



2024

ANNUAL REPORT



Regreening the earth without planting a single tree?

Foreword

Awaken Trees is not about afforestation in the traditional sense. We don't plant trees. Everything we need is already in the ground. The method we are promoting is called "FMNR" – how this approach looks like will be described at the beginning of this report.

Awaken Trees is a non-profit association founded in Austria in 2021. From there we support initiatives of visionary people in Ghana, Tanzania and Senegal. We support people, who want to take responsibility for their community and get them excited about regreening through FMNR. The ideas and strategies of these persons are implemented in our projects. With our funding, they can realize their visions of regreening and reach as many people as possible.

Their goals are also our goals.

- *Josef Ertl, 23, President*



Njamasi Chiwanga, Josef Ertl & Tony Rinaudo
Accelerating Nature Based Solution Conference, Zambia 2024

Contents

FMNR in 4 steps	4
Our projects	5
<i>Ghana</i>	6
<i>NABDAM COMMUNITY FMNR-PROJEKT</i>	7
<i>FMNR ECO CLUB SCHOOLPROJECT</i>	14
Success stories	17
Global Conferences	21
<i>Nature-Based Solutions Conference</i>	22
Thank You!	25
Financial report 1	26
Financial report 2	27
Imprint	28

Reviving trees – stopping deserts

Our solution

Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) is a simple and low-cost method to grow trees. The important point: The trees are not planted - everything is already in the ground.

In many arid regions of the world, the landscape is covered with small bushes. Often these are actually trees, that have been either ignored or cut down. However, only through a little care and protection, these trees can start growing quickly.

Trees fertilize the soil. Trees protect the soil from drought and harsh winds. They give us shade, firewood, fruits and fodder for livestock. Especially in drylands, trees on farmland can bring huge benefits for the local population.



In the African country Niger farmers could double their crop yields through FMNR. Even in years of drought they were able to harvest a surplus. That's why 200 million trees have been regenerated throughout the country and over 5 million hectares have been restored. The method has been spreading independently from farmer to farmer. This movement hasn't stopped until the present day.

That's why Awaken Trees supports initiatives of people, that are spreading the knowledge about FMNR - in the past year in Ghana, Tanzania & Senegal. It is our goal, that this story of hope will repeat in other parts of the world. With the mission to combat both food scarcity and harsh climatic conditions.

FMNR in 4 steps

1. **Observe the land:** Wild growing trees are often mistaken for small bushes – if you take a closer look, you can identify them by their leaves.



2. **Select trees:** Numbers and types of trees can vary from person to person – the decision depends on your own individual needs.



3. **Pruning:** To stimulate new growth, cut away all shoots except three to five of the strongest ones.



4: **Protect & care:** A small red ribbon signals, that the desired shoots should not be removed. Prune new branches every two to six months.

