

LWR & NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT



BACKGROUND: THE NATURAL RESOURCE CHALLENGE

Over the past decade, the world has witnessed increasing soil and water degradation. One quarter of the planet's land resources are highly degraded. Some 1.6 billion hectares of the world's most productive lands are currently used to grow crops; related degradation results in water and wind erosion, the loss of organic matter, topsoil compaction, salinization and soil pollution, and nutrient loss. Worldwide, the poor have the least access to land and water and are locked in a poverty trap of sustaining livelihoods on small farms with poor quality soils and high vulnerability to land degradation and climatic uncertainty.¹ LWR is dedicated to reversing this trend, and works with rural communities and smallholder farmers around the world to introduce sustainable natural resource management (NRM) practices that both protect the environment and improve livelihoods.

¹ United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), *State of the World's Land and Water Resources for Food and Agriculture (SOLAW)*. <http://www.fao.org/nr/solaw/main-messages/en/>

LWR'S APPROACH: COMMUNITY-BASED SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION AND PROTECTION

LWR approaches natural resource management from a holistic and integrated perspective and ensures that all of its sustainable rural development programming contains elements that mitigate the negative impact of an eroding natural resource base on farmers, families and communities. LWR recognizes that farmers and rural communities are more likely to adopt new cultivation and resource conservation measures when there is a proven link between these measures and improvement in their livelihoods. Therefore, LWR uses a participatory and results-based approach, providing verifiable evidence about how natural resource conservation contributes to an increase in on-farm production and community wellbeing. LWR accompanies farmers and communities as they identify and implement a wide range of conservation measures – from community-led reforestation campaigns and mangrove rehabilitation and management programs, to soil and water conservation activities that are fully integrated into sustainable agriculture and agro-forestry techniques.



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Achieving community buy-in

LWR uses a hands-on and practical approach to demonstrate to rural farm communities the connection between natural resource protection and improved rural livelihoods. LWR's work with farmers and communities stresses participant ownership of natural resource management activities, through techniques like resource mapping – working with community stakeholders to graphically document the unique ecosystem in which they live and highlight how the environment relates to their health and economic wellbeing. When promoting natural resource management within the context of sustainable agriculture, LWR's training and technical assistance approach stresses the importance of farmer-to-farmer exchange programs – allowing farmers new to natural resource management to learn from farmers already experiencing benefits. LWR targets women and youth in its natural resource management activities, expanding impact through a gender and age equity approach that pools the energies of the entire family.

On-farm and community-based soil and water conservation

LWR introduces a wide variety of proven soil and water conservation methods into its sustainable agriculture and value chain programming. These include agriculture-based techniques such as minimum tillage, use of organic fertilizers, grass strips, agro-forestry techniques and improved water harvesting options. LWR also promotes agronomic and agro-forestry technologies, such as combining agricultural crops with longer term tree crops to reduce soil erosion while also enhancing soil organic matter and increasing nitrogen fixation. LWR promotes economic return on natural resource conservation measures by encouraging farmers to plant trees whose fruit can be marketed and rapid growth varieties of trees for household use. LWR's natural resource management initiatives involve entire communities in a focused intervention; in Indonesia, for example, LWR successfully supports a community-run mangrove rehabilitation program, combining solid technical assistance and a proven scientific approach with widespread community education and participation techniques. At the household level, LWR supports on-farm natural resource management activities with the introduction of fuel-efficient stoves that reduce deforestation due to use of firewood.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT:

LWR's community-based natural resource management program in Niger's Tahoua region has protected more than 7,413 acres of communal and pasture land. LWR and its local partners successfully mobilized 64,800 men and women in a cash-for-work initiative, in which participants were paid to build soil and water conservation structures throughout the 30 mile watershed catchment basin to reduce desertification and restore their natural environment. Over the course of the program, 14,255 smallholder farmers also reported utilizing new conservation techniques in their own fields – thereby protecting 14,195 acres of private land.

