Growing the Great Green Wall

To reach the GGW target of restoring 100 million hectares by 2030 (but with only 18 million hectares restored so far[1]) means restoration rates must increase from 1 to 8 million hectares each year.

Speedily...

With $14 billion of public funds already committed[2], implementation can be increased immediately and significantly, if the following steps are transformed into national action plans and applied.

Smartly...

Using farmer-managed natural regeneration where possible, and simple water harvesting structures, alongside other low cost and easily adopted sustainable land management techniques.

Sustainably...

Increasing the inclusive participation of all land users in decentralized decision-making, and in helping communities to create and enforce local bylaws to manage their natural resources.

Actions for accelerating adoption

Stocktake restoration undertaken in every GGW country, identify the success and determine their potential for scaling.[3]

Develop tree-based value chains for fruit, fibre, fodder, fuel, gums, resins, medicines, etc. with support for appropriate processing technologies, and marketing.

Identify areas where success is most likely and will be rapidly adopted, such as those with high population densities.

Co-create policies and legislation that develop or improve rights to trees and plant resources on-farm or on communal land.

Promote natural regeneration of trees and shrubs, from stumps, and using manure with tree seeds in it. This is low cost and produces quick results, plant seedlings only where other trees are wanted.

Inform all people about the many clear successes as a source of local and national pride, and the urgent need to accelerate restoration, especially through radio programmes and social media.

Build capacity of land users, trained, empowered and mobilized by NGOs, CSOs and ministries, and of support staff, both in soft skills as well as technical knowledge.

Monitor progress through the application of a truly participatory system agreed by all stakeholders, including livelihood benefits and carbon sequestered.

Strengthen village organizations and share experiences of villages in every GGW country that have already organized themselves and created as well as enforced their own bylaws.

Fill all knowledge gaps through action research (though we know enough already to scale action), e.g. impacts on food security, local economies, groundwater recharge.

Each GGW country should have these built into concrete plans for greatly expanding areas to be restored, from 2022.
See next page for a proposal on how to divide a national budget, to immediately begin regreening a million hectares...

Regreening. Regenerating. Building back better

What to do with $100 million a year, and a million hectares to restore?

You hear on 11 January 2021 that the Great Green Wall has received $14.3 billion for the next five years, committed by the African Development Bank, the World Bank, France and Germany, amongst others.[2] Yours is one of the 11 participating countries. A budget is presented to you...

You have a very ambitious target to reach, and no time to lose.
You have to act **now**. What to do and how to spend the money...?

Documenting and communicating ~10%. Conduct surveys to decide the priority areas immediately– where the million hectares to be restored are. At the same time, hire journalists to go across the country reporting on restoration successes, for the web, radio, TV and newsprint. Establish a central communications team to coordinate. Outputs are clear and should be ready in 3-6 months.

Teaching technical abilities ~20%. A crucial component with many sides, but that is the foundation. This includes technical training to farmers, by the tens of thousands, in natural regeneration and simple water harvesting techniques. Also encourage farmer-to-farmer learning and exchange visits. But first, trainers will need training, by the many hundreds, from NGOs, CSOs and government extentionists.

Providing tools, seedlings and earthworks~15%. More and better pruning and digging tools are needed to scale restoration, as well as village tree nurseries and even heavy machinery on some sites. However, many previous programmes have depended on earthworks and this infrastructure has not been maintained. Use only when what has to be done cannot be achieved by community participation alone.

Supporting soft skills ~10%. Essential to improve community organization and management, dialogue and conflict resolution between farmers, pastoralists, charcoal makers.... This will overlap in part with technical and business capacity building. A specific budget is now recommended in any development project for building such 'functional capacities'[4].

Building businesses ~25%. Identify, with communities and especially women and youth, the products from restored landscapes that can be developed. Provide appropriate enterprise training, equipment for improved production and processing, and marketing support. Offer subsidies, grants and loans to producer organizations, cooperatives, small and medium-sized enterprises so they can expand.

Providing policy frameworks ~5%. Does supportive legislation exist, and if it does, is it implemented? If not, why not? Establish a policy working group including representatives from all ministries with a vested interest in agriculture, livestock, water, land and planning. This working group should also look into reducing the costs and the red tape involved in developing small enterprises.

Monitoring and appraising ~10%. Establish a national taskforce and conduct a thorough baseline survey across the million hectares, working with the World Resources Institute and AFR100's Secretariat. Develop and implement a protocol with biannual updates and reporting, including more criteria than just numbers of hectares and trees, e.g. economic benefits and carbon sequestered.

Enabling action-research ~5%. Only if required, to support any of the other actions. However, research for research's sake is not necessary, and almost all of the needed knowledge is known. Exceptions include the need to know more about soil carbon sequestration, and the production and trade of firewood and charcoal trade.

[1] UNCCD, 2020. The Great Green Wall implementation status and way ahead to 2030.
[2] Great Green Wall receives over $14 billion to regreen the Sahel – France, Germany, African Development Bank and World Bank listed among donors
[3] Many examples of such successes are reported in Restoring African Drylands from which this brief is drawn.
[4] Agrinatura and FAO, 2019. Catalysing Innovation in Agriculture – Conversations of change.

All comments and requests for further information much appreciated.
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Photo: A farmer in the Yatenga region, Burkina Faso, and his millet harvest on once barren land, restored using *zaï* pits, contour stone bunds and farmer managed natural regeneration. Chris Reij.

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