



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

# **YEAR TWO PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION SEMI-ANNUAL PROGRESS AND RESULTS REPORT (FEBRUARY 1, 2024 -JULY 31, 2024)**

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August 21, 2024

## **Abbreviations and Acronyms**

FMNR	Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration
FMNR4WELIP	FMNR for Women Empowerment and Livelihoods Project
FONAR	Forum for Natural Regeneration LBG
GAPs	Good Agricultural Practices
GSLA	Group Savings and Loans Association
NRM	Natural Resource Management
PMT	Project Management Team
SG	Savings Groups

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## 1. BACKGROUND

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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 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 February 1, 2024 to July 31, 2024 to achieve the objectives and targets set for year two (2) project implementation. Section 3 outlines the activities implemented and the achievements made during the period under review.

## 2. HIGHLIGHTS (SUMMARY OF MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS)

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### **FIRST QUARTER ACTIVITIES (FEBRUARY – APRIL, 2024)**

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

Activity 1 – Validation of Registered of GSLA Members: Forty-six (46) registered members of Group Savings and Loans Associations (GSLA) established by the project were validated at Dasang and Kparaboug communities. Names of 21 registered members were validated in Dasang, while 25 names were validated at Kparaboug. The type of income generating activities that the registered members were engaging in were also verified. The registered GSLA members were female FMNR lead farmers, widows, persons with disabilities and female household heads. Twelve of them were engaged in agro-processing, while the nine (9) others were into petty trading.

Activity 2 – Training and Facilitation of GSLA Leadership Election: The Project developed a 39-page GSLA Training Facilitation Guide, which is being used to train the groups on various stages of savings groups formation. On 14 &16 February 2024, two project staff trained 46 members of the GSLAs in both communities on group dynamics, leadership skills and how to elect their leaders. After the training, each group elected their Management Committee members, consisting of five people: a chairperson, record-keeper, box-keeper and two money-counters. Each Group also appointed three members called “key-holders”, who keep the keys to ensure that the savings boxes safe, and can only be opened at meetings in the presence of all members.

Activity 3 – Development and Adoption of GSLA Constitutions (byelaws): The project trained GSLA members to develop and adopt their constitutions (byelaws). The first training was held at Kparaboug community on February 22, 2024, followed by the second one held at Dasang Community on February 27, 2024. The training helped the savings group members to develop their constitutions, establish meeting procedures and create rules about saving, lending and record keeping.

Activity 4: - Validation of GSLA Constitutions/First Savings & Loans Meeting: Two project staff held separate meetings with GSLA members in the two project target communities to validate their draft constitutions (byelaws). The groups adopted their constitutions after the validation. The FONAR team also supervised the groups to conduct their first savings and loans meetings.

Activity 5: - Training on fuel-efficient mud stoves: The project trained 20 women from the two project target villages (Dasang and Kparaboug) on how to construct simple fuel-efficient mud stoves. The all-female trainees were FMNR lead farmers, fire volunteers and some community members.

The trainees are expected to train other women to construct their own improved mud stoves. Females were targeted for the training because they are mostly responsible for cooking and fuelwood collection. The main source of cooking energy in the project area is firewood.

**Activity 6 – The Accelerating Nature-Based Solutions Conference in Zambia:** FONAR Executive Director, Sumaila S. Saaka supported Josef Ertl, President of Awaken Trees to prepare a presentation for the Accelerating Nature-based Solutions Conference in Zambia. The conference was held in Zambia from 11 to 15 March, 2024. Mr. Ertl's interactive presentation at the conference provided a huge forum for sharing the project's success story to a global audience.

**Activity 7 – Review Meetings with Community Stakeholders:** The project team organized separate review meetings with community stakeholders at Dasang and Kparaboug. The meetings were held to allow the project beneficiaries and key stakeholders to give feedback on progress of implementation. Twenty-four people attended the first meeting held at Dasang, while 22 people attended the second meeting held at Kparaboug.

**Activity 8 – Capturing and documenting the Project success stories:** The project team interviewed a few lead farmers and community opinion for success stories. The objective was to document the success stories resulting from the project activities in video as told by the beneficiaries. The documentation of success stories is to help track progress and to learn lessons from the project implementation lessons.

**Activity 9 – FMNR Promotion through Community Outreach Documentary Films:** The project funded the screening of four short documentary films to mixed community audiences in the two project communities (Dasang and Kparaboug) at night. The films were: 1) The Forest Maker, 2) The Man who plants Baobabs, 3) Tamarind Cultivation in Thailand, and 4) How Orange trees can be used to control elephants invasion. The success of screening the films was evident from the positive feedback received from the audiences.

