

**FARMER MANAGED NATURAL REGENERATION FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT
AND LIVELIHOODS PROJECT (FMNR4WELIP) PROJECT IN NABDAM DISTRICT**

**YEAR 1 PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION
SEMI-ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT
(AUGUST 1, 2023 -JANUARY 31, 2024)**

Submitted to
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Abbreviations and Acronyms

DCD	District Coordinating Director
DCE	District Chief Executive Officer
FMNR	Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration
FMNR4WELIP	FMNR for Women Empowerment and Livelihoods Project
FONAR	Forum for Natural Regeneration LBG
GAPs	Good Agricultural Practices
GNFS	Ghana National Fire Services
GSLA	Group Savings and Loans Association
KAP	Knowledge, Attitude and Practice
NRM	Natural Resource Management
PMT	Project Management Team
SG	Savings Groups
WVI	World Vision International
WVG	World Vision Ghana

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1. Background

The Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration for Women's Empowerment and Livelihoods Project (FMNR4WELIP) in the Nabdam District, Upper East Region of Ghana is funded by the Awaken Trees Foundation of Austria. The two-year pilot project is being implemented by FONAR in two communities (Dasang and Kparaboug) in the Kontintabig Electoral Area of Sakote Area Council. The project is aimed at safeguarding and enhancing women's land-based livelihoods through sustainable use of natural resources using the farmer managed natural regeneration (FMNR) land restoration technique. The project is promoting uptake of the FMNR model alongside a few viable complementary livelihood activities, targeting vulnerable female farmers, widows, female-headed households and other disadvantaged groups. The project has formed lead FMNR farmer groups and trained them to lead their communities for collective action on land restoration. The trained FMNR lead farmers in turn are expected to provide on-farm practical training to other farmers either on their own farms or on community demonstration sites for replication. This approach is intended to increase FMNR adoption among individual farmers in the project communities and beyond.

The project has two main objectives (outcomes):

Objective 1: Enhance the capacity of farmers in target communities to adopt FMNR for improved household food and livelihoods security.

Objective 2: Increase farmers, women in particular, access to alternative livelihoods that reduce pressure on tree resources.

The project expected results/outputs are as follows:

Objective 1: Enhance capacity of farmers in target communities to adopt FMNR for improved household food and livelihoods security.

- Output 1.1: Project target communities (villages) mobilized and sensitized on the project.
- Output 1.2: FMNR lead farmer groups formed and trained in FMNR techniques and good agricultural practices (GAPs).
- Output 1.3: Community bushfire awareness and preparedness enhanced in target areas.
- Output 1.4: Project target communities supported to establish FMNR demonstration plots.

Objective 2: Increase farmers, particularly female farmers, access to alternative livelihoods that reduced pressure on tree resources.

- Output 2.1: Diversified alternative livelihood options for women, the youth and the most vulnerable developed to reduce pressures on woodlands due to overdependence.
- Output 2.2: Village Savings Group (SG) concept introduced in project target communities.

This report presents the progress made in project implementation for the period August 1, 2023, to January 31, 2024, to achieve the objectives and targets set for year one. Section 3 outlines the activities implemented and the achievements made during the period under review. Section and 5 outlined early lessons learned during the project's implementation and project next steps.

2. Activity Implementation Summary

Activity 1 & 2: Farmer-to-farmer learning, community awareness raising and periodic field visits to monitor and support FMNR adoption in project communities can contribute to spread the practice. During the reporting period, the project carried out two field visits for on-farm FMNR adoption monitoring and extension support. On August 29, 2023, Christopher Pubeng and Eugene Agomna (FONAR Project Officers) visited the farms of two female lead farmers and a female follower farmer in Dasang and Kparaboug communities respectively. Again, on September 14, 2023: Christopher, Juliana and Eugene conducted another monitoring and support visit to some lead and follower farmers in the two project communities on their farms.