OUR PROJECTS

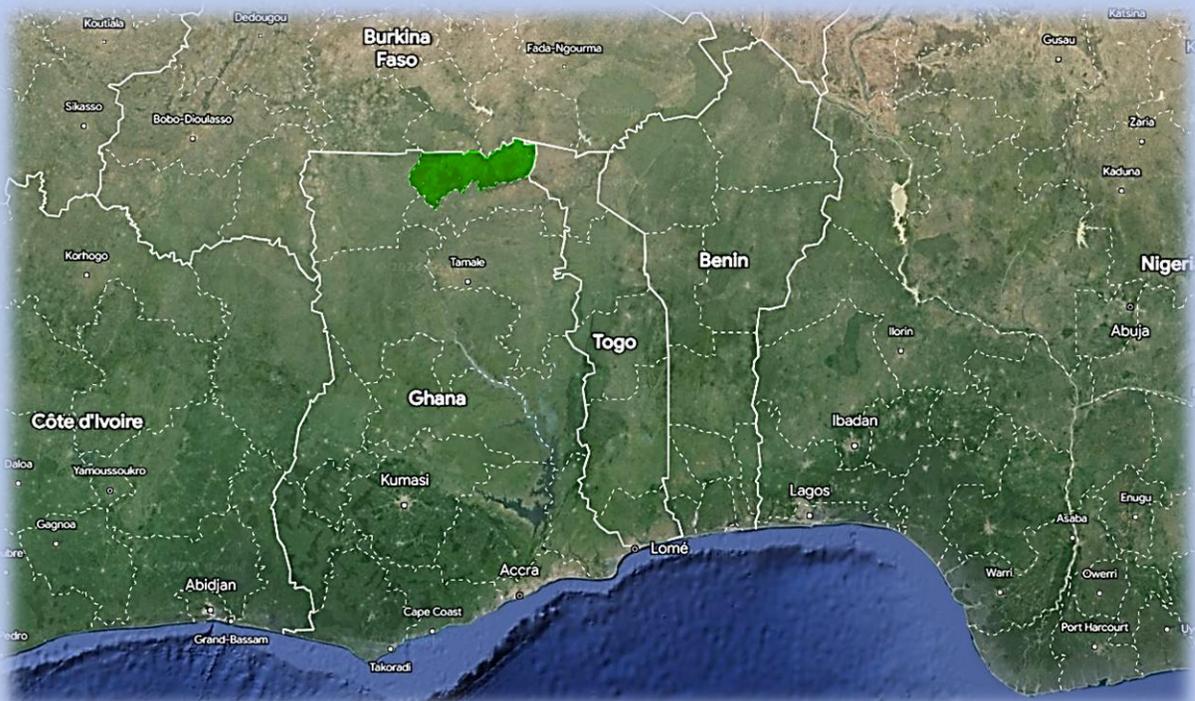
SENEGAL - GHANA - TANZANIA





Ghana

Our focus for 2024



From village to village

NABDAM COMMUNITY FMNR-PROJEKT

In 2024 we finished implementing a two-year 'Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration for Women's Empowerment and Livelihoods Project (**FMNR4WELIP**)' in Nabdam District of the Upper East Region of Ghana together with our partner organization FONAR. The project goal was to safeguard and enhance women's land-based livelihoods through sustainable use of natural resources using the Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) land restoration technique.

FMNR4WELIP's specific objectives are to:

1. enhance the capacity of farmers in target communities to adopt FMNR for improved household food and livelihoods security
2. increase farmers, particularly female farmers, access to alternative livelihoods that reduce pressure on woodlands



The project promotes uptake of the FMNR model alongside a few viable complementary livelihood activities, targeting vulnerable female farmers, widows, female-headed households and other disadvantaged groups. The project adopted the Lead Farmer (LF) approach for FMNR extension service delivery and to accelerate upscaling of the technique and related good agricultural practices. The project facilitated the formation of two FMNR Lead farmer groups of 10 members (10 females/10 males) in each of the two project target communities (villages). They were trained to lead their communities for collective action on land restoration using the FMNR technique. In turn, the trained FMNR lead farmers are to train and mentor other farmers either on their own farms or on community FMNR demonstration sites for replication. This approach is intended to increase FMNR adoption among individual farmers in the project communities and beyond.

Strengthening FMNR practice in the communities

In 2024, a central focus of the project was on the practical dissemination and anchoring of the FMNR (Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration) method in the two target communities of Dasang and Kparaboug. Through regular field visits and personal advice, more than 30 lead farmers were intensively supported. They regenerated numerous economically and ecologically valuable tree species such as shea, locust bean and tamarind in their fields. The lead farmers were also trained as multipliers and took over the training and support of so-called follower farmers in their neighbourhood.



The implementation of the FMNR technique was strengthened by practice-oriented training courses in which participants learned how to promote growth and improve soil fertility through targeted selection, care and pruning of naturally regrowing trees. Many farmers reported positive effects such as better yields, higher soil moisture and reduced erosion. Ecological benefits such as improved biodiversity and microclimate were also observed. In order to permanently anchor the knowledge in the communities, additional FMNR



demonstration areas have been set up. These serve as places of learning for the community and enable interested parties to familiarize themselves with the method directly on site. The combination of practice, peer learning and community engagement has proven to be an effective approach to spread the FMNR method in a sustainable way.

Introduction and expansion of alternative sources of income

A central goal of the project was to provide women and disadvantaged groups in the communities of Dasang and Kparaboug with access to alternative sources of income. In 2024, a total of 44 vulnerable women – including widows, single mothers, women with disabilities and female heads of households – were supported with improved poultry breeds (three animals per person) as well as transitional feed. This measure not only strengthened food security in households, but also opened up new opportunities for women to generate income by selling eggs, meat or offspring.



In addition, a **Group Savings and Loans Association (GSLA)** has been established in each of the two communities. These savings groups are mostly made up of women and enable them to save small amounts on a regular basis, grant each other small loans and build financial security. In the first round of savings, over **14,857 GHS (approx. 1,010 EUR)** were saved and distributed. Many women used the money to invest in small businesses, cover medical expenses or finance their children's school supplies. The positive response to this model was so great

that a second round of savings has already been launched and the interest of other community members is growing.