## **SECOND QUARTER ACTIVITIES (MAY-JULY, 2024)**

**Activity 1 – Facilitation and Action Planning Training for FMNR Lead Farmers:** The project trained 18 FMNR lead farmers on how to facilitate farmer-to-farmer extension service delivery and to develop their action (work) plans. The training equipped the lead farmers with basic facilitation and action planning skills they can use to train and mentor other farmers. The participatory training introduced the participants to farmer-to-farmer extension service delivery, the qualities of good lead farmers, how to facilitate fellow farmers' group learning, basic leadership skills and how to develop individual and group action plans.

Activity 2 – Supply of Orange/Citrus seedlings to farmers to reduce human-elephants conflicts: The project bought and distributed 150 orange/citrus seedlings to farmers affected by elephant crop raids to plant on their farms on trial basis. Citrus trees are known to repel elephant attacks on homes and crops in Sri Lanka.

Activity 3 – Fall Armyworm Awareness Training for Lead Farmers: Fall armyworm (FAW) has become an endemic crop pest across Ghana since 2016, often causing heavy damage to maize crop in the project area every farming season. At the farmers request, FONAR designed and facilitated a community-wide FAW awareness campaign. Increased awareness and knowledge of FAW among farmers can facilitate successful management of the pest during the early stages of outbreak. As part of the campaign, the project organised a day's training on FAW early prevention and control measures for 19 (10 female/9 male) lead farmers drawn from the two project communities.

Activity 4 – Radio Discussion Programme with Project FMNR Lead Farmers: The project sponsored a one hour airtime with a local community FM radio station (Word - 88.3 FM) to allow four lead farmers (2 males/2 females) to share their experiences. Word FM radio station is located in Zuarungu in Bolgatanga District of the Upper East Region. The radio station produces and broadcast programmes in English and the local dialects (Gurune, Talen and Nabit), which reach a wider audience in FONAR operational districts (Talensi and Nabdamp) and beyond.

Activity 5 – Online Training on Natural Resource Conflict Management: The Project Manager (Sumaila S. Saaka) and two project field staff (Christopher Pubeng and Eugene Agomna) enrolled and successfully completed in an intensive two-hour online introductory course on Natural Resource Conflict Management offered by Proforest Academy<sup>1</sup>. The course built their understanding about natural resource-related conflicts, root causes, types, dynamics and consequences. It also enhanced their knowledge and skills in conflict analysis, using available cutting edge tools.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.proforest.net/resources/training-from-proforest/proforest-academy-e-learning/natural-resource-conflict-management/>

### 3. IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS

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#### FIRST QUARTER ACTIVITIES (FEBRUARY – APRIL, 2024)

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

**Output 2.2: Village Savings Group (SG) concept introduced in project target communities.**

During the period under review, the project established two Group Savings and Loans Associations (GSLA) targeting identified vulnerable women in target communities. FONAR organised a series of meetings to train members on how to create and sustain the groups and also provided them with the GSLA tool kits. The tool kit consist of; 1) cash box, 2) three padlocks, 3) two money bags, 4) passbooks, 5) a calculator, 6) counting bowls, 7) pens and 8) record books.



GSLA Tool Kit (cash box)



items in the box



Presentation of toolkit

The GSLA members are female FMNR lead farmers, persons with disabilities, female household heads and widows. The groups are formed to help members mobilize savings for household financial security, enable them access loans to develop their micro enterprises and to create a social fund for family emergencies. Access to short-term small loans at low interest rates is to enable members develop and diversify local agro-processing micro-enterprises for economic empowerment. The group members were guided to establish and adopt their own constitutions (byelaws), and to agree on loan repayment terms.

**Activity 1: Validation of Registered of GSLA Members**

**08 February, 2024:** Two project staff (Juliana Atagra and Christopher Pubeng) held separate meetings at Dasang and Kparaboug communities to validate the names of registered GSLA members. They validated the names of 21 women who met the group membership requirements in Dasang Community. The registered group members were five (5) female FMNR lead farmers, nine (9) widows, and seven (7) female household heads. Twelve of them were engaged in agro-processing, while the nine (9) others were into petty trading.

At Kparaboug, the team validated the names of 25 registered GSLA members who met the required self-selection criteria. The group is made up of FMNR lead farmers (5), female household heads (8) and widows (14), including persons with disabilities. The members are engaged in various income generating activities such as agro-processing, petty trading and firewood/charcoal sales.



