

# FMNR in Somaliland

Saving lives, restoring landscapes and livelihoods for generations to come.



Before and after:

*Nothing shows the effectiveness of FMNR so much as this simple image of what a difference training, patience, and six months made on this block of land in drought-ridden Beerato, Somaliland in 2017*

(Photo: World Vision)

## Background

The effects of climate change are hitting the most fragile contexts the hardest. The confluence of instability, scarcity, and extreme weather is no coincidence; those going into crises with the least have fewer resources to navigate unpredictable situations.

Over the last thirty years World Vision Somalia (WVS) has been working tirelessly to reach the country's most vulnerable communities. With over 350 staff and a geographical footprint spanning nearly 80 districts, our dedicated local teams use our decades of knowledge to support those affected by protracted humanitarian challenges in ways that will make the people themselves the custodians of their future prosperity.

The 2011 famine challenged World Vision and its partners to reflect on what was working and what was not in terms of humanitarian interventions. Year after year of emergency response saved many lives but did very little to address the underlying causes of vulnerability to extreme weather.

Somalia suffers from widespread land degradation. Combined with its fragile governance, prolonged conflict, and the breakdown of traditional land management mechanisms, the phenomenon is further exacerbated by climate change. More frequent and larger-magnitude droughts and flood events are accelerating erosion and reducing vegetative coverage. Climate change has further exacerbated this fragile situation. Water scarcity and over-farming have ruined the topsoil and pushed agrarian communities onto the same areas, leading to fewer resources and sometimes conflict.

## Chapter 1

### Identify sustainable and resilience solutions

Faced with its existing intractable challenges, World Vision Somalia began to look around East Africa and the World Vision Partnership for models to strengthen the capacity of communities to better manage their soil, rangeland, and water resources. We drew inspiration from conservationists in northern Kenya and World Vision's own experiences in Ethiopia, adopting a comprehensive package of land-management practices, including Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR), re-evaluated grazing methods, and natural resource governance systems.

World Vision visited thought-leaders at Zimbabwe's Savory Institute and undertook cross-visits to Ethiopia to see first-hand how community-led strategies can improve the land and strengthen traditional farming and pastoral livelihoods.

After several years of pilot projects, World Vision Somalia mobilised our own FMNR pioneer, Australian agronomist Tony Rinaudo, to approach the Somali government and raise awareness on the potential of FMNR for catalysing climate adaptive action.

Children –  
especially girls are  
paying the price

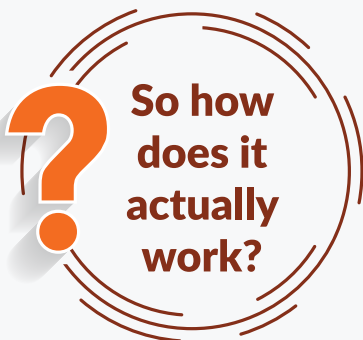
All of the issues created by desertification overlap with World Vision Somalia's work in fragile humanitarian contexts. With more frequent movements to farther away places, children are no longer able to attend school. Families who stay in one location have lower incomes and choose food and water over the expense of school supplies; wherever there is extra money, they choose to educate a boy over a girl.

## Chapter 2

### Meet FMNR

Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) is a low-cost land restoration technique used to combat poverty and hunger amongst subsistence farmers. It can reverse desertification, increase food, water and commodity production, and build resilience to climate extremes. It almost sounds too good to be true, but it is very real. The special ingredients are passing the knowledge to local communities, mobilising the message and transferring the skills in language they can understand, by people they can trust.

Improved soil and water tables mean better quality and more diverse harvests, bringing more food and money to farming families and communities. Better grazing opportunities mean shepherds no longer have to travel as far to feed their animals and can better manage their finances at home. We bring everyone on board with our specialised financial literacy training and the creation of microfinancing groups which help bring communities together and support individual farmers to grow their business.



#### Step 1

- Find the bush or stump you want to regenerate, based on your chosen farming activity (fruit, fodder, firewood, shade, etc.).
- Prune carefully, using a sharp tool and an upward cutting motion. Select at least five of the best stems and cull the rest.
- Prune the selected stems to halfway off the trunk.
- Keep the offcuts and the wood for firewood, compost, or even fodder.

Give it time to heal: Trees take six to eight months to regenerate and in that time, they need protection from livestock, wood gatherers, and fire.

#### Step 2

Watch, work, regenerate, grow: "Before this project, it was just dust, there was no trees, no grass," says Sahra an FMNR-trained agro-pastoralist from the Beerato region.