Activity 3: On September 21, 2023, FONAR held separate engagements with lead farmers of both project communities (Kparaboug and Dasang) to brainstorm on possible strategies of reducing the increasing human-elephant conflicts in the area. Eight lead farmers (5 females/3 males) attended the first engagement held at Kparaboug, and seven farmers (5 females/2 males) attended the second meeting held at Dasang community.

Activity 4: The District Fire Service Office, community leaders and FMNR lead farmer groups helped FONAR to identify and select 20 community fire volunteers (10 female/10 males) for the two project communities. Twelve volunteers (6 females/6 males) were selected for Dasang community and eight volunteers (4 females/4 males) for Kparaboug, which is a smaller community. On November, 16 2023, FONAR project staff held a meeting with the selected fire volunteers and some lead farmers at Dasang. The aim was to get to know the newly selected volunteers, explain the Community Fire Volunteers concept and get their support for the activity.

Activity 5: The project facilitated the formation of community fire volunteers in target villages. FONAR and personnel of the District Fire Service Office inaugurated and trained the 20 fire volunteers (10 males/10 females). The project also provided the groups with basic firefighting equipment (rakes, cutlasses, wellington boots, hand gloves and branded t-shirts).

Activity 6: FONAR facilitated the 20 project FMNR Lead farmers to visit nearby Yameriga FMNR restoration hills in Talensi District for them to interact with credible peers who have been practising FMNR for years. The take away for our project lead farmers from Yameriga was that a key success factor of the Yameriga FMNR restoration effort was the enforcement of local byelaws to discourage bush burning and tree felling. People who break the rules are made to pay fines, which are used to support in sustaining the FMNR restoration site or support other community development initiatives.

Activity 7: The project trained 15 FMNR Lead farmers (10 women/5 men) in compost making drawn from the two target project communities. The training was also used to raise awareness on the importance, benefits and advantages of organic manure and organic farming.

The expected training outcomes were; enhanced farmer's compost making skills and adaptation of organic farming to improve soil fertility. And enhanced healthy food crops production with low external farm inputs to overcome food shortages and insecurity.

Activity 8: The project procured and supplied basic fire-fighting hand tools, which were 20 pieces of cutlasses, 20 pairs of wellington boots, 20 pieces of rakes, 20 pairs of hand gloves and 20 branded t-shirts.

3. Progress in Project Implementation

Objective 1 - Enhanced capacity of farmers in target communities to adopt FMNR for improved household food and livelihoods security.

Activity 1: First on-farm FMNR implementation monitoring and support visits.

Farmer-to-farmer learning, community awareness raising and periodic field visits to monitor and support FMNR adoption in project communities can contribute to spread the practice. Therefore, regular field visits for on-farm FMNR extension support are an on-going activity of the project.

On August 29, 2023, Christopher Pubeng and Eugene Agomna (FONAR Project Officers) visited the farms of two female lead farmers and a female follower farmer in Dasang and Kparaboug communities respectively to provide on-farm technical support and to monitor FMNR adoption during the farming season. In addition, the team wanted to find out the extent to which the female lead farmers were practicing FMNR on their farms. The farmers shared experiences on local environmental changes due to land degradation and concerns about elephants' raids on their farms, and the impacts on their livelihoods. Awareness of these environmental changes partly motivated them to try the FMNR regreening technique.

At Dasang village, the team visited Madam Bakpemye Yen, a 59-year-old lead farmer who was



working on her 3.5-acre groundnuts farm on the outskirts of the community. She had allowed many shrubs of different tree species to grow on the farm following FONAR's introduction of FMNR in the area. With increased understanding of the benefits of on-farm trees, Bakpemye was determined to prune the shrubs on her farm, which she used to clear during land preparation in the past. There were nine (9) mature trees of baobab (*Adansonia digitata*), African ebony (*Diospyros mespiliformis*), shea (*Vitellaria paradoxa*) and *Laenea*

macrocarpa on her farm. She also had 15 shrubs (young trees) of different species on her farm. Bakpemye said the trees were being regenerated to improve soil fertility, for medicinal uses, firewood and wild fruits (food) to supplement family diets. At the time of the visit, there was an outbreak of Fall Armyworm, which had destroyed her 1.5-acre maize crop. Fall Armyworm outbreaks are very common in the project communities during prolonged dry spells (agricultural drought) during the farming season when rains are erratic.

