

COURSE REPORT

Forest Landscape Restoration and the Restoration Opportunities Assessment Methodology - Niger

February 5 - 23, 2018

A blended course organized by:
Environmental Leadership & Training Initiative (ELTI)
International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and TerrAfrica



Group photo of course participants, facilitators, and organizers. Photo credit: NEPAD.

Background:

Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) provides an opportunity to transform large areas of degraded and deforested land into landscapes that produce numerous ecological, economic, and social benefits. Many countries have made commitments to restore millions of hectares of degraded and deforested land under the Bonn Challenge, which is an international effort to restore 150 million hectares around the globe by 2020 and 350 million by 2030. Achieving these commitments, however, requires that decision-makers address the diverse ecological, socio-political, and economic factors that impact restoration efforts at different scales.

The Restoration Opportunities Assessment Methodology (ROAM) provides a framework to analyze, identify, and prioritize restoration opportunities in order to develop a suite of landscape restoration strategies for particular contexts. By situating ROAM within a broader framework of information on tropical forest and landscape ecology, socio-political and economic processes related to restoration, and landscape restoration strategies, individuals involved with FLR policy, planning, and implementation can develop the foundation needed to achieve a range of objectives, such as economic growth, food security, biodiversity conservation, and carbon sequestration.

ELTI is an initiative of the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental studies supported by Arcadia, a charitable fund of Peter Baldwin and Lisbet Rausing (www.arcadiafund.org.uk). IUCN is a membership Union composed of both government and civil society organisations. It harnesses the experience, resources and reach of its 1,300 Member organisations and the input of some 15,000 experts. IUCN is the global authority on the status of the natural world and the measures needed to safeguard it.



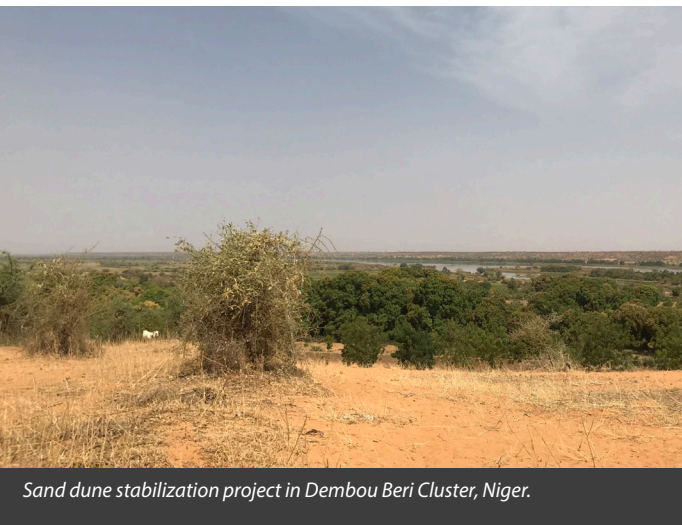
Participants visiting the site of sand dune stabilization efforts at Demou Beri Cluster during the field visit component of the training course.

This training course aimed to develop the capacity of staff members from government and other key agencies to implement ROAM. This objective is particularly important for countries striving to meet Bonn Challenge targets by 2030, as implementing ROAM can help governments generate appropriate information for improved decision-making on FLR implementation. In 2015, Niger committed to restore 3.2 million hectares of land under the Bonn Challenge and the African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative (AFR100).

Course Objectives:

The specific objectives of this course were to:

1. Present key principles of tropical forest ecology, disturbance, social and governance factors, and landscape restoration actions;
2. Support participants to develop a Theory of Change that will generate sustained multiple benefits of FLR in the context of Niger by implementing a situation analysis of landscape degradation and the drivers of degradation and deforestation;
3. Provide participants with the knowledge to evaluate and compare an array of forest landscape restoration methodologies and understand how biophysical and socio-economic conditions of a landscape influence decision-making about which strategies to utilize;
4. Develop a shared understanding of landscape restoration opportunities and the value of multifunctional landscapes amongst participants, to help increase resource allocation to landscape restoration programs and increase engagement of key policy-makers from different sectors;
5. Present ROAM as a robust and adaptable framework to analyze and develop FLR strategies, plans, and supporting policies;
6. Provide opportunities for participants to engage in critical discussion, share expertise, and connect with other practitioners engaged in landscape restoration and ROAM-related activities in their country; and
7. Discuss and help develop capacity to contribute to the realization of Niger's commitment to the Bonn Challenge and the AFR100.



Sand dune stabilization project in Dembou Beri Cluster, Niger.



Course participants discussing important stakeholders for FLR and ROAM.



Participants presenting their results of an interactive exercise on identifying restoration opportunity areas.

Format:

The training course comprised two primary components:

1. A **Two-week online primer** presented key information on social and ecological fundamentals and landscape restoration strategies. The primer included pre-recorded lectures, interactive text-based presentations, case studies, an introductory live discussion session, and assignments in which participants were asked to relate themes to their own local context.

2. A **Four-day in-person training course** was held at the Hotel Univers in Niamey, Niger and included a comprehensive and interactive program on FLR and ROAM. The course incorporated a range of teaching approaches, including key presentations on theory and application of FLR and ROAM, interactive exercises, field visits, and peer-to-peer exchange.