Kparaboug Community Validation Meeting



Dasang Community Validation Meeting

### ***Activity 2 Training and Facilitation of Group Leaders Election***

**February 14 & 16, 2024:** The Project developed a 39-page training facilitation guide to train group members on various aspects of the GSLA approach. Two project staff Juliana Atagra and Eugene Agomna attended first meetings of the two savings groups held at Dasang and Kparaboug communities respectively to train them on group dynamics, leadership and how to elect their leaders. The lead facilitator (Juliana) trained the groups on how and why members should be self-selected based on trust, the procedure for electing management committee members, and on the qualities and responsibilities of the group leaders. After the training, each group was supervised to elect their Management Committee members, consisting of five people: a chairperson, record-keeper, box-keeper and two money-counters. Each Group also appointed three members called "key-holders", who keep the cash box keys to ensure that the boxes can only be opened at meetings in the presence of all members.



14/02/24: Dasang GSLA training and Management Committee Election





16/02/24: Kparaboug GSLA training and Management Committee Election

### **Activity 3: Development and Adoption of GSLA Constitutions (byelaws)**

The Group Savings and Loans Associations (GSLA) are required to develop their own constitutions (byelaws) after electing their leaders (management committee). The constitution sets out savings, lending and social fund disbursement rules; how the group will share out its money at the end of the cycle (often one year); and the management committee structure. It has two parts – (1) the Association's governance structure, including conflict resolution measures and disciplinary actions, and (2) the services offered by the Group (such as savings, loans and the social fund). The constitution is a binding document that group members must refer to when solving internal problems. FONAR developed a blank constitution form as a guide and facilitated the GSLA members to refine and adopt them as their byelaws. This was to make it easy for non-literate GSLA members to participate in developing their constitutions.

**22 & 27 February, 2024:** Project staff attended the second meetings of the two GSLA Groups to train and supervise them to adopt their constitutions. The first training was held at Kparaboug community on February 22, 2024, followed by the second one held at Dasang Community on February 27, 2024. Juliana Atagra (lead facilitator) guided the groups to complete sections of their blank constitution templates. She also facilitated the groups to agree on type of fines (penalties) to impose when the rules are violated. The training helped the savings groups to develop and agree on their constitutions, establish meeting procedures and create rules about saving, lending and record keeping.



27/02/24 – Dasang Community Training



22/02/24 – Kparaboug Community Training

#### **Activity 4: Validation of GSLA Constitutions/First Savings & Loans Meeting**

**March 1 & 5, 2024:** Project staff held meetings with GSLA members at Kparaboug on March 01, 2024 and with the Dasang group on March 05, 2024. The aim was to facilitate the groups to validate their draft constitutions, which were finalised by the facilitation team. The facilitators also supervised the groups to conduct their first savings and loans meetings. At the meetings, Juliana (activity lead) read out the first draft of the GSLA constitutions for members to make corrections, add new rules, amend or delete existing ones. The groups adopted their constitutions after the validation. At the end of the meeting, Juliana advised the groups to work as a team, and encouraged GSLA management committees to ensure that meetings and transactions are carried out guided by their Constitutions.



Kparaboug GSLA conducting first savings



Kparaboug GSLA members validating their byelaws



Dasang GSLA members validating their byelaws



Dasang GSLA conducting first savings

At the time of compiling this report, the Dasang GSLA had saved GHS 3,575.00 (USD 231 equivalent) and disbursed GHS 3, 550.00 as loans. On the other hand, the Kparaboug group had mobilized a savings of GHS 3,368.00 (USD 217 equivalent), disbursed GHS 2,700.00 as loans. This is after 5 months of savings.

## **Activity 5: Training on fuel-efficient mud stoves**

**March 26-27, 2024:** The project trained 20 women from the two project villages (Dasang and Kparaboug) on how to construct simple fuel-efficient mud stoves. The all-female trainees were FMNR lead farmers, fire volunteers and some community members. The trainees are, in turn, expected to train other women to construct their own improved mud stoves. Females were trained because they are mostly responsible for cooking and fuelwood collection. The main source of cooking energy in the project area is firewood collected from woodlands and farmlands.



The participants were introduced to an improved fuel-efficient mud-stove (cooking station), which is cheaper, easy to construct and not entirely new in design. The hands-on practical training equipped the women with basic construction and maintenance skills of the improved stoves. They can build the stoves using locally available materials such as clay and anthill soil. Introducing the improved mud stoves is to help reduce fuelwood use, minimize indoor air pollution and improve cooking convenience of families. The type of improved mud stove the project introduced is more efficient in saving firewood when compared to the 3-stone traditional open stove.