Next, the team visited the farm of Madam Teni Nagpogbil, also in Dasang community. Teni, who is in her late 40s, cultivated groundnuts on her farm. The more than 2.5 acres farm is almost live fenced with various tree species. She pruned some of the tree branches to provide more fencing material. The pruned branches will be used as fuelwood after harvest. Teni said her understanding of the importance of trees on farm has increased as a result of FONAR's advocacy and training. Though there are many trees surrounding the farm, she still maintained and pruned shrubs inside the farm. The pruned parts of the shrubs she left on the farm to rot and serve as organic manure. Teni has been able to regenerate four new shrubs on the farm in addition to 12 existing shea trees. Shea is an economic tree in the project communities, which many farmers leave on their farms.



The team visited the farm of 52-years-old female follower farmer, Madam Magdalene Noorin Yelbire in Kparaboug village. She was working on her 2.5-acre groundnuts farm, inherited from her deceased husband. The land was previously used to cultivate maize, but Magdalene switched to the cultivation of groundnuts (a leguminous crop), when she noticed declining fertility and low crop yields. She has been cropping groundnut for the past two farming seasons in an effort to replenish fertility of the farm. Magdalene explained that she used to cut all the shrubs in previous seasons when preparing the land for the farming season, but now prune them because of the knowledge on tree care gained from FONAR's FMNR intervention. "I used to think that the shrubs were a nuisance on the farm, but having learned how to manage them, my mind has changed". "FONAR is teaching things that have real life impacts", she added. Magdalene said the mature trees on her farm are important as they fertilize the soil and retain moisture making it easier for her to harvest the groundnuts.



Magdalene's farm had many sprouting *Piliostigma thonningii* shrub/tree species. The FONAR team asked if she was aware of the shrub's ability to move water through the roots from deeper soils into drier top soils for annual crops to use during drought periods (hydraulic lift). Magdalene answered no, but said the new knowledge was a value addition to motivate for her to prune and manage the shrubs to help increase moisture retention on her field during dry spells. The female farmers have embraced the FMNR concept, have an understanding of how to manage shrubs and trees on farms but they do not have enough support in terms of labour to carry out some farm management activities like weeding.

Activity 2: Second on-farm FMNR implementation monitoring and support visits.

September 14, 2023: The Project field staff (Christopher Pubeng, Juliana Atagra and Eugene Agomna) conducted another monitoring and support visit to some lead and follower farmers in the two project communities on their farms. Christopher and Juliana also used the opportunity to collect data for their World Vision International (WVI) FMNR eWorkshop Course assignment. The field monitoring and support visits enabled the project staff to measure the progress of on-farm FMNR implementation, provide technical support, identify possible adoption facilitators and barriers, and assist farmers to take corrective measures. The team visited the farms of Joseph Mpumbire and Teni Nagpokbil (both lead farmers Dasang community), and those of Magdalene Noorin Yelbire and Mary Kurug (follower farmers) in Kparaboug. Mary is a young energetic farmer, supporting her husband to ensure food security and improved livelihood for their family.



Christopher sharing proper pruning practices with Joseph (L) & Teni (R) in Dasang



Mary practice tree pruning (Kparaboug)



Juliana (R) explaining the benefits of pruning

Activity 3: Sensitization on human-elephant conflicts in project communities

September 21, 2023: The two project communities (Dasang and Kparaboug) are located on the west bank of the Red Volta River in north-eastern Ghana, a few kilometers south of the Burkina Faso border. The Red Volta valley is a protected wildlife migration corridor through which elephants seasonally move from neighbouring Burkina Faso into Ghana. The elephants move southwards into Ghana through the corridor during the wet season in August/October when farmers are about to harvest their cereal crops, and move back (northwards) to Burkina Faso during the dry season. In recent years, the elephants have been raiding mature crops like millet, Guinea corn, groundnut, maize and rice of adjoining communities during migration. Also, the elephants tend to damage valuable economic trees such as the shea and dawadawa through browsing, felling and debarking.

