether you have worked with the community in question for a long time or are new to the area, a good entry point is to learn from people's key concerns uncovered in the taking stock assessment. Generally, people will engage with topics of vital importance to them. Ask questions – lots of questions. People love to be heard; and, by asking the right questions, your audience will be forced to think creatively, come to conclusions and devise solutions they may have never considered before. A self-generated solution has much more power than one provided by an outsider.

Engagement can come in many forms. If you are introducing FMNR to a community unfamiliar with the concept, engagement may include meetings to explain the benefits, asking elders key questions in front of a wider audience and conducting an exercise that explores what the environment was like in the past, what it is like in the present and what is likely in the future. Engagement could also involve storytelling through theatre or film, or by telling the right story at the right time. Exchange visits are another powerful form of engagement, giving the floor to an 'outsider' who has lived and overcome the same difficulties experienced by the audience. At the right time, an FMNR demonstration and full training, with timely and regular follow-ups and encouragement, will be required.

Where the community is already practising FMNR, or fully committed to it, engagement might take the form of helping with bylaw creation, troubleshooting problems or providing capacity building for changing policies that impede the success of FMNR. Maintaining relationships through regular visits to encourage, correct (if necessary) and to advise on dealing with obstacles is important. What separates a good FMNR facilitator from the rest is the ability to make genuine friendships, to have empathy and to be a good listener. Attending weddings, funerals and birth ceremonies may not seem like working (to a Western world view, at least), but this type of engagement can spell the difference between successfully introducing FMNR and simply trying to.

Here are some activities that are frequently undertaken to introduce, or further support the community, in the development of the FMNR movement:

- Wide-scale awareness creation, including practical field demonstrations of FMNR techniques and use of local media, such as radio and posters, to inform the public of its benefits.
- Consultation meetings and stakeholder planning, preferably working towards creating a shared vision for the future. Community ownership and commitment will make the difference between merely having plans and having plans that work.
- Vulnerability and capacity analysis (VCA) – see tools for this [here](#).
- Facilitation of community-led action planning, implementation, monitoring and adaptation to ensure the best outcomes from the efforts of land users.
- Facilitation of open dialogue and exchanges at the community level through workshops and community meetings. All stakeholders, including minorities and marginalised groups, need to be heard, because when aiming to sustainably manage a shared natural resource base, everybody's needs must be accommodated to the degree possible.
- Engaging children through school programs or environmental club activities. Children can also be a powerful force for change, and should be included appropriately.
- Survey of potential FMNR fields and development of preferred FMNR species list with the community (see [Chapter 4](#))
- Stakeholder analysis to identify potential partners and important stakeholders within and beyond the community, such as identifying traditional and religious thought leaders. See following section for more information on one way of doing this.
- Facilitation of exchange visits with existing FMNR practitioners. This is a powerful way to demonstrate the benefits of FMNR.
- Strengthening of existing governing structures, through training, mentorship, networking, etc; or, if they are not already present, facilitating their establishment. These structures can include FMNR committees, task groups, associations and similar organisational structures, according to the community's culture and needs.
- Creating workable mechanisms for dealing with threats and obstacles. Usually this includes development of bylaws around tree use and management; establishment of volunteer patrollers; and a sustainable and appropriate means of enforcing regulations, such as fines, community service or other approaches as agreed by the community.
- Advocacy for government recognition and formalisation of rights and responsibilities of those practising FMNR.

Working with the community

Engaging the community in the right way from the beginning will be foundational to the success of any FMNR activities going forward. FMNR involves change: not just in the landscape, but often in the ways that people interact with each other. Understanding traditions, traditional roles and the dynamics of people in the community is an important part of engagement. Key principles of FMNR, such as inclusion and ensuring that women and minorities have equal rights and access, may require the community to carefully think through their values and norms. This is a valuable outcome, but it requires courage and openness. The following sections will describe some of the things to keep in mind when engaging with the community to achieve these objectives. It is also important to remember that these activities should occur throughout an FMNR project, not simply as part of initial activities.

Encouraging community involvement

It is important that decisions about land use involve all the different groups in the community; including women and men, elders, young people and children, people with disabilities and those who may not work the land, as well as any minority groups. In FMNR, the more people involved the better. Having people from all backgrounds share their experience and collaborate to improve their environment makes everyone more successful.

If there are both settled and nomadic populations using the land, it is ideal to involve both in discussions and planning if possible. Herders may think reforestation means they will no longer have access to traditional grazing grounds. Take time to involve them and explain benefits; they too can bring knowledge, experience and valuable

contributions to regeneration work. [Chapter 7](#) includes more information on how to involve herders and other groups such as charcoal makers, woodcutters and representatives from other industries who may feel their income source is at risk because of FMNR.

Traditional leaders and land owners are particularly important to involve. Where possible, include extension staff from departments of environment, forestry and agriculture, as well as local authorities, across both FMNR planning and decision-making.

Stakeholder analysis is a tool that can be used to identify these different groups or key individuals, and examine their power to influence the outcomes of the FMNR project. This information is valuable for identifying who to engage, and how best to involve them. For example, in northern Ghana a 'power analysis' was conducted to identify who the key influencers were in the community. This enabled project staff to initially focus their efforts on this group, which included local government, traditional chiefs and the tindaama or 'land custodians'. Once they had convinced this group of the benefits of FMNR, the rest of the community readily followed their lead. As a result, this project became very successful in a short period of time. A stakeholder analysis template can be found in [Annex 3](#).



