

# Restoration of degraded land for food security and poverty reduction in East Africa and the Sahel: taking successes in land restoration to scale

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## Overall Project Goal and Objectives

The IFAD- funded project, “Restoration of degraded land for food security and poverty reduction in East Africa and the Sahel: taking successes in land restoration to scale” was launched in March 2015 and runs until March 2018. The project action countries include: Niger, Mali, Ethiopia, Tanzania and Kenya. This report will focus on activities carried out in the first nine months of operation that correspond to the first two project objectives. **Objective One: Lessons Learned and Best Practice:** to identify and articulate lessons learned and develop good practice guidelines for restoring productive capacity of drylands through critical review of experience at five contrasting sites in Africa. **Objective Two: Proof of Application:** to obtain detailed information on the impacts of land restoration on ecosystem services and livelihoods through action research involving multiple stakeholders, providing feedback for refinement of tools for scaling up land restoration at the five sites.

The overall project goal is to reduce food insecurity and improve livelihoods of poor people living in African drylands by restoring degraded land and returning it to effective and sustainable tree, crop and livestock production, thereby increasing land profitability and landscape and livelihood resilience.

## On-going Literature Review of Restoration Activities in the Five Project Countries

A detailed literature review is currently underway and focuses on documenting and quantifying successes and failures of large and small scale restoration projects. Coordinated by ICRAF, each country review is lead by a CGIAR center: ILRI in Ethiopia; ICRAF in Kenya and Tanzania; ICRISAT in Niger; and ICRAF & ICRISAT are leading the review in Mali. The lessons learned will be used to inform project activities, as well as identify key restoration activities in each country as well key actors implementing restoration activities. In addition, the review will document the baseline assessments conducted, interventions implemented, and the indicators used to evaluate success of the restoration interventions. Currently, hundreds of peer-reviewed journal articles have been cataloged by specific option. Expect the full report online in March 2016.

## The Options by Context (OxC) Approach

In terms of developing options, a co-learning paradigm that recognizes and addresses fine-scale variation in context is required. “This uses planned comparisons to systematically test and monitor options across sufficient ranges of context so that quantitative and qualitative performance data can be interpreted to determine which options work in different circumstances and what ingredients it is necessary to combine for successful scaling in different contexts” (Coe, Sinclair, Barrios, 2014).

**Vocabulary: Option:** anything that a farmer, community, extension agent, stakeholder is encouraged and supported by the project to do differently (e.g., interventions, practices, strategies, choices and approaches). **Context:** The ecological, social, institutional and economic situation that affects the performance of and preference for options.



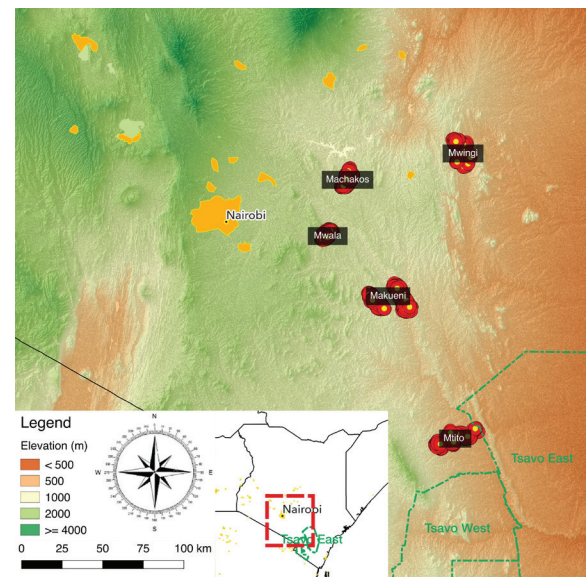
# Integrating the OxC Approach into Community Visioning and Action Planning

Identification and prioritization of options/interventions is the core of the Options by Context (OxC) approach. The OxC approach has been fully integrated into the DryDev project's participatory approaches and specifically into the **community visioning and action planning: guidelines for integrating the options by context approach**. Integrating the OxC approach has proved to be a powerful tool in facilitating bottom up and inclusive identification and prioritization of development options that match the heterogeneous biophysical and socio-economic contexts of marginalized communities. Building on the results and outcomes of the participatory process, community representatives defined key interventions/options to be used in achieving the results/outcomes that contribute to the realization of the vision. It is important to ensure that a wide range of options are included and cater for farmers in different socio-economic and biophysical contexts. The identification of these options will be used to inform the planned comparisons at the sites.

## Theoretical and Field Training of the OxC Approach in Kenya 2015

Ox<sup>c</sup> training workshop for ICRAF staff was conducted in May 25th-29th on the ICRAF- Nairobi campus. Led by Fergus Sinclair, Ric Coe and Karl Hughes, 26 ICRAF scientists and experts were trained in the conceptual framework and implementation guidelines of Ox<sup>c</sup>. Specific objectives of the workshop were to: 1) familiarize ICRAF staff with the Ox<sup>c</sup> approach, research in development concepts and planned comparisons being used in the IFAD and DryDev projects; 2) test and revise processes for implementing the approaches; 3) plan how the methods will be taken 'to scale' in each country; and 4) produce Ox<sup>c</sup> matrices and planned comparison designs for Kenyan sites.

The practical section of the training engaged field officers from the implementing partner organizations which included: SNV, ADRA, ICRAF, World Vision, CARITAS, the Kenyan National Drought Management Authority as well as various Ministries within the Kenyan government including: Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries; Ministry of Gender and Social Studies; and the Ministry of Water. In total, over 100 participants were engaged in the field trainings, including local farmers at the Kenyan project action sites (see map on the right).



Location of the Kenya project action sites and where the Ox<sup>c</sup> field training took place.

Using the participatory methods described above, each community identified a range of options for implementation in the action site, for a total of 50 different options from the three counties, Kitui, Machakos and Makueni in Kenya. These data will be used to inform the interventions and associated planned comparisons.

## Conceptual Paper Outlining the OxC Approach

A draft conceptual paper, outlining the theoretical background of Ox<sup>c</sup>, implementation guidelines and success stories from the field is currently being circulated within the team. This paper will be a key output of the project and contribute to the project objectives on developing tools, methods and guidelines for scaling up and scaling out successes in land restoration.