With increasing population growth and declining soil fertility on compound (homestead) farms, farmers are compelled to encroach into the elephant migration corridor and habitat. This creates human-elephant conflicts in the project communities, especially during the harvesting period. Many of these poor and economically vulnerable smallholder farmers can lose their entire livelihood overnight from the elephant raids. The FMNR lead farmers raised these concerns during our community engagements and asked for guidance and support to manage the situation.

Apparently, the issue has implications for implementation of the FMNR project and hence the need to have conversations with farmers on possible local solutions. Currently, farmers in the project communities tie white plastic bags on ropes for fencing around their farms to ward off the elephants. However, they say this strategy has been less effective in reducing the elephant raids.



On September 21, 2023, FONAR held separate engagements with lead farmers of both project communities (Kparaboug and Dasang) to brainstorm on possible strategies of reducing the increasing human-elephant conflicts during the farming season. Eight lead farmers (5 females/3 males) attended the first engagement held at Kparaboug, and seven farmers (5 females/2 males) attended the second meeting held at Dasang community. Sumaila S. Saaka, FONAR Executive Director, welcomed the farmers to the meetings and thanked them for embracing the

FMNR project. He said the growing tension between farmers and elephants on the adjoining wildlife corridor was very worrying for sustaining food security in the area. On the other hand, Sumaila told the farmers that the increasing expansion of farmlands into the elephants' seasonal migration route blocks their movements and reduces their feeding grounds, hence their hostilities in recent years.

He encouraged the farmers to adopt FMNR to improve soil fertility on their existing farmlands, which would help them to reduce encroaching on the wildlife (elephant) corridor. The FONAR Director, therefore, urged the farmers to adopt FMNR on existing degraded farmlands to improve soil fertility, increase water retention, increase crop yields and food security. He mentioned that beekeeping and growing of citrus trees as live fences on farm borders have been used to prevent elephants' invasion in Sri Lanka and some parts of the world. The farmers were excited about the idea and were willing to try the two strategies as possible long-term solution to the human-elephant conflicts. FONAR is in talks with the Forestry Services Division for technical assistance to procure citrus seedlings for farmers to plant during the next raining season.

Kurug Abeong, a male lead farmer at Kparaboug community said they were encouraged by the regular visits by FONAR staff to their farms to monitor and provide technical support. On his part, Noorin Moses, (Chairman of Kparaboug lead farmers group) reported that there has been progress on preventing community people from harvesting firewood from their FMNR demonstration plot. At the end of the meeting. Juliana Atagra, the project lead, thanked the farmers for attending the meetings and encouraged them to share their knowledge and skills of FMNR with other farmers in and outside their communities. The project later presented pieces of 10mm nylon ropes and white plastic rubbers to the lead farmer groups. This was to enable them to protect their crops from elephant raids during the harvest season



Kparaboug meeting participants



Dasang meeting participants

Activity 4: Meeting with community fire volunteer squads (CFVS)

The project supports to build the capacity of target communities to plan ahead to prevent and control damaging annual bushfires, which usually occur during the dry season in November/January. It is very difficult to implement FMNR if farmlands and communal grazing fields are regularly burnt. In the project communities, bush burning is seen as a normal practice, even though many people know that the practice is a serious problem. In the context of FMNR uptake, we do know that bushfires can burn young trees, plants and leaves on the ground. This makes soil bare, exposed and prone to wind and water erosion. FONAR is working with the Ghana National Fire Service (GNFS) to set up community fire volunteer squads (CVFS), raise community awareness on the causes and dangers of bushfires, and commit people to bushfire prevention and control measures.