Bushfires – Prevention through Community and Education



Bushfires are one of the greatest threats to natural resources and agricultural land in the project area. Not only do they destroy young trees and crops, but they also affect soil fertility and the local microclimate. In the past, fires were often set uncontrollably – whether for land preparation or through negligence. The consequences were annually recurring wildfires, for which often no one felt responsible.

To meet this challenge, the project relied on a community-based approach to fire prevention in 2024.

Community Fire Volunteer Squads (CFVS) have been established in both target communities and professionally trained with the support of the Ghana National Fire Service. The volunteers carried out educational activities, imparted knowledge about safe fire practices and helped to create fire protection strips. Practical exercises to fight small fires were also carried out. The results are encouraging: In many areas, fires were prevented at an early stage or quickly brought under control.

Another important step was to provide technical support to the district administration in the development of municipal laws to control bushfires. This legal framework is intended to ensure in the long term that fire protection measures are implemented in a binding and collaborative manner. The combination of traditional knowledge, modern education and legal protection is showing initial successes – both in reducing the frequency of fires and in the growing sense of responsibility among the population. The protection of soil, plants and biodiversity benefits noticeably from this change in the way we deal with fire.



Human-wildlife conflicts

In the project regions of Dasang and Kparaboug, crop damage caused by migrating elephants is one of the recurring challenges for smallholder agriculture. Especially during the growing season in August and November, there are repeated cases in which elephants devastate fields, damage young trees or even endanger people. This problem mainly affects those farmers who cultivate their fields close to natural wildlife corridors.



In 2024, the project took several preventive measures to mitigate these human-animal conflicts. A key innovation was the distribution of **150 citrus seedlings**, which were strategically planted around endangered fields. Studies show that the smell of orange trees deters elephants because they don't like the intense scent. Planting thus represents a double solution: it not only serves to protect the fields, but also opens up a new source of income for farmers in the long term through the sale of fruit. Already during the first inspection in August, a survival rate of over 90% of the planted seedlings was found – a clear sign of the farmers' commitment.

In addition, particularly affected families received simple material for the construction of temporary elephant fences, consisting of white plastic packaging and ropes. These improvised visual-acoustic barriers have a good deterrent effect when combined with other means. The experience of 2024 shows that these cost-effective and locally implementable strategies are an effective first line of defense against wildlife damage. In the long term, they are to be supplemented by reforestation, environmental education and monitoring in order to sustainably secure the habitat for humans and animals.



Überblick

1. The FMNR method has been successfully anchored in the communities and disseminated by committed farmers.
2. Women have been empowered through animal-assisted income opportunities, savings groups, and entrepreneurship training.
3. Community fire protection measures have significantly reduced the risk of bushfires.
4. Simple, nature-based strategies helped to reduce crop losses due to wildlife and create new sources of income.
5. The project promoted personal initiative, environmental awareness and social structures that should have an effect beyond the end of the project.



Facts & Figures

- In 2024, **30 FMNR Lead Farmers** were trained
- **50 Follower Farmers** benefit directly from the knowledge transfer by the Lead Farmers
- **44 women** received a total of **132 poultry animals**
- **2 savings groups** with a total of **45 members** founded- **14,857 GHS (approx. 1,010 EUR)** were saved
- For the prevention of bushfires, **2 Community Fire Volunteer Squads (CFVS)** have been established
- **18 volunteers (11 men, 7 women)** received professional training from the Ghana National Fire Service
- To ward off elephant damage, **150 citrus seedlings** were planted - with a **survival rate of over 90%**



From student to student

FMNR ECO CLUB SCHOOL PROJECT

The goal of FONAR and Awaken Trees school kids FMNR eco clubs programme, being implemented in primary schools of Ghana's Upper East Region (UER) is to empower young people to become change agents for environmental restoration in their communities. The programme began as a two-year project in August 2021 by reviving and strengthening 15 school kids FMNR eco clubs established by the then World Vision Ghana (WVG) Talensi FMNR Project in primary schools. We revived the eco clubs, trained teachers and children on the FMNR technique, provided pruning tools, supported the schools to establish FMNR demonstration sites and facilitated the clubs to conduct community outreach activities on various local environmental issues. Through these activities, the eco clubs have raised awareness among the target communities to sustain FMNR practices. The project reached **385 (207 girls/178 boys) and 32 teachers** directly as club members and club teachers by the end of July 2023. Increasing environmental literacy of young people through environmental education (EE) is pivotal for success and sustainability of ecosystem restoration efforts.

