

Capacity-development workshop for Central, Eastern and Southern Africa on the restoration of forests and other ecosystems to support the achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets

2-6 October 2017- Durban, South Africa

Key messages from the workshop sessions

(A) - NATIONAL TARGETS AND INTEGRATION OF COMMITMENTS

- When setting national targets, formulate them to be specific, measurable, agreed, realistic and time bound – avoiding targets that are too complex to achieve or too vague to be useful. Keep in mind that restoration is a process over long time scales.
- Government focal points must work together with local stakeholders to understand their needs and knowledge.
- National implementing agencies and international conventions need to harmonize their processes to reduce costs and delays.
- Focal points for different conventions are often in different ministries, do not know each other and fail to coordinate – an effort should be made to establish working relationships.
- The private sector is both part of the causes of degradation and a net beneficiary of restoration efforts. As such, they should be a contributor to restoration finance.

(B) PLANNING OF RESTORATION ACTIVITIES

- There is no one approach to restoration, but rather a series of principles and guidance to be followed in tailoring each site-specific strategy.
- Successful restoration requires to first identify the direct and indirect drivers of degradation. These need to be addressed for restoration efforts to be effective and durable. This may entail arbitration between the priorities of different sectors and the resolution of conflicts of interest.
- Restoration efforts should be based on identified needs, including those of the local community. Clear goals should be set, which account for cultural aspects of resource use. Restoration activities should take into account traditional knowledge and address behavioural change in the communities.
- The success of restoration initiatives is possible only through the involvement of all stakeholders, including those who will be directly affected by the restoration activities
- When starting a community rehabilitation project, carry out a visioning activity in which the community outlines what they would like to see the area looking like in five years' time. This forms the basis of discussions about what can be done to achieve this and avoids a “wish list” of expectations that are not achievable.
- The benefits of restoration should be clearly explained to and preferably requested by the communities involved. They must see the benefit of the project to themselves to ensure their commitment to the restoration process. For example, if people have greater access to medicinal plants and more grass for livestock, thatching and making baskets, they will be motivated to find solutions and contribute to activities that are then more likely to be

successful. It may be necessary to provide an alternative to communities in terms of access to resources. A strategy that incorporates the needs of the land users or owners should be at the centre of restoration planning to ensure sustainability

- Cost-benefit analyses can be important: to weigh the cost and benefits of restoration efforts against likelihood of success; and vs the costs and benefits of other activities on the land over time. Take into account national priorities - restoration will not always be the priority.
- Food security is arguably one of the biggest priorities for most countries. Restoration of natural resources contributes to food/energy/water nexus and must therefore be coordinated with these agendas. It is useful to map out how restoration contributes to the objectives of other sectors.
- Ecosystem restoration can be a practical application of ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction. It can reduce the impacts of climate change, conserve species and contribute to disaster risk reduction.

(C) - ON-THE-GROUND IMPLEMENTATION

- The work of limiting the spread of invasive species and prevent their introduction to new locations can save significant effort and cost, compared to restoration activities that seek to remove them.
- Restoration takes time. It could take dozens of years and the land may not be completely restored even in the long term. The short time frames of international commitments may not allow for demonstration of the final results of restoration (hence why the Bonn Challenge now aims for land 'under restoration' by 2020).
- It is not always economical to try to eradicate invasive alien species. In some circumstances it may be better to control and minimize the impact of these species, use them for subsistence or commercial activity if possible, and manage them as a part of the landscape. One pillar of invasive species management is the development of value-added industries: mine the invasive species until you can recover the productive value of the site.
- Work with ecological processes, not against them. Natural regeneration can be a cost-effective option and is worth evaluating. Restoration can also be combined with productive use of the land if the process is well planned and managed.
- Correct species identification, species-site matching and use of indigenous species sourced locally is very important. For example, make use of best available science and consult local knowledge of fast growing plant species for quicker soil stabilization.
- Restoration in the wind path is a challenge and requires use of native, fire-resistant species, or native species integrated with fire management techniques.
- One approach to manage invasive plant species is to establish fast-growing tree species amongst them in clusters, which may then outgrow and shade off the unwanted species until they are suppressed.

(D) – MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING

- Monitoring restoration and rehabilitation is necessary, but does not have to involve complex scientific techniques.
- Communities can be trained to use simple monitoring techniques to understand and inform the restoration process.
- The results of the monitoring programme need to be reported back to the community, the restoration practitioners, the public, and used to inform adaptive management.

- Monitoring programmes can be strengthened by optimizing the use of remote sensing and monitoring tools and collaboration on data collection, using citizen science.
- Restoration standards can be used as a guideline, keeping in mind the realities of the African context. They can define an end point for ‘ideal’ restoration, followed by prioritization of what can realistically be achieved. Information of ‘how much’ of the standards can be achieved can be useful to feed back into the reporting on progress under the targets.

(E) - IDEAS FOR COLLABORATIVE NEXT STEPS

- Organize an African knowledge exchange event on restoration, with experts providing advice to concrete restoration problems or initiatives.
- Upscale monitoring tools like AFIS to serve the whole continent (or SSA). Cost of monitoring per ha would be less as we scale up. Could be approached internationally rather than countries individually.
- Identify tools and existing databases for rangeland monitoring
- Establish an online platform (clearing house) where one can create a request for help from a restoration expert with a restoration problem/how to develop a restoration strategy for a particular area. Consider links to AfriOCAT. Should mature to a regional coordination framework.
- Developing a community of practice in the region (especially on wetlands) and work to share knowledge and new experiences.
- Dissemination options: find ways to feed the recommendations from this meeting into also the other Rio Conventions & Bonn Challenge processes. We should also find ways of informing donor communities.
- Set up a mailing list for further information sharing. Note: this has provisionally been done as a Google group.