The Control and Prevention of Bushfires Act (Law), 1990 (PNDC.L.229) provides for the setting up of CFVS to plan and manage small fire outbreaks. The duties of CFVS include; prevention and control of community bushfires, and community awareness raising and education on basic fire management practices. The fire volunteer squads are also responsible for developing and enforcing agreed on community fire management byelaws (rules and regulations). The District GNFS Office, community leaders and FMNR lead farmer groups helped FONAR to identify and select 20 volunteers (10 female/10 males) for the two project communities. Twelve volunteers (6 females/6 males) were selected for Dasang community and eight volunteers (4 females/4 males) for Kparaboug, which is a smaller community.

On November,16 2023: FONAR project staff and leadership of the District Fire Department held a meeting with the selected fire volunteers and some leader farmers at Dasang. The aim of the meeting was to get to know the newly selected volunteers, explain the CFVS concept and get their support for the activity. FONAR Executive Director, Sumaila Saaka welcomed the meeting participants, and thanked everyone for coming. He praised the farmers for sacrificing their productive hours, which they could have used to harvest their crops. Sumaila told the meeting that the women-focused project was not only aimed to empower women but to also broaden opportunities for community-wide livelihoods diversification of households. He, however, said there was the need for the people to work together to prevent and control the annual ritual of damaging bushfires, which have negative effects on lives, property, crops and tree regeneration. Sumaila announced that the project will train and provide them with basic firefighting tools like wellington boots, cutlasses, t-shirts and rakes.

The Nabdam District Fire Officer, Assistant Divisional Officer (II) Awuni Akolgo, explained the CFVS concept, functions of the fire volunteers, their selection process, and leadership and reporting structure. He advised the volunteers to show commitment to their role and cooperate with other community groups to manage small fire outbreaks in the communities. Mr. Akolgo told the fire volunteers to take their work seriously to help save lives and properties in their respective communities. Mr. Akolgo concluded by asking both communities to meet separately and elect their leaders two from each community.



Engagement meeting with newly selected community fire volunteer squads (CVFS) at Dasang

Activity 5: Inauguration and training of community fire volunteer squads

December 08, 2023: FONAR introduced the community fire volunteer squads (CFVS) concept under the project to encourage the participation of the local people in basic bushfire prevention and control. The inauguration and training of 20 fire volunteers (10 females/10 males) for the Dasang and Kparaboug project communities was held on December 8, 2023 at Kparaboug. Personnel of the Nabdam District Office of the Ghana National Fire Service (GNFS) and FONAR staff facilitated the activity. In attendance were representatives of the project lead farmers from the two project communities. The volunteer groups were also presented with basic firefighting equipment (rakes, cutlasses, wellington boots, hand gloves and branded t-shirts) during the ceremony.



FONAR developed a Community Bushfire Awareness and Preparedness Campaign presentation flip charts and a Facilitation Guide for the training. The pictorial flip charts for low-literate audiences, introduced the volunteers to 'good' and 'bad' fires, causes of bushfires, the fire triangle and how to break it (prevention and control measures), basics of fire behaviour and use of basic bushfire prevention and prevention tools.

Inaugurating the volunteer groups, Sumaila S. Saaka (FONAR Executive Director) said establishing the CFVS and training them on basic fire prevention and control measures was part of FONAR's effort to help in protecting lives, property and the environment, including regenerated trees. He indicated that the training was to equip the community fire volunteers with an understanding of basic fire concepts and how they can work with FMNR lead farmers and other community members to fight mild bushfire outbreaks. Sumaila, therefore, urged the fire volunteers to work closely with community members, FMNR lead farmers and higher authority technical service providers like the Ghana National Fire Service (GNFS) in their work.