The value of including community leaders

When you are engaging with the community, don't forget the community leaders – these people can make or break the success of FMNR! Leaders, for our purposes, come in many different forms:

- **Traditional leaders** often determine how land is used, and they have a significant impact on the attitudes of the community. By engaging with traditional leaders first, you may find their support ignites the interest of the community as a whole.
- **Faith leaders** play an important and often influential role in the lives of the community; they need to be invited into FMNR efforts too.
- **Group leaders** in cooperatives, as well as farmers', women's and other community groups, are important allies.
- **Natural leaders** are influencers in their community, and it is important to know who they are and include them in FMNR efforts. Natural leaders are people that others trust and look to for direction.

Leaders can support the FMNR movement by reinforcing positive messages about FMNR, leading by example through their own FMNR practice, helping to mediate conflicts over FMNR plots and communal resources, enforcing bylaws, and enabling access to the community for a project facilitator.

Involvement through FMNR groups

While FMNR can be practised by individuals as well as whole communities, it is helpful to work with others when possible. Two heads are better than one when problems come up, and groups of people can exert greater influence than individuals alone. Working as a group is also very important when tackling landscape-scale challenges. Making changes at the scale of a whole watershed or catchment area requires those at the top of the hills to work with those further down.

Belonging to a group can provide mutual support, shared learning, collective action when needed and a united front to approach government entities, NGOs and donors. Common relevant community groups that FMNR operates through include:

- women's groups;
- youth groups or clubs;

- farmers' and producers' groups;
- cooperatives and collectives;
- savings groups; and
- groups existing for the purposes of mutual support and collective action, which have an interest in FMNR.

Where a community does not have existing groups able to fill this role, committees and groups can be formed exclusively for the purposes of the FMNR work. While people are more highly motivated to practise FMNR on their own private land, as opposed to group work on communal land, the benefits of belonging to a group still apply.

Building community agreement and ownership

FMNR involves decision-making, therefore community ownership of the process is essential. The physical practices that are part of FMNR activities are important, but they will not succeed unless the people who use the land more broadly are in agreement on how to manage it, as well as the regeneration of the trees.

Every man, woman or young person who uses the land should decide together how the community will treat the trees being regenerated, and what benefits each will get from the FMNR work.

FMNR succeeds best when everyone who uses or accesses the managed land is engaged in the process from start to finish. This way, FMNR plots are more likely to be protected from damage by competing land uses, such as grazing, and conflicts over the use of resources are avoided.

Building relationships and trust

Any type of change, even good change, can be frightening. Not everyone in the community may be convinced that the changes brought about through FMNR will be good. They may worry trees will compete with their crops, or that their herds will be permanently kept from traditional grazing grounds. Or they may simply worry about changing the way they work their land.



Project success is not just about managing projects

We are dealing with human beings and we need to foremost make connections on the human level. So, as agents of change, we need to show genuine interest in the things that are important to the people we work with – births, marriages, deaths, cultural and religious events are the big events of many rural people's lives. To act as if they weren't important and to restrict your dealings with people to FMNR issues would limit our own growth as human beings, the richness of our experience and the making of genuine friendships, just as it would limit the degree to which communities trust us.

FMNR thrives when people trust each other and when there is cooperation to reach their shared goals. It is important that everyone has the opportunity to understand and become comfortable with FMNR in their own way. For some, this will take longer than for others; and for the majority, this often happens once a critical mass (a convincing number) of people are already practising it. Ideally, initial FMNR workshops, training and capacity building meetings will facilitate a learning journey for the community, where people grow to associate their current challenges with deforestation. Developing their aspirations for greening will culminate in the creation of a shared vision for the future.

For an FMNR initiative to be adopted, considerable time needs to be invested into promoting an environment of open dialogue and exchange of ideas. This is especially true when someone external to the community is introducing FMNR. It will probably be necessary to conduct several meetings before people are convinced to

experiment with FMNR. After all, FMNR may challenge practices that go back many generations; practices which, to their way of thinking, are rational and good.

Community engagement will also look different depending on whether it is facilitated by members of community or someone from the outside, like a program manager for a development organisation or a government extension worker. If you are not a part of the community, a critical piece of your work is learning as much as you can about the community before you engage them in FMNR. You need to build relationships and trust, so the community has a reason to hear what you say.

The key to FMNR success is that the community doing the FMNR work has full ownership of the process. If FMNR is promoted by anyone from outside that community, it's critical they know how to work in a way that does not take over, but leaves decisions, responsibility and power firmly in the hands of the people. Liberal use of questions and allowing time for people to make their own conclusions goes a long way towards empowering and enabling the community.

It is wise to expect some resistance and even opposition. Be prepared to make visits and spend time with people one-on-one and in small groups. Most importantly, join people on their farms or communal FMNR sites and **work with them on pruning**, explaining the benefits as you go. When extension agents do not engage in physical labour, it conveys conceit and puts distance between themselves and the people they are trying to teach; who, in most cases, earned everything they own through manual work. Above all, always **listen**; listen for what people know already, listen to their concerns, and listen to their hopes for the future.