The introduced improved mud stove (in use)



The traditional 3-stone cook stove

The improved mud stove is covered on all sides, except an opening (door) in front through which fuelwood is fed and ash is removed, and one to three potholes. The design reduces air flow into the stove, thus making the firewood to burn more slowly and efficiently. The mud used to build the stove also retains cooking heat longer, further reducing the use of firewood. The need for less firewood for cooking means that fewer trees are cut down for fuelwood.

The trainer, Monica Daamorah took the participants through some basic principles on how the stove works and practical training on the various stages of making the improved stove. These include proper mixing of soil and water to make mud, preparing foundation measurements, sprinkling the ground surface with water, filling in the mud, compaction and creating the stoves.



In closing the training, Juliana Atagra (FONAR Project Lead) and the trainer (Monica Daamorah) educated the participants on the benefits of using the improved stove. They explained that use of the improved mud stove can help reduce firewood use, reduce smoke and improve respiratory health, and promotes local employment and skills in the communities. The training facilitators further explained that the improved mud stove was cheaper to build because locally available materials like clay soil are used. Other benefits of the stove mentioned were that it reduces risks of kitchen fires and burns to children, contributes to kitchen cleanliness, and is easily adapted (very similar to cooking with a three stone fire). Juliana was hopeful that by the end of the project in January 2025, most households in the project communities would have been using the improved mud stove to save fuelwood. Four stoves were constructed for households in the two communities during the training. Some trainees have also constructed their own stoves and are using them.



Education and sensitization sessions

## **Activity 6: The Accelerating Nature-Based Solutions Conference in Zambia**

**February 10-17, 2024:** The President of Awaken Trees, Mr. Josef Ertl was invited to make a presentation at the Accelerating Nature-based Solutions International Conference in Zambia (11-15 March, 2024). He was to present at the session entitled: "*Regional and global approaches to scaling up Assisted Natural Regeneration*". The session was organised by the Assisted Natural Regeneration (ANR) Alliance to provide an overview of ANR interventions with a focus on approaching for scaling their adoption. It was aimed at sharing and discussing with participants how a range of approaches, including Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR), are used to scale up ANR globally and in selected regions. Josef was presenting on the topic: "*Upscaling ANR through farmer-to-farmer exchange in Ghana*".

FONAR Executive Director (Sumaila Saaka) supported Josef to prepare the presentation. Sumaila drafted a 31-slide MS PowerPoint presentation and explanatory notes based on the project experience. Josef made very valuable inputs to the draft and subsequently travelled to Zambia where he delivered an engagingly brilliant presentation at the conference. He has since shared a 15-minute video on the presentation.

## **Activity 7: Review Meetings with Community Stakeholders**

**April 4 & 12, 2024:** The project team organized separate review meetings with community stakeholders at Dasang and Kparaboug. The meeting at Dasang was held on April 04, 2024 and that of Kparaboug held on April 12, 2024. The engagements provided opportunity for project beneficiaries and key community stakeholders to give honest feedback on implementation progress. Seeking feedback from the beneficiaries about project activities and how to improve them is key to the project success. Feedback from the beneficiaries is to help us better understand how well the project is running and whether there is need for improvements. It also allowed community groups and individuals who may be adversely affected by the project activities to voice their concerns. The project team also used the meetings to brief the community stakeholders on upcoming planned activities. Twenty-four people attended the meeting held at Dasang. They were made up of nine lead farmers, 10 community fire volunteers, the Assembly member for the area, and a representative each of the Chief, the Tindaana (land priest), the women's leader and the youth.



**Dasang community stakeholders review meeting**



**A community fire volunteers contributing**

## **Dasang meeting highlights**

### **What went well (reports of community stakeholders)**

- ⇒ Reduced indiscriminate cutting of trees, especially on the FMNR demonstration site.
- ⇒ Reduced bushfires due to project supported training and education on bushfire prevention and control.
- ⇒ Increased availability of fodder for livestock (animals) due to reduced burning.
- ⇒ Community fire volunteers facilitated creation of fire belts and bushfire education.
- ⇒ The pruning technique learned helped in proper on-farm trees and shrubs management.
- ⇒ FONAR training helped in better understanding of the FMNR lead farmers functions.