The project lead, Juliana Atagra on her part emphasized the importance of community involvement in bushfire prevention and control efforts to ensure the success of the project. She reminded the people that uncontrolled bushfires can kill people, destroy property and disrupt growth of regenerated trees. Hence, the need to train the community fire volunteers to support the project FMNR lead farmers and community members to minimize bushfire outbreak during the fire season.



December 12, 2023: FONAR organized a follow-up practical bushfire prevention and control training for the fire volunteers. The 20 (10 females/10 males) community fire volunteers were taught the why and how to construct fire lines by removing vegetation fuels to bare ground between 6 inches and 3 feet wide to protect private and community assets. They were also taught how to construct defensible spaces around their houses and other community structures like schools, and how to use basic hand tools to control vegetation fires. Two Officers of the Rural Fires Department of the Ghana National Fire Service (GNFS), Station Officers (I) Freeman Aduah and Saani Tahiru conducted the trainings. They were supported by Christopher Pubeng and Eugene Agomna (FONAR Project staff).



Basic bushfire control techniques skills

Fireline construction training

Demonstration fire control

Activity 6: Project lead farmers learning visit Yameriga FMNR Site

December 20, 2023: FONAR organised a farmer-to-farmer learning visit for the 20 (10 females/10 males) project lead farmers to the celebrated Yameriga FMNR restoration hills in nearby Talensi District. Yameriga is about 25km away from the project communities (Dasang and Kparaboug) in Nabdam district. The 32 hectares degraded and rocky Yameriga hills was restored to a forest cover within 6 years (2010-2016) under the WVI funded Talensi FMR project. The restoration initiative was community-led, and the restored land is currently managed by community members themselves.

The visit was organised to; 1) to facilitate farmer-to-farmer learning from ‘what worked’ and ‘what didn’t work’ during the Yameriga FMNR restoration effort; and 2) to expose project lead farmers to the broader context of the Yameriga regreening success story. In other words, the visit was to allow participants to understand the context of the Yameriga restoration success story, and the enabling factors and challenges for FMNR scaling in other areas. We also wanted to increase farmer-to-farmer networking among our project lead farmers and their counterparts in Yameriga to support FMNR scaling up advocacy efforts. Within the past two years, FONAR has been working with World Vision Ghana (WVG) and other partners to engage regional and local government policy makers to commit to FMNR scaling up in northern Ghana. More importantly, the visit was to inspire the project FMNR lead farmers to reflect and assess how they would do things differently to implement FMNR in their communities.

The visiting farmers were warmly welcomed by 25-member Yameriga FMNR farmers group. The group was led by Samuel Baan Bantang (FMNR champion and Secretary of the Yameriga FMNR farmers group). Christopher Pubeng and Eugene of FONAR accompanied the farmers to Yameriga.

Samuel Bantang welcomed the visiting farmers and used pictures of 'before' and 'after' to talk through the restoration journey. He shed light on the early challenges they faced, how progress was made, the structures they built to ensure success of the "Tintuug Lebge Tii" (shrub turned tree) greening approach, and the benefits of the project to the community. Samuel said the height of the Yameriga hills greening success is the international and local recognition, and the numerous visits by individuals and organisations to learn from them. He mentioned indiscriminate felling of trees and rampant bushfires in the demonstration plot as early challenges. However, the community had to adopt and enforce bye-laws to solve the problem. Samuel dedicated the success of the initiative to the fact that a woman was selected to lead the community FMNR Lead farmers Group. He said she "embodied the group; ensuring cohesiveness, understanding, tolerance and discipline". He ended his presentation by saying that "FMNR is doable, but the lead farmers would have to persevere and exercise patience among themselves, with their communities and their own expectations.



Samuel Bantang (M) in a presentation

The presentations were followed by questions and answers, and a guided tour of the restored hills. The visiting farmers were impressed by what they came to see and hear about the Yameriga greening success story. At the end of the visit, Joseph Mpumbire, chairperson of Dasang lead farmers thanked their counterparts for warmly welcoming them to their community, sharing their inspiring story and words of wisdom. He said humorously that they were inspired and would work to outdo the Yameriga achievement in their communities when they returned home.