The schoolbased FMNR environmental restoration programme will instill knowledge and skills on, and values for biodiversity conservation on the next generation for food security and sustainable livelihoods. FONAR is transitioning the FMNR eco clubs project to a programme in line with and supportive of Ghana's new standards-based school curriculum as well as global EE best practices. To this end, FONAR's eco clubs program strategy will connect tree growing and environmental education generally across a wide range of subjects and topics in the school curriculum. The programme elements are intended to increase children's environmental knowledge and awareness, promote positive attitudes towards the environment, develop critical thinking skills, stewardship intentions and behaviours, and enjoyment among young people. We recognize the critical role of teachers and the importance of a holistic approach that actively engages learners (pupils/students) in a complete learning experience. We trained and supported our eco club teachers to apply best practices that appear to drive positive results in environmental knowledge, awareness, skills, attitudes, intentions and behavior.



ECO CLUB activities



In 2024, the Eco Clubs carried out a variety of practical environmental education activities at the partner schools in the Talensi District. The focus was on teaching the FMNR method, which was brought closer to the children in an understandable way. They learned how new trees can grow from existing tree stumps and root shoots and how to support them in a targeted manner through selection and pruning. On specially created FMNR demonstration areas on the school grounds, the students regularly implemented this technology.

The children carried out maintenance measures, removed superfluous shoots, cut back weak branches and protected young plants from damage. At the same time, they beautified their schoolyards by creating small gardens, building natural fences and regularly cleaning the surroundings. The Eco Clubs also used creative formats such as poems and drawings to deepen their knowledge and transfer it to their surroundings.

These activities were carried out regularly and independently. Teachers accompanied the groups, but deliberately left the implementation to the children in order to strengthen independence and a sense of responsibility. Many students also transferred what they had learned to their home environment by applying the FMNR principle on their families' farms. The combination of theory and practical application proved to be particularly effective in promoting environmental awareness in the long term.



Campaigns



On October 24, 2024, the Eco Clubs of Gorogo Primary School actively participated in **World Climate Action Day**. The students used this day to raise their voices for the protection of the natural environment and to draw attention to local challenges. Under the guidance of their teachers, they wrote poems, designed posters and presented small scenes in which they addressed the importance of trees, clean water and healthy soils.

A special focus was placed on the fight against illegal gold extraction ("Galamsey"), which causes both environmental destruction and social problems in the region. In their contributions, the children called for a rethink and emphasized that the future of their communities depends on the responsible use of natural resources. The message "Stop Galamsey – the future belongs to all of us" became the motto of the day.



The campaign was implemented with great commitment by the students and found broad support within the school. Many children expressed the desire to remain active beyond the project framework and to pass on their knowledge. The Climate Action Day impressively showed how young people can become convincing ambassadors for a healthy environment through environmental education and creative forms of expression.

Success stories

Silvia Tecka, Kparaboug – FMNR Champion and Instructor

Silvia is a dedicated FMNR ambassador in Kparaboug. Together with her husband, she runs a 3.6-hectare corn and peanut farm, where they specifically preserve young shea trees.

"We used to remove most of the trees because we thought they would harm our crops," says Silvia. Today, through the FMNR project, she knows that trees can be cared for through targeted pruning measures in such a way that they not only do no damage, but also improve the soil, retain moisture longer and reduce erosion. "Our view of trees has changed completely since FMNR," says Silvia. She has already trained seven other farmers in the technique.



Kurug Abeong, Kparaboug – FMNR pioneer

Kurug was one of the first farmers in Kparaboug to implement FMNR on his field. His farm now serves as a model farm for training follower farmers. He began regenerating as early as the 2023 season, and many of the young trees grew surprisingly quickly. In total, he has restored 17 different species of trees and shrubs on his land, including many shea trees.



"In the past, we removed all the trees when we planted the fields," Kurug reports. "Without FMNR, there would not be a single one of these trees left." At the same time, he is concerned about regular damage by elephants, which destroy both young trees and crops.