This short video shows you FMNR in action

*The answer lies in nature;  
the future is in the hands of the people who live off the land*

On farmlands, FMNR makes a positive contribution to soil fertility, animal productivity, and crop yields. Farmers practising FMNR have greater resilience in the face of environmental shocks such as drought, floods and insect attack and they are less prone to famine. Everything they need to restore the land is already there; all they need is patience and the right techniques and the tools for regeneration and soil restoration are already in their hands.

#### Talk to the farmers

At scale, FMNR increases the recharge of groundwater and improves soil moisture – more-so when done in combination with physical soil and water conservation measures. Through these impacts, FMNR is an effective means of reducing the poverty of even those furthest behind. Our success encourages farmers and their communities to become champions for FMNR, engaging with schools, children, and adolescents.

## Resonating benefits for women and children



Ismail, 15-year-old from Somaliland: "Before we didn't have grass, we used to travel to farplaces. But the grass we get from here helps our livestock survive."  
(Photo: World Vision, 2022)

At a household level, healthier, more resilient farming activities mean more food and more money.

Improved diets and healthier animals mean a more nutrient-rich diet for children, meaning they can thrive and minimise the need for health interventions.

All our programmes contain a fundamental gender-transformative component.

We actively engage with community leaders to change social norms and embrace the exponential economic and social benefits of empowering women and children.

## Chapter 3

### Success stories that need scaling

#### Case Study: Re-greening Africa in Somaliland

The Re-greening Africa project has been working to reverse land degradation in Somaliland since 2017. This EU co-funded project promotes sustainable land management, especially Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR), and other suitable agroforestry practices.

The project interventions reached 17 target sites in Somaliland's Baki and Odweyne districts through various implementation modes. Across both regions the re-greening project oversaw the formation of 44 FMNR groups, benefitting over 10,100 farmers and livestock herders, and restoring 6,600 hectares of degraded land.

With your support, we can stall desertification, feed entire communities, and empower local people with the tools to sustainably manage their own prosperous future: water, land, nutrition, education, commerce, health, and stability.

### Farming ecosystems, human ecosystems

Just as Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration is a top-to-bottom renewal of people's relationship with the land they live off, it is also a top-to-bottom renewal of attitudes and practices towards creating a stronger, more durable and sustainable, infrastructure to support the new ecosystem.

Our multilateral approach embraces all levels of participation, sharing expertise and recommendations that will ensure infrastructure exists all the way up the chain for enduring and optimal success. Much like a renewed root system, FMNR is more effective when knowledge is spread and embraced by the entire population – from farmers all the way to government ministers.

This holistic chain means that a farmer has access to government subsidies that support better practices – and that policies exist to make the funds available. It means that if a community reduces its pastoral movements and stays longer in one location, better water infrastructure exists to support their prolonged presence and farming activity. Communities are also empowered with the knowledge on how best to re-invest the additional income generated by diversified farming practices. This goes beyond the financial literacy programmes we



FMNR's resonating cycles in action: Ceel-same is a drought-afflicted village located in Somaliland's Togdheer region. Through World Vision's FMNR programming and education, the people built an earth dam, rehabilitated the land and transitioned from pastoral to agricultural farming. The dam now supplies 60 households in the village with drinking and farming water (Image: World Vision, 2022)

## Education is key

A fundamental part of the FMNR process is farmer-to-farmer knowledge exchange programmes. In the Re-greening Somaliland project, we trained 20 community members and conducted community sensitisation meetings on promising FMNR models. Through support and training, communities benefit from boosting the productivity of by-products produced from existing trees, improved livestock products, improved crop products, and a better environment for future generations.

Our knowledge-sharing is expansive and includes regional- and country-level consultative workshops for representatives, the establishment of FMNR champions, community leaders (village leaders and mayors). We bring our educational messages and training to staff from the Ministry of Environment and Rural Development, the Ministry of Agricultural Development, Ministry of Livestock, as well as local partners and re-greening project staff.

A major success was the Ministry of Environment and Rural Development agreeing to mainstream FMNR in the national strategy plan (2021- 2025). We established and equipped nine nurseries across both districts, training both male and female members of the local community on how to manage and scale-up their business. We also engaged our 400 FMNR champions to participate in tree plantation, distributing 950 agroforestry tree seedlings including lemon, neem, and guava across eight villages.