### **What could be improved**

- ⇒ More training on FMNR practices.
- ⇒ Support farmers to regenerate/plant more shea trees on communal lands.
- ⇒ Include community faith-based leaders in project activities. This is because they influence local belief systems, taboos and customs that could support or hinder FMNR implementation. Including everyone will ensure that value traditional NRM customary rules and practices are sustained.
- ⇒ Women who were trained on the energy saving mud stoves construction should train more people in the community. This will allow more women to have these stoves to reduce their use of fuelwood.
- ⇒ Community needs more support to deal with crop raiding by elephants and human-elephants conflict.
- ⇒ The women appealed to FONAR for the improved mud stove construction tools.
- ⇒ FONAR should organize durbars to reach to the wider community about the project
- ⇒ Lead farmers should train others as follower farmers.

Twenty-two people attended the Kparaboug community review meeting. They were made up of nine lead farmers (5 females/4 males), 10 community fire volunteers (5 females/5 males), a community elder, and a representative each of the Chief and the women's leader.



### **Kparaboug meeting highlights/key points**

The meeting allowed the Project team and community people to reflect on the way forward together after one-year of implementation – what went well and what did not.

#### **What went well (achievements/successes) – Stakeholder perspectives**

- ⇒ Bush burning in the community has reduced due to the project intervention.
- ⇒ Community livestock (animals) no longer travel far during the dry season looking for fodder.
- ⇒ Animal theft reduced because of fodder availability near homes.
- ⇒ The FMNR project has strengthened community relationships, cohesion and participation.
- ⇒ The project is empowering people, especially women, to become assertive and self-confident to engage duty bearers within and outside the community.
- ⇒ The GSLA concept introduced has changed the mindset of members towards savings.
- ⇒ The FMNR concept has also improved their crop yields.
- ⇒ The project has built the self-confidence of FMNR lead farmers and fire volunteers to effectively participate and contribute during community meetings.
- ⇒ Farmers now understand the importance of keeping trees on their farms.
- ⇒ Increased animal dung (manure) on homestead farms as animals feed on regenerated trees.
- ⇒ Training on compost making was helpful as some FMNR lead farmers are now making their own compost manure.

#### **What could be improved/main concerns**

- ⇒ Elephants raiding on farmlands affects farming activities and the regeneration of valuable economic trees like shea. Elephants contributing significantly to the decline of economically important tree species on farms and communal lands.
- ⇒ FMNR Lead Farmer Group Leadership not been very proactive.

## **Activity 8: Capturing and documenting the Project success stories**

**April 17, 2014:** Following the review meetings with the community stakeholders, the project team went back to the villages to capture success stories. The objective was to document the success stories resulting from the project activities in video as told by the beneficiaries. The documentation of success stories is to help track progress and lessons learned from the project implementation. The project team, supported by a professional videographer, interviewed two project beneficiaries in each of the two target communities (villages) to document personal testimonies on film. In Dasang, the team interviewed Yenyeya Joel (a lead farmer) and Yamseb Jemima (a female community opinion leader). We also interviewed Moses Norin Brethren and Tobig John (both FMNR lead farmers) in Kparaboug. Capturing, documenting and sharing the experiences of project beneficiaries can encourage more people to get involved in FMNR implementation. This kind of peer to peer learning can often be the first step towards replication.



Yenyeya Joel (lead farmer)  
Dasang Community interviewee



Yamseb Jemima (opinion leader)  
Dasang Community interviewee



Moses Noorin (lead farmer)  
Kparaboug Community

## **Activity 9: FMNR Promotion through Community Outreach Documentary Films**

**April/May, 2024:** Documentary films are a powerful medium that shows real-life events, stories and experiences through a storytelling lens. They offer a unique opportunity to explore and understand the complexities of our world, shedding light on social, political and cultural issues that might otherwise go unnoticed. From raising awareness to inspiring change, documentary films have proven to be an invaluable tool for education, advocacy, and behaviour change. As powerful educational and awareness raising tools, documentary films provide audiences with in-depth insights on a wide range of critical social issues such land degradation and climate change. By presenting real life issues through personal stories, documentary films are effective in sparking widespread conversations and encouraging individuals to take action. The activity consisted of showing four short documentary films to mixed community audiences in the two project communities (Dasang and Kparaboug) at night. The films were: 1) The Forest Maker, 2) The Man who plants Baobabs, 3) Tamarind Cultivation in Thailand, and 4) How Orange trees can be used to control elephants invasion.

The 'Forest Maker' is a 40 minutes long documentary film about the life of Australian Agronomist Tony Rinaudo. Tony pioneered the simple but revolutionary FMNR regreening approach, which has been used to combat desertification and improve rural livelihoods across the world, particularly in African drylands. The second film, 'The Man Who Plants Baobabs' is 12 minutes long. It tells the exemplary story of El Hadji Salifou Ouédraogo (a rural farmer in Burkina) who spent his entire adult life growing thousands of baobab trees from tiny seeds to expansive forests in his village.