Remember these points when engaging the community to build agreement and trust

1. Be inclusive of everyone, regardless of their role, gender, ethnic group and age.
2. Respect and encourage thoughtful, civil debate.
3. Discuss every person's concerns and work together to find solutions that help everyone. There is nearly always a locally appropriate solution; give people the opportunity to suggest it.
4. Always start with the assumption the other person has positive intentions and respond to misunderstandings and mistakes gently.
5. Whenever possible, invite people already practising FMNR to share their experiences and knowledge with your community.
6. Listen and learn. By listening you will develop the knowledge necessary to support the community. It is the only way for you to find out what might be the best way to introduce FMNR. Listening will help you become aware of threats to success and it will win you many allies.
7. Share what you know and what you don't know. Admit when you don't know the answers.
8. Talk about values. Don't lecture or preach, just share your values, listen to others' and walk your talk. Then, when you make suggestions, connect them to shared values.
9. Make sure that everyone knows they can try FMNR in their own way, on as much or as little land as they are comfortable using.
10. Do what you say. If you promise things you can't do, people might like you, but they won't trust you.



Case study

Inspiring communities to act in Ghana

FMNR champion Norbert Akolbila is telling a success story under moonlight in Ghana's Bong District.

Norbert is the late founder of Movement for Natural Regeneration (MONAR), a Ghanaian organisation dedicated to teaching tree and land regeneration techniques to communities in West Africa.

Under the bright moonlight – supported by generator-powered electricity – the MONAR team shows videos and pictorial presentations on FMNR to the Ayopia community, while drawing attention to local environmental and degradation issues.

More than 600 community members have shown up, including the chief and assemblyman as well as women, men and children.

Norbert, a passionate advocate of FMNR, encourages everyone to join a discussion after the presentations. As he speaks, people become deeply moved. They share their knowledge of past, present and future conditions of their environment.

An older man joins the conversation.

"The good thing I know of the present is that there are now schools for our children to attend, as [formerly] we did not have any. All other things about the environment is getting worse every day."

Community members recount the good old days when their streams provided water year-round for their animals and households; the environment was green and filled with trees; and their farms provided good yields. But within the past three or so decades, they say their situation has changed, due to inappropriate land use and management practices. Some people, who've heard of the progress FMNR is making to restore degraded lands in Talensi, say they hope to introduce the concept into their community as soon as possible.

As the meeting draws to a close, Norbert addresses the community.

"I have never met such a large crowd at an outreach program at night. Even if a quarter of you people take this story seriously and practise FMNR, it will make a difference."



Figure 1 Norbert Akolbila, facilitating an FMNR event in Bongo District, Ghana (May 2015).
Photo: T. Rinaudo

From engagement to practice: FMNR action planning

Once the community has decided they want to change their environment and that FMNR is an appropriate method for addressing many of the issues that concern them, they are in the right frame of mind to implement FMNR.

Together, they can now formulate a vision statement that answers the question, “What do we want to achieve?” They can also outline a goal or goals for their work. Once done, it will be very important to jointly formulate an action plan that turns their vision and goal into reality.

This action planning may take place at an FMNR workshop. This workshop should include representatives from all groups in the community that are affected by the FMNR project. Necessary participants will have been determined from work completed while getting to know the community and the stakeholder analysis. Ensure that key influencers such as local leaders are present as well as stakeholders, such as officers from environment or agriculture ministries. See the FMNR Hub’s [Guidelines for Facilitators](#) for more information.

Establishing a vision statement and community goals

The vision statement is a description of what changes the community would like to see as a result of adopting FMNR. Visions can be a short, written statement – for example, evoking a productive landscape or a community free from poverty and hunger – or a drawing or map of the area, showing how the community would like their landscape to look in the future.

When forming a vision statement, it’s a good idea to look ahead at least five to 10 years. Vision statements are also useful to bring together a group of people and motivate collaboration around a common mission. Facilitation techniques, such as vision mapping or development of a ‘rich picture’, based on current asset and social maps¹, are useful here to help people establish a common understanding of the current situation, and a common vision for the future.

Good FMNR goals tend to include one-to-three-year action statements such as “increase tree cover from 10 to 50 trees per hectare over three years”. These goals should be specific, measurable, actionable, realistic and time-bound (SMART). It may be easiest to start with only one or a few goals to begin with. Ensure these goals are aligned with the vision statement already created.

Developing an FMNR action plan

The FMNR action plan should cover:

1. What work will be done.
2. Who is responsible for doing it (if more than one person, list them all).
3. When each action will be completed by.
4. What materials and funding are needed.
5. Where the work will take place.

The action plan should be recorded in a simple table, with columns for each of the four types of information needed, so everything is remembered for future use.

Action plans can be developed by small groups, perhaps according to geographic area or organisation, if they are a mixed group. Groups can also complete the FMNR action plan template, either in one go or step by step (see [Annex 2](#)). Where communities are fortunate enough to have a secure meeting place, it is good to pin the vision statement and action plan to the wall for them to refer to, and to keep before them during subsequent meetings.

A good plan won’t limit itself to local communities and government agencies. It will also include a communication strategy for any organisations represented by participants, such as NGOs or government departments. Participants might return to their organisations full of excitement for FMNR, but they face the challenge of

¹ These tools are commonly used in Participatory Rural Appraisal and Rapid Rural Appraisal approaches. An overview of these tools by FAO can be found [here](#), or here from the [Catholic Relief Services](#).

convincing their busy colleagues about the importance of implementing it, and they need to be prepared for this. The reality is that organisations usually already have set ways of doing things and goals they are working towards. Most are blind to new opportunities, and so participants will need to return warned and armed with a plan.