Cletus Mbumbil (26), Dasang – young Follower Farmer

Cletus is a young farmer who has only recently discovered the FMNR method for himself. He is supervised by Joseph Mpumbire, chairman of the Dasang Lead Farmers Group. In the 2024 growing season, Cletus cut back about ten naturally grown trees and shrubs in his sorghum field.

"Joseph showed me how to prune multi-stem shrubs and trees properly so that they grow faster," he reports. Cletus knows that pruning correctly not only reduces the shading of its crops, but also helps to improve the soil. In addition, he obtains useful firewood by pruning older trees - a classic win-win situation, as he says.

Joel Yenyeya, Dasang – FMNR Lead farmer



Joel was one of the first farmers in Dasang to actively implement FMNR. On his maize and peanut field, he regenerates over 40 trees. He uses the leaves as mulch to improve the soil. By cutting back the lower branches, he reduces the shadow effect on his crops.

"I used to think trees interfered with cultivation. Now I know that they improve the soil and help me."

Joel looks after five follower farmers and is committed to passing on his knowledge.

Joseph Mpumbire, Dasang – Chairman of the Lead Farmer Group

Joseph heads the FMNR Lead Farmers Group in Dasang and is considered a driving force in the project. On his 2.8-hectare farm, numerous shea trees grow between corn and peanuts. He regenerates over 40 trees and trains five follower farmers in FMNR.

"I love the shea trees – they bring income, food and shade. I want even more farmers to realize that."



 **Nagpogbil Teni (36), Dasang – FMNR Lead Farmer and mother of three children**

Teni is one of the first female farmers in Dasang to adopt the FMNR method, after FONAR introduced the concept in February 2023. Today, she is an active FMNR advocate and mentors two other farmers in her community. Around her small peanut farm at the house, she has created a living tree hedge that borders her field, protects her harvest from animal damage and provides her with firewood that is quickly available through pruning.

"FONAR's training on proper tree pruning and all the information about the benefits of trees was very helpful," she says. "I cut back the lower branches so that my food plants get more light, and use the branches for additional fences or as firewood."

 **Dennis Denke (32), Dasang – FMNR teacher despite setbacks**



Dennis was an early FMNR user, but had to give up his first field due to land rights issues. Nevertheless, he continues to implement the method in a bush field. Despite challenges, he remains committed and looks after five follower farmers, including his wife.

"FMNR also works where others would give up. I will continue - for our future."

 **Gifty Tankorin, Kparaboug – The FMNR multiplier & innovation power**

Gifty and her husband run a soy farm with more than ten old shea trees and regenerate an additional 19 young trees. She is strongly committed to young women, looks after two follower farmers and uses various project offers such as GSLA, poultry farming and the improved clay oven.



 **Student, Gorogo Primary School – Eco Club Member & FMNR practitioner**

The young student was actively involved in the Eco Club and participated in World Climate Action Day with a poem about the value of trees. She was particularly impressed by the FMNR technique, which she wants to use not only at school, but also at home.

"I've learned that trees can help us if we help them. I would like to take care of trees on our farm later."



 **Teacher, Eco Club School – Observer and Supporter**



A teacher from the participating school reported on the positive change in behavior of many students since the introduction of the FMNR program. The children take responsibility for their trees, organize maintenance assignments and bring their enthusiasm home with them.

"Some children now voluntarily come to school earlier just to check their trees. That's new for us."



Global Conferences

Public relations



Awaken Trees in Zambia

Nature-Based Solutions Conference



The "Accelerating Nature-Based Solutions Conference 2024" took place in March 2024 in Livingstone, Zambia, near Victoria Falls. Several hundred participants from all over the world gathered here to advance solutions for climate and environmental protection. The event was hosted by the Global EverGreening Alliance together with the Government of Zambia and international partners. The five-day meeting is considered the world's largest conference on land restoration and nature-based solutions. More than 500 participants from numerous countries – including more than 150 environmental organisations, experts, government representatives and community representatives – came together to exchange ideas and work together on concrete action steps.

The focus was on current issues and best practices in the field of Nature-Based Solutions (NBS). Among other things, the participants discussed the role of agroforestry, farmer managed natural regeneration (FMNR) and wildlife management as nature-based approaches to climate resilience. Topics such as carbon offsetting and the rights of local communities in the implementation of NBS measures were also dealt with intensively.