Activity 7: Awareness and compost making training for lead farmers

January 25, 2024: The project trained 15 FMNR Lead farmers (10 women/5 men) in compost making drawn from the two target project communities (Dasang and Kparaboug). The training was also used to raise awareness on the importance, benefits and advantages of organic manure and organic farming. The participants learned practical methodology of compost making using leaves from tree pruning, crop residues, animal waste and grass. The training had three objectives; 1) increase farmers' knowledge on the benefits of organic manure and organic farming, 2) promote compost application as a good agricultural practice (GAP), and 3) encourage farmers to use compost manure to restore soil fertility and improve crop yields, especially vegetables.

Two resource persons (Akobta Emmanuel and Yenguniba Michael). both Agricultural Extension Officers from the Nabdam District Department of Agriculture, facilitated the training. They took the farmers through the farm yard organic compost (manure) making process, sources of compost material, uses of compost, and hands-on demonstration of compost preparation.

Addressing the farmers after the training, Sumaila S. Saaka (Director of FONAR) urged them to embrace the composting and application of organic waste to improve soil organic matter for increased crop yields, especially now that chemical fertilizers have become so expensive. He told the farmers that composting will save them money, both in the short term and long term.

Expected training outcomes.

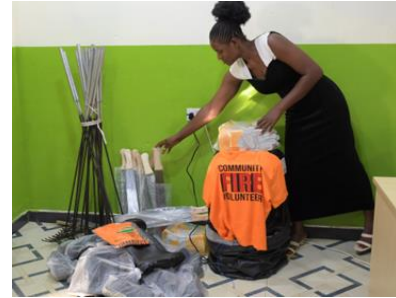
- Enhanced farmer's skills for compost making and adapting organic farming system to improve soil fertility and production of healthy foods for good nutrition.
- Enhanced healthy food crops production with low external farm inputs to overcome food shortages and insecurity.



Training of lead farmers on farmyard manure compost making in Dasang

Activity 8: Supply of Basic firefighting tools to community fire volunteers.

October 2, 2023: The project procured and supplied basic fire-fighting hand tools and branded t-shirts to the 20 community fire volunteer squads formed in Dasang and Kparaboug project communities. The items supplied to support the work of the volunteers were 20 pieces of cutlasses, 20 pairs of wellington boots, 20 pieces of rakes, 20 pairs of hand gloves and 20 branded t-shirts.



4. Project milestones

- **October 25-26, 2023:** FONAR in partnership with the Upper East Regional Command of the Ghana National Fire Service (GNFS) organised a trainer-of-trainers training on Community-based Fire Management (CBfM) for officers of Regional and District Rural Fires Department of the Service. The trainers are in turn training and supporting community fire volunteers in our working districts (Nabdam and Talensi). FONAR provided basic logistics to the community fire volunteers and working with them to raise community fire awareness and bushfire preparedness.
- Cordial relationship built with relevant Local Government Authority (LGA) partners like the Nabdam District Assembly, Department of Agriculture, Fire Service Department, Forest Services Division (FSD) and the News Media. We have also built a trusting partnership with community leadership structures.
- The key project implementation structures – Lead farmer groups and Community fire volunteers have been established.

5. Lessons learned

What is working well

- Involving community leadership structures in the project activities from the onset for their buy-in is working well so far. The whole community and their leaders were fully involved in the selection of both the lead farmers and the fire volunteers. It was also the community leaders who allocated land for establishing the FMNR demonstration plots. Local project ownership allowed the community people to embrace the FMNR concept. In effect, gaining the confidence and trust of the people and their leaders is a game changer for project success.
- In addition, using staff of local government partners from the Department of Agriculture and Fire Service is contributing immensely to the credibility of our extension service delivery reach. Many of these local government field officers are already working in the communities and are known to the people. We only needed to build their capacities and help them to reach the communities.
- The project focus on women and the youth through deliberate efforts to get them involved in all activities is achieving results. We have high interest and participation of women/youth in all project structures and engagements.
- Regular monitoring and support visits to project communities to interact with farmers and listen to their concerns is helping to build trust and good relationships for the project success.