Keep in mind:

- For the action plan to work, you will need to engage everyone involved with or affected by the implementation of FMNR in the community.
- Take the time needed to come up with a workable plan (usually one to two hours).
- Make sure everybody has a chance to contribute, and that not just leaders and outspoken people make the plan. It may be necessary to separately consult marginalised groups, such as women or ethnic minorities, so they feel free to express themselves, and then to combine the plans at the end of the session.
- The plan does not have to be perfect, and good plans are always reviewed and modified regularly.
- Agree on a time to meet again and regular meeting times so that progress against the plan can be monitored. This way, if blockages have prevented tasks from being accomplished, the whole group can address the issues.

Capacity building

Capacity building activities seek to equip people with the knowledge and skills to not only successfully practise FMNR, but also to work together to do it: to negotiate, observe, experiment and share their experiences with others. Capacity building aims to help communities develop the skills and structures needed and to have the capacity to organise and manage the work, communicate about what they are doing and deal with problems. Capacity building should enable and empower participants to take full ownership of and responsibility for their FMNR practices.

Topics for capacity building

Undertaking some form of capacity needs assessment will assist in planning what topics to cover in capacity building activities, as well as identifying the best methods to use. This assessment should be based on the FMNR action plan, and any stakeholder assessment activities that were undertaken.

For a community with no experience with FMNR, capacity building activities will cover the physical and technical practice of FMNR, such as tree selection, pruning, protection and maintenance. See [Chapter 4](#) for this information.

When some form of FMNR has already been used in the area, learning about these practices will help identify the best techniques for a community to start with. Building on and perhaps adapting a traditional system is more likely to work than presenting something entirely new.

In addition to the technical components, there are many other skills a community may need to sustainably spread the FMNR movement. These include:

- Creating and using bylaws.
- Advocating for greater support of FMNR from local leaders, other leaders and government officials. This may include advocacy for favourable policies or simply for visits from agricultural or forest agents. [Citizen Voice and Action](#) is a powerful advocacy tool taught to communities by World Vision.
- Experimenting with new methods of FMNR and documenting and sharing that learning. (See [Chapter 10](#) for monitoring and evaluation of FMNR.)
- Teaching others about FMNR. The [FMNR Online Training Academy](#) has courses available for facilitators working with the community to spread FMNR, while more information about FMNR champions can be found in the next section. This training is currently only available for World Vision staff.
- Finding and improving markets for FMNR products (wood, fodder, wild foods, traditional medicines, dyes, seeds, etc.) to increase and diversify incomes. Methods such as [Business Facilitation](#) and [Local Value Chain Development](#) are useful for this (See [Chapter 4](#).)

Methods of capacity building

Training can take different forms according to the community's needs. It could include workshops, field trips, use of demonstration sites, field schools, multi-day courses and even online training. Training may be held for large groups, farmer groups or individuals. Peer-to-peer learning is one of the most common ways that FMNR spreads, so focused effort should be put into training land users and enabling and empowering them to share their knowledge.

It is important to think about how to design these training activities so that community members are able to participate. Consider timing, distance from home and access, particularly to ensure groups such as women and people with disabilities can participate.

For FMNR practice, training should include a practical component in the field so that land users can see and practise pruning activities for themselves. Regular follow-up and field visits to boost skills and troubleshoot problems will also improve the success of FMNR.

It is important to remember that FMNR is not a standard practice, and so its actual form will vary from land user to land user. While teaching the principles of FMNR, trainers should be encouraging trainees to also experiment and learn by trial and error: to be observant, and to make adjustments to their methods accordingly.



Capacity building isn't only about bringing in new knowledge!

Capacity building also involves identifying existing knowledge and skills, and providing a forum for sharing. This is especially important when FMNR is being promoted by an outside agency. The facilitator may have FMNR experience in a wide range of contexts, and be able to address numerous questions and concerns, but communities and individuals are experts on their local context; they have learned a lot through intuition, trial and error, and observations. Recognising and valuing existing skills and capacities is important for fostering community ownership of FMNR activities.



Capacity building resources

There are many resources available for assisting in building FMNR capacity at the FMNR Hub.

Some notable examples include:

- a pictorial poster developed by World Vision in [English](#) and [French](#), which describes the process and outcomes of FMNR;
- the [FMNR quick guide](#) on how to do FMNR; and
- the [FMNR Hub YouTube channel](#), which has many instructional videos, such as:
 - [How to prune for natural regeneration](#)
 - [FMNR income generation](#)
- other video resources such as:
 - [Sustainable land management practices: Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration](#)
 - [Gestion durable des terres: Régénération naturelle assistée](#)

FMNR champions

FMNR champions are women and men who, after adopting and practising FMNR successfully themselves, have become passionate advocates. They have very good skills for managing trees and finding ways to make FMNR more effective for them, but they also have a heart for people. They have the skills to work with, support and teach others to adopt FMNR for themselves. FMNR champions also play an important role in FMNR projects and the spread of the FMNR movement more generally, due to the position of trust and influence they hold in the community.

As a Nigerien land user once explained to Tony Rinaudo in the 1980s:

If you as a foreigner convince me to try a new innovation and I implement it, but it doesn't work, I will suffer; but you can fly home with no consequences. Even if your Nigerien project staff shares this information with me, I will be sceptical because that person is paid to give those instructions, while it is me who bears the risk and the consequences. However, if another land user tells me to try something, I know it is genuine because their livelihood also depends on the efficacy of what they are promoting.

FMNR champions are valuable due to their ability to:

- share their knowledge and experience;
- teach others how to practise FMNR;
- provide encouragement and advice to other practitioners;
- help to monitor practice and troubleshoot problems; and
- work with their community to resolve conflicts, change policies and advocate with leaders and government.