Contribution from Awaken Trees

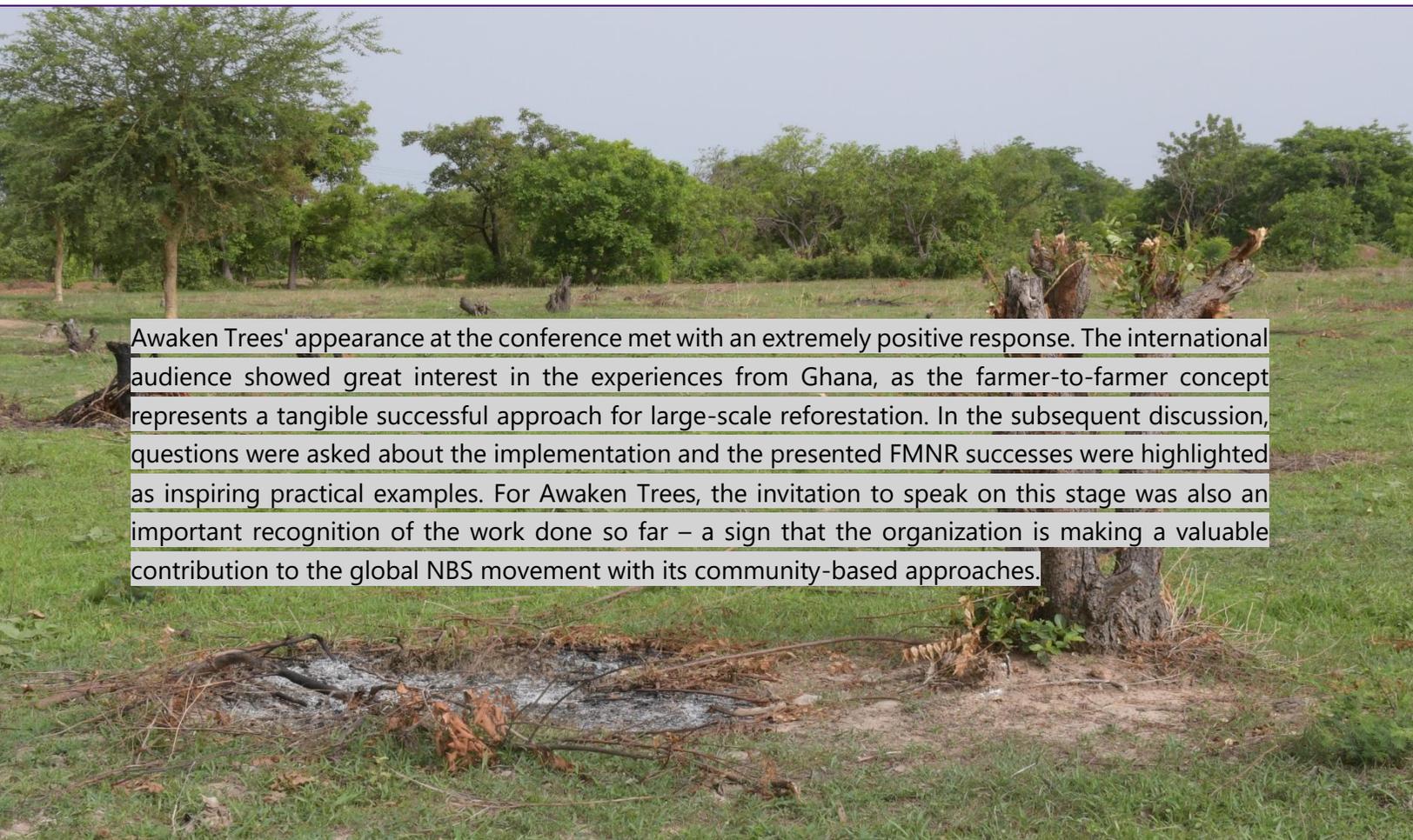


Awaken Trees was represented at this international summit with its own contribution. President Josef Ertl traveled to Livingstone to represent the organization on site. As part of a technical session, he gave a lecture entitled "Upscaling ANR through farmer-to-farmer exchange in Ghana".