- Supporting lead farmers and fire volunteers with t-shirts and basic working tools boosted their enthusiasm and moral to participate in project activities. These were more incentives to encourage their commitment to the project activities.

Challenges

- It was difficult to implement some planned activities during the raining season in June through December because the farmers were busy with their farming activities. As a result, some activities had to be delayed or postponed until after the season.

What needs to improve

- We need to pay attention to tracking project results by developing and refining M&E indicators.
- Improve capturing of field activity implementation for promotional purposes.
- The need to train our implementing partners on the FMNR approach.

What to continue

- Continue to recognize and engage community leaders.
- Continue to strengthen partnership with the Media
- Continue to develop project guidelines and manuals.

6. Financial report

FINANCIAL REPORT FOR THE REPORTING PEERIOD, ENDING JANUARY 2024		
FUNDS RECEIVED (AUGUST 2023- JANUARY 2024)	USD	GHS
3rd Quarter transfer (August-October 2023)	2,500.00	26,750.00
4th Quarter transfer (November 2023-January 2024)	2,500.00	28,175.00
Total funds received for August 2023 - January 2024	5,000.00	54,925.00
Direct project implementation allocation (80%)	4,000.00	43,940.00
Activities carried out		Cost
1. Field monitoring and extension support visits (2)		1,200.00
2. Sensitization & support on human-elephants' conflicts in communities		3,000.00
3. Procurement of basic fire-fighting hand tools for community fire volunteer squads		6,949.00
4. Printing of bushfire training and education materials		1,913.83
5. Procurement of Group Savings and Loans Association Toolkits (set of 2)		2,100.00
6. Community fire volunteers training		3,375.00
7. Lead farmers learning trip to Yameriga FMNR Restoration site		3,000.00
8. Lead farmers compost making training and awareness raising		3,000.00
9. Project support staff allowance for 5 months @GHS700		3,500.00
10. Refund of Administrative cost used for project implementation in 2rd Qtr.		5,925.00
TOTAL DIRECT PROJECT EXPENSES (A)		33,962.83
UNUSED FUNDS AS AT JANUARY 31, 2023 (B)		9,977.17
CONTRIBUTION TO ADMINISTRATIVE OVERHEADS (20%) - (C)		10,985.00
TOTAL PRROJECT FUNDS FOR THE REPORTING PERIOD – A+B+C		54,925.00

Annex 1: Year two planned activities -1st & 2nd Quarters (Feb. – July 2024)

1st Quarter Activities (February-April, 2024)

1. Train Women's Group Savings and Loans Associations for Economic Empowerment (GSLA4EE)
2. Train and support Lead farmers to develop their workplans.
3. Conduct safe community fire use education and awareness using different community channels.
4. Support communities to develop local bushfire byelaws (regulations).
5. Train women lead farmers on construction of energy saving mud-stoves.

2nd Quarter Activities (May-July, 2024)

1. Conduct FMNR training for Extension staff of District implementing partners.
2. Train FONAR/Implementing partner staff on natural resource management conflict resolution.
3. Support communities to establish and train conflict resolution Committees.
4. Train women/young girls in snack making using locally available food products/edible fruits.

Annex 2: News Media coverage of Project Activities

- 1) December 20, 2023/GNA: Community involvement in bushfire management crucial – FONAR.
<https://gna.org.gh/2023/12/community-involvement-in-bushfire-management-crucial-fonar/>
- 2) January 30, 2024/GNA: Smallholder farmers trained on compost manure production at Nabdam
<https://gna.org.gh/2024/01/smallholder-farmers-trained-on-compost-manure-production-at-nabdam/>