*Most families used to eat one meal a day, but now families eat at least three meals due to increased milk production and sales". Caregiver, Qaloocato Village*

## Education is key Knowledge is power

Our re-greening approaches never stop at just the landscape we are working with; successful FMNR is a whole-of-society engagement, which requires training, awareness-raising, and a renewed relationship with the land around them.

Our work also actively engages in the realignment of attitudes towards women and children's participation in the creation of a renewed and successful intergenerational relationship with the land and farming communities' future.



*World Vision collaborated to research plant tissue technologies in the laboratories of the Technical Veterinary School and Reference Centre in Somaliland's Sheikh district (Image: World Vision, 2021)*

We translated manuals into several Somali languages and disseminated them into the communities and supported FMNR champions, who participated in advocacy forums to encourage fellow farmers to join the movement. In communities where the practice has already been adopted, we harmonised responses to the successful implementation of FMNR, protection of vegetation cover/trees, and prevention of charcoal burning and other harmful practices.

We collaborate with higher education and scientific institutions, to ensure all the knowledge stays with the Somali people, is built-up on using local experts, and can be shared throughout the country. Our technological innovations, such as weather monitoring apps, are shared with the communities to ensure

## Not letting obstacle becomes a barrier

Regeneration brings up some difficulties. It can be something as simple as extreme weather preventing new farming processes from bearing fruit, or a community not realising the exponential economic and developmental value in educating their women and girls.

World Vision has been pioneering FMNR for three decades in over 24 African countries, we are always learning and adapting to new experiences, knowledge, and contexts. In every instance, the key is emphasising tenacity and modifying methodologies to ensure the success.

Gender inclusion is a fundamental part of an effective process. We engage in gender- and disability-transformative approaches to the communities we work with, changing gender perspective and social norms to address power and privilege imbalances amongst farming groups.

## Somali people own their future

FMNR goals create a climate-resilient infrastructure structure that belongs to the Somali people for the years to come, with renewed soil, better pastures, and improved farming practices which can be handed down to the next generation.



*Together we are making stronger, meaningful connections between knowledge, industry, policy, science, and the Somali people.*

*Sahra Nour Ali is a member of a village savings and loan association, created as part of an FMNR programme in the Togdheer region. Through her participation in the group, she received a loan to build her bread oven (Image: World Vision 2020)*

## Community engagement for re-greening is not without its challenges;

We draw on our decades of expertise to formulate solutions on-the-go or learn and incorporate the obstacles into our future project programming. Among our coming challenges are improving messaging for communities to prioritise re-greening, as well strengthening community groups into regional FMNR leaders.

We always strive to ensure more inclusion and meaningful participation of women, children, adolescents, and people with disabilities.

## Lessons we've learnt along the way

We are constantly learning. When we discovered poor FMNR implementation due to lack of trained practitioners, we passed the knowledge higher up, training government staff from target areas to lead re-greening implementation.

In Somaliland, we found that FMNR wasn't being adopted in some areas because women and youth weren't being meaningfully included. After community engagement to change negative attitudes towards women's involvement, we showed women how to reseed, prune trees, as well as build soil and water conservation structures. We also showed women's and youth groups how to propagate tree seedlings in the nurseries. Beyond the physical participation, we also trained local women on the concepts and principles of FMNR approach.

In the Somaliland project, we also conducted business facilitation training on Farming As A Business (FAAB), with the participation of 80 female farmers. Our future programming is also aiming to manage external drivers of environmental degradation, such as environmentally destructive companies, influencing more government policies focussed on supporting FMNR.

## Chapter 4

### World Vision has the expertise, and we're giving it to the people who need it most

Now in its third decade, World Vision delivers Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration as a sustainable and environmentally friendly farming activity across almost 30 countries.

The benefits of FMNR can't be understated. The humanitarian sector is embracing a new era, where expertise in emergency response is no longer enough; interventions must assess the needs of the people we support and seek to sustainably solve problems for generations to come. This goes beyond supply: it means empowering communities with the tools and the knowledge to navigate their own futures more peacefully and prosperously.

Over the decades, World Vision Somalia's has worked with local communities, to expand our understanding of the existing issues and broadening our knowledge of the best methods to manage the new landscape.

We are constantly learning from experience. At the end of every project, we conduct comprehensive partner and stakeholder capacity assessments, so we can bring best knowledge and practice into our future collaborations.

*"We rejoice in the opportunity FMNR provides us to truly transform both the lives of children, and the communities and environments they live in."*

*Daniel Wordsworth, CEO of World Vision Australia*



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