The third film on 'Tamarind Cultivation and Processing in Thailand' is 8 minutes long. The multipurpose tamarind (*Tamarindus indica L.*) tree is native to the project communities and savannah drylands of northern Ghana as an important economic tree for rural livelihoods. Almost every part of the tree is useful. However, its economic potential in Ghana has not been fully utilised, unlike in countries like Thailand and India. The fourth film on 'Tackling Human-Elephant Conflict Using Oranges' is a 3 minutes long video documentary showing how Project Orange Elephant (POE) in Sri Lanka used the planting of orange trees to overcome human-elephants conflicts. Human-elephants conflicts are an increasing problem in the project area as farmers encroach on the elephants movement corridors. POE has proven to be a simple and effective method for mitigating human-elephant conflicts in Sri Lanka<sup>2</sup>. Our project thought of testing this innovative approach in the target communities.

The films were screened at four rural farming communities as part of our community outreach activities. The communities were Dasang and Kparaboug in Nabdam District where FONAR is implementing FMNRWELIP, and at Yameriga and Yagzore communities in Talensi where we are implementing the School kids FMNR eco club Project. Local screenings of the films was to create awareness on the issues, mobilize and motivate the audiences to act by adopting and advocacy for cost effective ecosystem restoration measures like FMNR. The Films were screened at Dasang on April 19, at Kparaboug on April 22, Yagzore on May 09 and Yameriga on May 10, 2024. The turnout and reactions after the screenings were encouraging and exciting. More than 300 people (men, women and children) watched the films in all the communities. Among the audiences were community opinion leaders, FMNR lead farmers and fire volunteers. The screenings were followed by Q&A sessions and facilitated discussions.

**Evidence of Success:** The success of screening the films was evident from the positive feedback received from the audiences. They asked many questions and shared their views on issues raised from the films. Most participants appear to have clear understanding of the issues raised during the discussions.

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<sup>2</sup> Dharmarathne, C. et al. (2020). Project orange elephant is a conflict specific holistic approach to mitigating human-elephant conflict in Sri Lanka. *Communications Biology* | <https://doi.org/10.1038/s42003-020-0760-4>



April 19, 2024: Film Screening in Dasang



April 22, 2024: Film Screening in Kparaboug



May 09, 2024: Film Screening in Yagzore



May 10, 2024: Film Screening in Yameriga

## SECOND QUARTER ACTIVITIES (MAY-JULY 2024)

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

- Output 1:2: FMNR lead farmer groups formed and trained in FMNR techniques and good agricultural practices (GAPs).

### ***Activity 1: Facilitation and Action Planning Training for FMNR Lead Farmers***

**May 29, 2024:** The project trained 18 FMNR lead farmers on how to facilitate farmer-to-farmer extension service delivery and to develop their action (work) plans. The training equipped the lead farmers with basic facilitation and action planning skills to enable them train and mentor their peers. The participatory training introduced participants to farmer-to-farmer extension service delivery, the qualities of good lead farmers, how to facilitate fellow farmers' learning, basic leadership skills and how to develop individual/group action plans. FONAR Executive Director (Sumaila Saaka) developed and co-facilitated the training. He was supported by Christopher Pubeng and Eugene Agomna (both project staff).

## **Results of oral training evaluation and discussions after the training:**

- The Lead farmer extension approach was the best because of the shortage of formal Agricultural Extension Agents (AEAs). Participants were happy with the training and pledged to apply the knowledge and skills gained.
- Farmers perspectives on the FMNR Project impacts.
  - Regeneration of trees/shrubs on-farms helped increase soil moisture and fertility.
  - Other farmers are seeing the results of FMNR implementation and are motivated to adopt it on their farms.
  - The Compost making training was useful and beneficial.
  - Improved mud stove construction training participants were confident of constructing the stoves for themselves and also training others.
  - The participants requested FONAR to train them (lead farmers) on Fall Armyworm prevention and control measures.
  - A beneficiary of the group savings introduced lauded it as a good initiative that could be used to support their farming and income generating activities.
  - The participants appealed to FONAR to provide them with Orange seedlings to plant on their farm borders when the rains starts as a long term elephants control measure.
- Participants fears of retaining many trees on their farms.
  - Invading elephants mostly feed on trees and eventually pull them down, this behaviour of the elephants discourages farmers to retain many trees on farms. The farmers think retaining more trees on farms will attract the elephants to farms to destroy their crops.
  - Some farmers were concerned that people who harvest on-farm tree products usually end up trampling on their crops, especially women who pick shea nuts.
  - Shading effect of trees was another fear expressed by the farmers. A participant explained that some annual crops planted under trees don't grow well.
  - The farmers also mentioned that trees do compete with crops for water and nutrients as well as take up space on the farms.
  - However, one participant explained that since they have learned about tree management on farms, the shading effect does not seem to be a big issue.