The in-person training included the following presentations and activities:

Day 1:

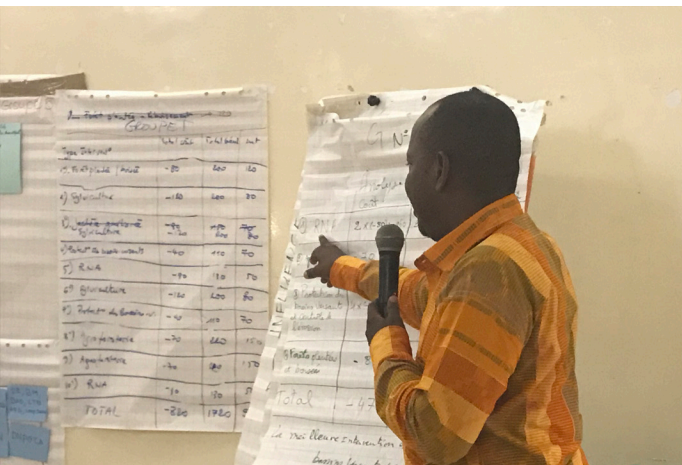
The first day began with an opening session to welcome participants and introduce the training event. Presentations on the Bonn Challenge, the AFR100, and ROAM followed the opening session.

Participants then discussed and identified local degradation indicators, drivers of degradation, and FLR objectives in an interactive group exercise. Participants learned about social and cultural considerations for FLR and completed an activity identifying and prioritizing important stakeholders to engage with in FLR and ROAM.

Day 2:

On the second day, participants completed an interactive group exercise identifying priority restoration areas in a landscape. They learned about ecosystem services and landscape restoration, including restoration strategies to achieve specific ecosystem service objectives and planning tools for measuring and assessing benefits. Participants then completed an interactive group activity to identify restoration zones and site-specific FLR interventions, using a landscape approach.

During the afternoon, Yacouba Seybou, Director



Participants presenting their group's results from the cost-benefit analysis activity

of Forest Management, Reforestation, and Land Restoration, presented an overview of current activities in Niger contributing to the Bonn Challenge. Following the presentation, participants completed an interactive exercise on cost-benefit analysis for landscape restoration interventions.

Day 3:

On the third day, course attendees visited two field sites to demonstrate course themes and help visualize FLR opportunities.

Participants first visited a project site at the Yettoré Allah cluster (a group of village committees), where the program has worked with communities to provide technical and financial support to implement restoration activities. The area was previously forested and had been subject to human disturbance and degradation. The local people were supported to implement rehabilitation activities, including: erosion control strips, tree planting pits, stone barriers, agroforestry, reforestation with *Acacia Senegal* (Gum arabic), and forage crops.



Participants consulting with a local community member involved with the Yettoré Allah Cluster project during the field visit.

Next, participants visited another project site at the Dembou Beri cluster. At this site, the project's main objective was to stabilize sand dunes using a combination of mechanical and biological measures. The mechanical method consisted of palisade windbreaks made of plant material (e.g., millet stalks, grasses, branches) that were arranged in a checkerboard pattern to establish buffer strips. The biological method consisted of planting vegetation. Simplified management plans have been developed to organize the joint management of these sites often located on communal lands.

Day 4:

On the final day, participants shared their reflections about the field visit. The discussion was followed by presentations on data and multi-criteria analysis for ROAM, financing for FLR, and considerations for scaling up FLR. Participants completed a final wrap-up activity, developing a "road map" to plan and implement ROAM. The event ended with course evaluations and closing remarks.



Reference site left by the Yettoré Allah Cluster project to show the state of the land prior to restoration activities.



Participants visiting a rehabilitation area with Acacia Senegal plantation, at the Yettoré Allah Cluster project.

Participants:

Twenty-seven participants, representing Nigerien governmental departments (e.g., environment and sustainable development, forest management and restoration, water, and agriculture) and other Nigerien institutions, attended the course.

Facilitators:

The course was facilitated by Salomé Begeladze (Programme Officer, IUCN Global Forest and Climate Change Programme), Karin Bucht (Online Training Program Associate, ELTI), and Dominique Endamana (Program Officer, IUCN Regional Forest Program for Central and West Africa), with assistance from country focal point Hamissou Garba (Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development), Amina Tidjani (Directorate of Forest Management, Reforestation, and Land Restoration), and NEPAD representatives Cheikh Tidjane N'dongo, Edith Maboumba, and Ambassador Amadou Diallo. The field visit was facilitated by Commandant Mahamadou Abdoul Aziz (Program to Combat Sand Encroachment in the Niger Basin).

Follow-up:

Most participants were actively engaged during the four-day in-person course and indicated that their experience was a positive one. In the course exit survey, 92% of participants rated their experience in the course as “good” or “very good.” While only some participants accessed the online primer before the in-person course, those that did indicated that they found the content useful. In the coming months, ELTI aims to follow up with participants to see how the course has influenced their professional development, and how they are managing and planning FLR in their work.

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