Unlike most extension agents, champions live in the community and practise FMNR because it contributes to their well-being, not because they are paid to – hence they have enormous credibility. The majority of FMNR champions are members of the community they work in. By helping neighbours and family members, while drawing others in as they go, champions help establish a foundation of sustainability for FMNR practice.

The most effective FMNR champion may also be an extension worker or project manager from a development organisation. This is not always the case, of course, and even those who are not passionate and dedicated champions can still do an excellent job of training and supporting communities to practise FMNR. However, it is always helpful when paid staff have the heart of an FMNR champion.

Either way, as the community adopts and adapts FMNR to their context, and sees the benefits that it brings to their lives, more FMNR champions will be created. One goal of the FMNR movement is that each community will contribute to the spread of FMNR by teaching and supporting others to do it.

Identifying FMNR champions

Firstly, it is very important that a potential champion is practising FMNR on their own land, and that they have experienced and been rewarded by the benefits of FMNR. FMNR champions need to teach others from personal knowledge, and have enough experience so they can answer questions and anticipate potential problems.

Not all good FMNR practitioners are natural FMNR champions, however. Champions are people who are excited about the changes they see and have an inborn desire to share the good news with others. Communities will usually know who these people are. These are often the people chosen by a community to represent them during training or some other activity, because they will freely share what they've learned, and have the necessary communication and training skills to do so effectively.

External organisations seeking to hire FMNR promoters should seek candidates who share the qualities of champions. If possible, hire staff with existing FMNR expertise, who are practising FMNR on their own land. If this is not possible, don't worry: it's easier to learn the skills of pruning and troubleshooting than to have a generous heart for people, and natural teaching skills. Where practical, link staff who have limited FMNR expertise with existing FMNR champions and other experienced practitioners in the communities for FMNR training and mentoring.

Qualities of good FMNR champions

- **Excellent FMNR practitioners** who monitor their progress and experiment to solve problems with their trees.
- **Good citizens** who are respected in the community because of their behaviour and moral standards.
- **Passionate about spreading FMNR** and seeing people succeed. Rather than counting the hours while working on FMNR or teaching others, they'll be energised by what they are doing.
- **Natural teachers** who communicate patiently and clearly, willing to correct students when they are wrong, encourage them when they struggle and celebrate with them when they succeed.
- **Willing and able to regularly visit with community practitioners** and participate in meetings and discussions about practising FMNR. They love people and truly enjoy visiting them, spending time with them and listening to their problems. They are the people who can be counted on to stand by you when trouble comes. They are also not already too busy with other commitments, and are therefore practically able to spare time to share FMNR. Be aware these people are often in high demand, and so may already be quite busy.
- **Able to inspire others.** Some are extroverted and comfortable leading a crowd, while others, in their own quiet way, inspire the ones and twos – both are effective, they just work differently.
- **Patient and persistent.** They understand that people may take time to adopt a new idea, and are willing to continue the dialogue without getting discouraged or angry.
- **Forgiving and tough-skinned** when they are the object of jokes and derision, sometimes even abuse, as they practise and promote what may seem to some unusual at first.
- **Leaders who take initiative.** Not waiting for others to tell them what to do, but testing out new ideas and making use of opportunities.



Case study

Meet two FMNR champions

Nagueyeh

Nagueyeh grew up in Awdal district of Somaliland, and has worked with World Vision Somalia since 2009.

Nagueyeh first learnt about FMNR in 2012, through an Australian-funded project. At first, he thought it was only a farming intervention, but later came to see it as a means of fighting climate change, environmental degradation and building livelihoods.

“When we started the project, people did not value trees,” he says. “Cultivators asked, ‘how can we leave trees on our farms? Our crops won’t grow because of the shade’, and pastoralists said, ‘we need to cut trees down in order for our livestock to have fodder!’”

Nagueyeh's journey had begun. He read widely to learn all he could about FMNR, and took the attitude of learning together with the community as they developed a form of FMNR suitable for Somaliland. Demonstration plots were set up at regional and farm-scale levels, and progress was monitored jointly with the land users. Any small bushes present were pruned, and water harvesting structures were dug to trap water.



Figure 2 Mohamed Nagueyeh Amin, FMNR champion at World Vision Somalia. Photo: T. Rinaudo

In six months, grasses started growing on previously bare ground. In two years, trees had increased in height by one to two metres, providing firewood and boosting honey production to supplement women's incomes.

From the outset, Nagueyeh engaged with government personnel. The ministry of the environment helped with creation of bylaws and assisted communities in enforcing them.

Nagueyeh's dream is to see all programs in Somaliland, no matter what sector they address, have an FMNR component.

"We need to put all our resources into protecting and restoring the environment through FMNR."

Amina

Amina is a 27-year-old mother of three and an FMNR champion. I met her while visiting a community-designated FMNR site in Somaliland.

I didn't notice her in the beginning. But as we began examining some of the regenerating shrubs, the community rushed around one of the plants. Once there was silence, Amina walked up to the plant and began explaining its importance to the community and what it meant to be an FMNR champion.

I was a little taken aback. Having already spent a few days in Somaliland, the confidence that Amina exuded in the presence of men many years her senior was, I must admit, unexpected. But as she explained the many uses of the plant and its importance to the community, there was silence and heads were nodding in agreement.



Figure 3 Amina, a respected FMNR champion in Somaliland (2017). Photo and story: M. Munyeki

Coaching FMNR champions

Although champions will already have many suitable natural qualities, all can benefit from training and support to make their efforts more successful. Champions are critical to the success and spread of an FMNR project, so investing in them pays valuable dividends well beyond the project period.