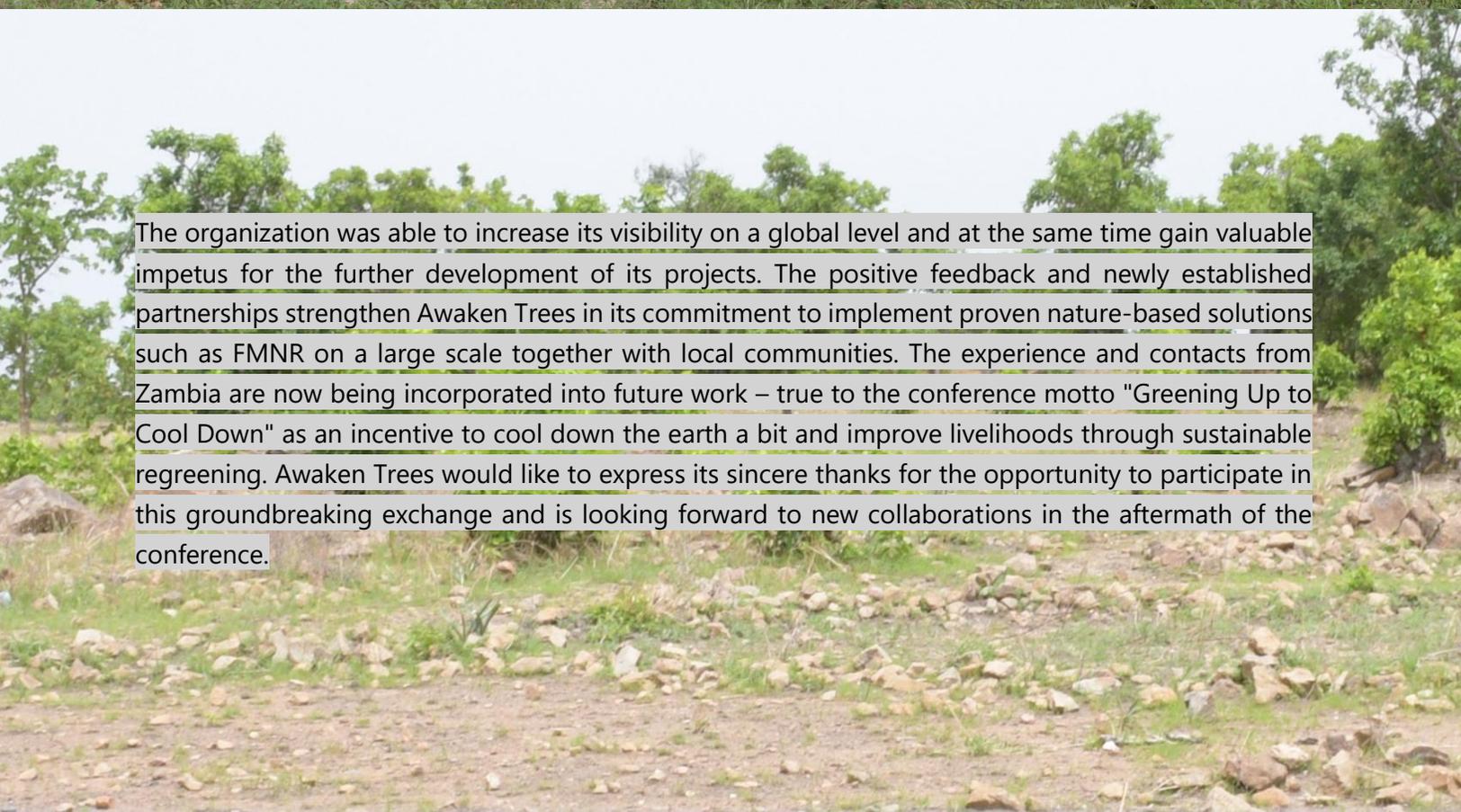
This presentation took place in a session on Assisted Natural Regeneration (ANR) organised by the African Forest Forum and the ANR-Alliance. Ertl presented how Awaken Trees, together with local partners in northern Ghana, is driving forward the greening of degraded areas and relies on the exchange of experience from farmer to farmer.

In terms of content, Awaken Trees showed how the Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) it promotes works in practice. Ertl explained that numerous farming families in Ghana are already regenerating their soils with the help of FMNR. Through farmer-to-farmer training and field reports, this nature-based reforestation method can spread almost automatically in neighboring communities. This practical example from Ghana impressively demonstrated how NBS solutions can be scaled through community engagement. In addition to the lecture, it was also part of the program to participate in discussion rounds and present project approaches to an international audience.



A wide-angle photograph of a lush green landscape. In the foreground, there is a large, gnarled tree trunk and some fallen branches. The middle ground is filled with a dense line of green trees and bushes. The background shows a clear sky and more trees in the distance.