Closing the training, the Director of FONAR (Sumaila) urged the farmers to embrace proper tree management practices such as regular pruning to reduce tree-crop competition, improve soil fertility, moisture retention and limit shading effects.

## **Activity 2: Supply of Orange/Citrus seedlings to farmers**

**June 20, 2024:** In 2006, Sri Lankan research scientists conducted feeding trials on captive Asian elephants and found that these elephants had a natural aversion to citrus plants. Based on the research findings, the Sri Lanka Wildlife Conservation Society (SLWCS) successfully employed this natural deterrent as a long term strategy to protect farms from crop raiding elephants<sup>3</sup>. The Organization supports rural Sri Lankan farmers to plant orange/citrus trees on their farms to protect crops from raiding elephants. According to SLWCS, orange trees mask the smell of crops stored in homes and provide a natural deterrent that helps prevent elephants from raiding farms, thereby reducing the chance of conflict between the farmers and elephants. In addition, the orange trees provides a sustainable, supplementary income for the farmers.

This innovative and long term elephant-deterrent strategy motivated FONAR to introduce the concept to farmers in the project communities, who are increasingly experiencing elephants crop damage every farming season. The project bought and distributed 150 orange/citrus seedlings to lead farmers and some most affected farmers to plant on their farms on trial basis. Farmers in Dasang, which is a bigger community than Kparaboug, received 100 seedlings and those in Kparaboug received 50 seedlings. Joseph Mpumbire, Chairperson of Dasang FMNR Lead Farmers Group received the seedlings on behalf of the farmers. He thanked Awaken Trees and FONAR for the support.



<sup>3</sup> <https://www.slwcs.org/project-orange-elephant>

Shortly after presenting the seedlings, the northern parts of Ghana experienced a long agricultural drought (dry spell) in July through mid-August. This delayed planting of the seedlings in the communities. However, a few farmers have planted their seedlings and the project team will monitor.

### **Activity 3: Fall Armyworm Awareness Training for Lead Farmers**

**July 4, 2024:** Fall armyworm (FAW) has become an endemic crop pest across Ghana since 2016, often causing heavy damage to maize crop in the project area every farming season. At the farmers request, FONAR designed and facilitated a community-wide FAW awareness campaign. Increased awareness and knowledge of FAW among farmers can facilitate successful management of the pest during the early stages of outbreak. As part of the campaign, the project organised a day's training on FAW early prevention and control measures for 19 (10 female/9 male) lead farmers drawn from the two project communities.

The objectives of the training were to; 1) promote farmer and community awareness on the threat of FAW, 2) create awareness on FAW life cycle, its spread, damage and identification, and 3) increase FMNR Lead Farmers awareness on early detection, reporting and management of FAW outbreak.

FONAR Executive Director, Sumaila S. Saaka facilitated the training. In a participatory pictorial PowerPoint presentation, the lead facilitator took the participants through the life cycle of the fall armyworm; the damaging effects of the pest on crops, especially on maize; history, spread and impact of FAW in Ghana; FAW biology and identification; community level cultural prevention and control measures; and the importance of community involvement in FAW management.

The training was participatory, with participants sharing their experiences with FAW on their farms. Two of the participants (a male and a female) were allowed to co-facilitate a session on the life cycle of FAW. During an oral evaluation of the training, most participants admit that they knew very little about the life cycle and biology of fall armyworm before the training, even though this information could better prepare them to combat the pest. They thanked FONAR for conducting the training using visual educational and information materials (poster and picture cards), which are easier to understand. FONAR developed educational flipcharts, posters, pictorials and training guides for the lead farmers to use in their communities.



News coverage: <https://gna.org.gh/2024/07/lead-farmers-equipped-to-combat-fall-armyworms-in-nabdam/>

#### **Activity 4: Radio Discussion Programme with Project FMNR Lead Farmers**

**July 27, 2024:** Radio is very powerful tool for education and information dissemination for behaviour change on a wide range of social issues. This is because radio is more accessible and reaches a huge audience quickly in an interactive manner. Hence, it is a powerful tool for addressing environmental issues, raising awareness, and promoting behaviour change within communities. After more than a year of implementing FMNR4WELIP, the project team thought it was a good time to ask some of our FMNR lead farmers (FMNR practitioners/champions) to share their experiences on radio. The empowering idea of reaching out to more farmers with the FMNR message through radio was to increase the communities' awareness of FMNR practices and its benefits. Farmers listen to other farmers and much less to outsiders. It is about farmers learning FMNR from farmers, but based on listening to radio, which is low cost and reaches tens of thousands of farmers at the same time.