Coaching is not primarily about teaching the skills of tree management – these will likely be skills in which the person is already very knowledgeable – but will usually focus on helping champions to increase their ability to teach, guide and lead others by example. Coaching should ensure FMNR champions have support and skills to:

- listen to others with a focus on understanding;
- facilitate discussions in a way that gives all participants a voice;
- expect and be ready to counter opposition;
- identify and resolve problems and conflicts;
- teach not only FMNR techniques, including managing trees, but also skills around working together, solving problems and advocating for change;
- gently and encouragingly correct errors in technique to help improve tree management;
- identify and share lessons to improve land users' practice;

- work with government staff and engage on policy issues;
- promote FMNR to a wide audience through media and events; and
- work with interested stakeholders, such as school management boards and faith-based groups, to embed FMNR more broadly in the community.

Ensuring sustainability

One important thing to remember is that even the most passionate person can become overwhelmed or discouraged. This is something we do not want to happen to FMNR champions!

Most champions will work in their own communities on a voluntary basis, on their own time, at their own pace, since communities usually cannot afford to pay them for help. Simply being recognised as an FMNR champion often gives status to a community member, but it is important to recognise the contributions these dedicated people make, and ensure that they know their work is seen and appreciated. Depending on the community context, and the personality of the champion, it may be appropriate to publicly acknowledge and thank them as part of a community FMNR meeting or other ceremony, or to provide them with a certificate or other acknowledgement of their contributions.

On some occasions, a project or extension service may wish to ask excellent FMNR champions to assist in additional FMNR work outside their own community. In this case, it is particularly important to ensure that these requests, which champions may not feel comfortable refusing, do not overburden the champion, or compete with their own responsibilities and livelihood. Champions who work outside their communities deserve recognition and gratitude, and should be compensated for any extra expenses associated with their help, such as travel, time away from the farm, meals and incidental costs.

If a project or organisation wishes to work with a champion beyond what's realistic for a busy person to sustain on top of their own obligations, then hiring that person as a regular staff member, at a salary which enables them to meet their other obligations while dedicating their time to FMNR promotion, is appropriate.

Identifying, creating and agreeing on bylaws

Bylaws are rules or laws established by a community or group of people to regulate itself. Bylaws are essential to the success of FMNR. The most effective bylaws are created through community-wide consultation, so that everyone who uses the land understands how the changes required for FMNR will affect them, and is willing to work with FMNR instead of against it.

When establishing an FMNR project, the community will need to create bylaws and decide what the consequences are for those who do not abide by the agreed rules. Bylaws come under the law of the government authorities, so local officials and leaders should be part of the process of creating and supporting bylaws for FMNR. This lends greater weight to the community bylaws, and opens the possibility of referring difficult cases to a higher authority.

Bylaws are created out of community discussions about goals, concerns and needs related to practising FMNR. Below is a list of issues that are often covered by bylaws, but be sure that your bylaws include any concerns or special situations important to your community.

Common questions for bylaws to address:

- How should the community organise FMNR work? For example, as a cooperative, an association, simply through their traditional management structures, or by individuals on their own land?
- Who is to be included in the bylaw?
- Who will have user rights to the resources from regenerated trees (wood, grass, wild foods, medicines, etc.)?
- When and how can resources be used?
- Who has user rights when a person practises FMNR on their own private land?
- Who has user rights when FMNR is practised on communal land?

- How should communities share the income and benefits from FMNR activities on communal land?
- What responsibilities will different members of the community have?
- How will they protect the FMNR work? For example, from theft, fire, livestock or vandalism?
- What regulations are needed around livestock? For example, around designated grazing areas and arrangements to harvest grass?
- What are the consequences of not complying with the agreed bylaws, and who has the responsibility to enforce them?
- What avenues can be taken when designated authorities do not prosecute offenders? (This may be the case where family ties, abuse of power and position or bribery are in play.)
- How will the community engage with government agencies and ministries?
- How should the community be represented to local government?
- What specific roles should government agencies have with respect to FMNR activities? What about development, community or other agencies already facilitating FMNR work?
- How often will agreements and bylaws be reviewed to see if changes are needed?

Most communities don't employ the services of a lawyer; but for very complex projects, such as carbon projects requiring high levels of transparency and accountability, working with one may be beneficial. An external facilitator may also assist in the process of developing bylaws, especially to ensure all voices are heard and agreement is secured from all those involved.

Developing and implementing bylaws

The development of bylaws involves many discussions with the community, seeking to shape the proposed bylaws into something everyone is comfortable with. These discussions are critical, because FMNR will be most successful when everyone who uses the land agrees to support the work in the most appropriate way. The example provided in the Talensi case study on page 81 describes the process that four communities in northern Ghana used to develop management plans and bylaws for their FMNR work.

During bylaw development, some community members may have concerns about whether a bylaw will restrict them from meeting their needs, or they may disagree with certain bylaws. Minority members of the community may be especially concerned that their rights and needs will be overlooked by the majority. These concerns should be acknowledged and managed by those who are facilitating the process.

When the community has identified and agreed to a set of bylaws, the roles each person has in enforcing them, and the consequences for not complying with them, people will have much more confidence that any FMNR work they do will be protected, and that they will benefit from their work. This is very important for motivation.