Awaken Trees' appearance at the conference met with an extremely positive response. The international audience showed great interest in the experiences from Ghana, as the farmer-to-farmer concept represents a tangible successful approach for large-scale reforestation. In the subsequent discussion, questions were asked about the implementation and the presented FMNR successes were highlighted as inspiring practical examples. For Awaken Trees, the invitation to speak on this stage was also an important recognition of the work done so far – a sign that the organization is making a valuable contribution to the global NBS movement with its community-based approaches.

A photograph showing a rocky, sparsely vegetated area. The foreground is dominated by light-colored rocks and small, dry-looking plants. In the background, there is a line of green trees under a clear sky.

The organization was able to increase its visibility on a global level and at the same time gain valuable impetus for the further development of its projects. The positive feedback and newly established partnerships strengthen Awaken Trees in its commitment to implement proven nature-based solutions such as FMNR on a large scale together with local communities. The experience and contacts from Zambia are now being incorporated into future work – true to the conference motto "Greening Up to Cool Down" as an incentive to cool down the earth a bit and improve livelihoods through sustainable greening. Awaken Trees would like to express its sincere thanks for the opportunity to participate in this groundbreaking exchange and is looking forward to new collaborations in the aftermath of the conference.

Thank You!

The Austrian association Awaken Trees is run exclusively by volunteer men and women.
Thank you to all our volunteers!

We thank all ambassadors for spreading our message!

We thank our advisors!

We thank our partners:

LEAD Foundation in Tanzania, JEBBI in Senegal, FONAR in Ghana

We thank all other organizations that have cooperated with us!

Awaken Trees is a non-profit organization. The work of Awaken Trees is funded by donations.
Thank you to all donors!



Financial report 1

Source of funds

I. Donations **6 558,9 EUR**

a. Undedicated **6 558,9 EUR**

b. Dedicated

II. Membership fees

III. Operating income

a. Operating income from public funds

b. Other operating income

IV. Subsidies and grants from the public sector

V. Other Income

a. Asset management

b. Other forms of income, unless included under points I. to IV

1,57 EUR (interest income)

VI. Reversal of liability items for items not yet used for their intended purpose

donations or subsidies

40 000,00 EUR (bank deposits from 2022)

VII. Release of reserves

VIII. Annual loss -

Total income 2024 incl. liquidation of bank deposits = **46 560,47 EUR**

Financial report 2

Use of funds

I. Payments for statutory purposes **38 116,9 EUR**

II. Fundraising

III. Administrative expenses

IV. Other expenses, unless listed under I. to III.

30,15 EUR (bank charges) **729,43 EUR** (NbS Conference)

V. Allocation to liability items for donations or subsidies not yet used as intended

VI. Allocation to reserves

VII. Annual surplus 2024 **7 683,99 EUR**

= 46 560,47 EUR

+ Annual surplus 2023 -

Awaken Trees forwards donations directly to their partner organizations, which implement the respective programs. This year these included **Forum for Natural Regeneration (FONAR)** in Ghana, **LEAD Foundation** in Tanzania and **Association Regionale Jebbi** in Senegal. All organizations are legally independent institutions in their respective countries, their goals overlap with the statutory purpose of Awaken Trees.

In 2024, **46 736,93 EUR** were spent directly on our programs. The administrative costs remain zero, because the association Awaken Trees has neither paid employees nor a rented office. The association also did not spend any funds on fundraising. **30,15 EUR** were bank charges. **729,43 EUR** were spent on further education.

Additional costs in connection with the association, such as travel expenses to project countries, were entirely covered privately by the board members.

The remaining funds were stored to finance our programs in 2025.



Imprint

Awaken Trees

Association for the Regreening of Drylands of the Global South

Awaken Trees is a registered non-profit association under Austrian law. The activity of the association is of public utility or charitable and not aimed at profit.

Headquarters: Schlosstraße 1 - 3364 Neuhofen/Ybbs – Austria

Board: Josef Ertl, Evelyn Ertl-Egger

Advisory Board: Wessel van Eeden, Godlove Kihupi, Chris McMilian

ZVR: 1905574740

Website: www.awakentrees.org

E-Mail: trees@awakentrees.org

Instagram: [awakentrees](https://www.instagram.com/awakentrees)

Facebook: [awakentrees](https://www.facebook.com/awakentrees)

Twitter: [awakentrees](https://twitter.com/awakentrees)

Responsible for content / use of funds / fundraising & data protection: Josef Ertl