The project sponsored a one hour airtime with a local community FM radio station (Word - 88.3 FM) to allow four lead farmers (2 males/2 females) to share their experiences. Word FM radio station is located in Zuarungu in Bolgatanga District of the Upper East Region. The radio station produces and broadcast programmes in English and the local dialects (Gurune, Talen and Nabt), which reach a wider audience in FONAR operational districts (Talensi and Nabdam) and beyond. It is well known for producing quality radio content for rural farmers on various agricultural topics, including FMNR.

FONAR developed a discussion question guide for the radio host that sought to clarify the farmers understanding of FMNR, benefits of the practice, why they decide to embrace it, the constraints they faced and how they have overcome these or not, how they have organized themselves, which community byelaws they use and how these are enforced, and which benefits they perceive.

The radio discussants were Sumaila S. Saaka (FONAR) and four community FMNR champions (2 men/2 women). The farmers were Joel Yenyeya (Dasang lead farmer), Madam Teni Nagpokbil (Dasang lead farmer), Moses Norin (Kparaboug lead farmer), and Madam Gifty Tankorin (Kparaboug FMNR lead farmer). The farmers spoke very well about the benefits of FMNR, the project interventions generally.



## **Activity 5: Online Training on Natural Resource Conflict Management**

**May/June, 2024:** Natural resources, especially land and tree resource management, conflicts are not uncommon due partly to the multiple and competing demands on these resources. In the case of FMNR interventions, conflicts can arise if key community stakeholders and diverse user groups are excluded from land and tree resources management.

Hence, the need to prepare the project staff to deal with these conflicts when they arise. In May/June, the Project Manager (Sumaila S. Saaka) and two project field staff (Christopher Pubeng and Eugene Agomna) enrolled and successfully completed in an intensive two-hour online introductory course on Natural Resource Conflict Management offered by Proforest Academy<sup>4</sup>.

The free online course was designed to build a better understanding about natural resource-related conflicts, their root causes, types, dynamics and consequences; as well as enhance the knowledge and skills of participants in conflict analysis, using available cutting edge tools. Participants were also introduced to the skills required for mediation and management. Sumaila and Christopher completed the course on 28 May 2024, which Eugene completed it on 03 June, 2024. The three FONAR staff were all issued with certificates of completion, and had access key materials on natural resource conflict management to build on. Participation in the course has prepared the project staff to be able to design and facilitate community stakeholders natural resource conflict management trainings.

## **4. IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES/CONSTRAINTS ENCOUNTERED**

- One of the field staff had a motor traffic accident in the first quarter (February) of this reporting period and was unable to work for about a month, which delayed implementation of some planned activities.
- Unmet high expectations of some FMNR lead farmers for incentives demoralizing.
- The human-elephant conflict in the project communities is discouraging farmers to regenerate trees on-farms.
- Unclear community land and tree tenure issues discourage some lead farmers from practising FMNR on their farms.
- Some farmers losing interest in the FMNR concept because of delayed benefits. Communities are more likely to adopt agricultural practices FMNR that are simple, quick, and have immediate results and benefits.
- FONAR found that integrating beekeeping on FMNR sites could incentivized people to regenerate and protect trees. However, the project budget could not support beekeeping activity.

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<sup>4</sup><https://www.proforest.net/resources/training-from-proforest/proforest-academy-e-learning/natural-resource-conflict-management/>

## **ANNEX 1: PLANNED ACTIVITIES -3<sup>RD</sup> & 4<sup>TH</sup> QUARTERS (AUG. 24 – JAN 2025)**

### **Third Quarter Activities (August-October, 2024)**

1. Poultry rearing livelihood improvement support to 45 female FMNR lead farmers and other vulnerable women in target communities.
2. Train women/young girls on developing income generating micro-enterprises.
3. Conduct FMNR training for Extension staff of District implementing partners
4. Monitoring and supervision visits.

### **Fourth Quarter Activities (November, 2024-January, 2025)**

1. Conduct safe community fire use education and awareness using different community channels.
2. Support Nabdam District Assembly to review bushfire prevention and control byelaws.
3. Support communities to establish natural resource conflict management committees.
4. Conduct project endline and lessons session.