Including government

Forestry and agricultural government departments, or individual government officers trained in traditional top-down management of forestry or agricultural resources, may resist the idea of 'community-managed forestry', or integration of trees into agricultural land. They may believe that, if communities have control over the trees on their land, they will destroy all remaining vegetation. Advocacy and awareness creation is needed to reassure them that greater diversity and increased trees will result from the practice of FMNR. It is vital to build relationships with and influence forestry staff to ensure they are exposed to successful FMNR models. Safeguards against over-exploitation (or, to put it more positively, towards sustainable tree management) may be more likely when forestry personnel are invited to participate in bylaw formulation.

Including charcoal makers and other commercial interests

Those involved in the commercial use of natural resources, or in activities such as illegal charcoal making or poaching, may oppose community or individual user rights, ownership or management of trees. Advocacy may be required to restrict their exploitation of the land. Alternatively, charcoal makers could become your greatest allies

if convinced that their own livelihoods would be more sustainable and less laborious through the practice of FMNR.

Community members who do not support the FMNR work may also steal or destroy trees pruned by FMNR practitioners. Community-wide consultation and agreement on bylaws and consequences for infringements needs to occur early in the process.

Reviewing and changing bylaws over time

In the early stages, it will be necessary to review the bylaws, and how they are being interpreted and implemented. Ensuring that all users are compliant, and that any infringements are dealt with quickly, will help the community to respect the bylaws and reduce conflict and infringements.

It may be necessary to experiment with bylaws, just as you experiment with physical FMNR work. This involves agreeing to test a set of bylaws for a period of time, then discussing whether any changes are needed.

As the community learns from their experience of practising FMNR, bylaws may need to be added or adapted to better meet the needs of all. Everyone affected must agree to any changes to the bylaws, and this too may require multiple discussions before agreement is reached. As FMNR work progresses, the community may decide to add activities which require advocating outside the community, such as working with government authorities to create more helpful policies, or creating certified markets for wood produced through FMNR. This is discussed further in the next section.



Case study

Community bylaws at work in Talensi, Ghana

An FMNR project in Talensi in northern Ghana worked with four communities to develop bylaws related to fire, forest management and land use.

An external organisation skilled in community facilitation was engaged to support the communities through the following processes:

1. Community entry, planning meetings and stakeholder consultation.
2. Identification of key stakeholders.
3. Engagement meetings.
4. Sensitisation and training workshops.
5. Drafting of fire and forest management plans.
6. Validation and adoption of **fire and forest management plans**.
7. Community dialogue on land ownership.
8. Development of land use bylaws.
9. Validation of **land use bylaws**.

Here are some bylaws that were developed through this process:

1. Land owners must seek advice from FMNR members before giving lands out for farming purposes.
2. Land owners are to survey the land with prospective land users to identify what trees are not to be cut.
3. The agreement between land users and land owners should be documented and witnessed by a third party.

4. Both land users and land owners are to be responsible for the maintenance of trees on a piece of land. Thus:
 - a. Land owners are to select some trees to be owned by land users as a way of motivating them to protect the trees in the farms; or
 - b. Land users and land owners should alternatively harvest or enjoy tree produce from time to time; or
 - c. Land users are to gather some produce from trees for the land owner if they are unable to harvest tree produce from the land.
5. Land users must create fire belts around the farm for tree protection.
6. Successive land users must be informed about rules and regulations given by a land owner.
7. Fire volunteers are to help women select forest trees to cut and prune. These women can collectively trim shrubs, gather excess stems and prune dry branches for personal use.
8. When collectively harvesting tree branches, women should not destroy the trees.
9. All bylaws about forest protection and preservation are applicable to every land user in the community.
10. There should be a community-wide sensitisation on agreed land use arrangements and best practices in tree maintenance.

A detailed report that describes the process outlined above and additional bylaws for each community can be found [here](#) on the FMNR Manual website. Another example of bylaws from Niger (in French) can be found [here](#).

Advocating for policy change

FMNR is most successful when there are government policies that give the tree and land users rights or ownership of their natural resources. FMNR also benefits from policies that allow for organisational structures, such as cooperatives and development groups, to exist and use a defined set of bylaws created and agreed upon by all stakeholders.

In countries where similar favourable policies already exist, they still may not be implemented, enforced or even known about. Where communities are not aware of their rights under these policies, development agents can play a critical role in raising awareness. Such a case occurred in Mali, where communities were exploited by middlemen claiming to have the right to harvest any trees they wanted even after forestry laws had changed. An NGO working in the area began broadcasting what the law actually stated, and this knowledge emboldened communities to stand up against the middlemen and prevent them from plundering the trees on their land.

In some situations, community bylaws may be sufficient to support FMNR work in the local policy environment. At other times, it will be necessary to work with local and/or other relevant authorities to change policies or agree upon formal rights that protect the work of FMNR practitioners, to ensure they benefit from their labour. Effecting policy change can take time and much effort. Don't be surprised if it doesn't occur within a three-to-four year timespan!

In some cases, it is possible to agree informally with authorities on user rights and policies to support FMNR implementation, but at other times it may be necessary to work towards changing official policies.

Potential legal issues

Because every community has different laws, histories and cultures, there is no 'typical' legal scenario across different communities, but there are some issues that occur frequently in FMNR projects.

Lack of land ownership

In many places, citizens don't own the land where they live and work. The land may belong to the government, a community leader or another land owner, and the users may only be tenants. Similarly, women or ethnic and religious minorities may be barred from owning land. People in this situation have little incentive to invest in improvements such as regenerating trees, because of the risk that the land or resources will be taken away from them.

While there are immediate benefits from FMNR, the big benefits are medium to long term – over three to five years. In order for practitioners to feel confident they will benefit from their efforts, it is necessary to work with government and land owners to create binding agreements on user rights or, where possible, land ownership.

Such agreements benefit everyone involved, not just the community members, because FMNR improves the entire landscape.



Case study

Impact of land ownership rights

A series of studies undertaken by the World Agroforestry Center (ICRAF) in 2016 examined what factors affected the uptake of FMNR in Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya and Rwanda. In these first three countries, land tenure arrangements were variable. Some farmers owned their land, and held the title deeds, some had customary ownership through inheritance or local knowledge, but with no title deeds, and some were reliant on communal land or leased land. In Rwanda, 90 percent of participants held title deeds to their land.

In all three countries with variable tenure arrangements, land tenure was not only raised by the community as a concern and barrier to adoption, it was also found to be a statistically significant factor in defining if a household was more or less likely to adopt FMNR. For example, in Uganda, 59 percent of farmers in the study owned land (without title deeds), but those who did not (eg. farmers on communal and rented land) were 123 percent less likely to take up FMNR. In Tanzania, 82 percent of farmers reported managing trees on their privately-owned land while 91 percent would not manage a tree on communal land.

Reasons identified for this include:

- The uncertainty created by lack of title deeds could also have discouraged investments that are considered long term in nature, such as tree planting or in this case managing trees for future benefits.
- Communal land is a common pool resource, where usually no-one is responsible for the state of the resource, yet everyone wants to gain maximum benefits from it. Although some communities have formulated local rules/bylaws that govern land management and tree regeneration, economic forces such as poverty and famine force them to compromise existing bylaws.
- Culturally, all trees belong to the land owner and these are usually men or household heads. Tenants or squatters do not own trees and this discourages them from participating in FMNR programs.
- The security and survival of trees planted or regenerating naturally on communal land is questionable and this may discourage people from investing in tree planting and management.

References

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Inequalities for women and minorities

In situations where one ethnic group or one gender dominates natural resource use, there may be a strong need to advocate for inclusiveness. In some countries, women still do not have the right to own land, or to make decisions about resources, or even to benefit from their own labour. But women are critical stakeholders in FMNR and need to be assured that they will benefit from the work invested in FMNR. (See section on ensuring FMNR is inclusive for women.)

Women are amongst the greatest harvesters and users of wood and other tree products and, along with children, they are often responsible for the daily task of firewood collection. Women also need the security of knowing that they will have equal decision-making power in how resources and incomes from FMNR work will be used. This is especially important for women-headed households.

If child-headed households exist in the area, it will also be necessary to ensure that these community members have adequate access and rights.

The same may be true of ethnic or religious minority groups. Like every other member of the community who uses or has access to the land, these groups must have equal assurance that they will benefit from the investment of protecting trees in order for FMNR to be fully successful.

Rights of nomadic and settled herders

Herders with large livestock herds may oppose FMNR, fearing that it will deny them access to traditional dry-season grazing lands. It is important to include them in early consultations and exchange visits to clearly demonstrate that the net gain in fodder that will occur with the return of trees will also benefit them. Assure them that FMNR will not exclude them from traditional grazing areas, except perhaps temporarily in areas where trees are still small and could be damaged.

Clear laws and bylaws governing the interaction between herders and farmers will also reduce the conflict between different groups, who may traditionally see themselves as being in competition for resources.

Tree ownership and use

In order to protect disappearing forests, many governments have made it illegal to cut trees, or to cut certain species of trees, or to sell charcoal or firewood. Unfortunately, these regulations rarely work as a deterrent, because most governments do not have enough resources (including finances and staffing) to protect forests efficiently and to monitor trees on farms.

This type of regulation also encourages a mentality of non-responsibility:

“If it is not my tree, why should I risk my life protecting it from theft?” or,

“If it is the government’s tree on my land, it’s better if I cut it now and benefit myself than risk having somebody else steal it and me not benefit at all.”

When it is illegal to use or sell wood and non-timber forest products, there is no economic incentive for people to invest in FMNR. For FMNR to be successful, practitioners need to be confident that they will be able to benefit from their work. So laws or formal agreements need to be made that allow FMNR communities formal user rights, or even ownership of trees, and the right to use and sell them. In countries where laws prevent the cutting or use of trees, FMNR practitioners have worked with local governments to establish markets that allow the selling of wood only from ‘certified’ regenerated trees. This can be a significant incentive to practise FMNR.



Changes to forest policy in Ethiopia to encourage land restoration

In January 2018, Ethiopia enacted the National Forest Law, revising the previous 2007 law to better recognise the rights of communities and their role in restoring and managing natural forests and plantations. In particular, the law recognises participatory forest management as a method of enhancing the role of communities in sharing responsibilities and benefits of managing natural forests in accordance with agreed management plans. The changes proposed will allow communities to improve their livelihoods through forest restoration and the socio economic benefits that can come from better forest management where previously access and rights to forest areas were limited.

For more information see the article [“Ethiopia’s new forestry law: A win for landscapes and livelihoods?”](#)

Carbon ownership

Most FMNR projects are focused on the benefits from the trees themselves, but one type of project requires a more complex legal framework: carbon sequestration projects.

In projects where communities seek to earn carbon credits from their FMNR work, it is very important to establish from the outset who owns the carbon. If the individual or community does not have legal ownership of the carbon, then their claim to receive carbon credits can be disputed and they will have no incentive to regenerate trees for carbon trading. Many countries do not have laws for this as it is a relatively new concept, so be sure to address legal title to carbon before embarking on carbon trading projects.