

«What if we could transform refugee camps into regenerative communities?»
Generation Restoration

Summary

On August 19th, 2024, Generation Restoration e.V. organized a roundtable with 30 participants from various organizations at the Social Innovation Academy (SINA) in Mpigi, Uganda. Generation Restoration e.V. aims to actively serve as a bridge builder, connecting and supporting the inspiring initiatives that exist within marginalized groups, including both refugees and host communities. Harnessing the experience of grassroots actors, combining common approaches or objectives, framing those for standard-setting, and - ultimately - approaching international organizations for policy definitions are at the forefront of Generation Restoration e.V.'s efforts. The first in-person roundtable marks the beginning of a series of discussions eagerly dedicated to bringing this vision to life. Hence, the question, «What if we could transform refugee camps into regenerative communities?» is not merely preceding its question mark, it is a provocative statement of which its positive effects have been identified and seized to grow by all participants present at the roundtable.

Key Questions & Discussions

The implementation of regenerative practices has been assessed by grassroots experts, raising the question:

«What are the learnings from regenerative practices in refugee camps?»

Within this discussion group, diverse perspectives concluded that multiple benefits arise from regenerative practices like permaculture, such as increased income generation, improved health and wellbeing as well as a better integration of women and youth into society. However, challenges were identified, mainly that these methods and practices are still quite unknown to most in these communities.

Limited market knowledge leads to problems in the value chain (e.g. surplus that can not be sold). When farming traditions face new techniques, this might lead to suspicion (e.g. “crops are not supposed to be mixed”). This widespread scepticism towards polyculture (crop biodiversity) can be countered by expanding the product range: Regenerative Agriculture can not only provide food but also products like essential oils for cosmetics, providing a more sustainable and durable income. The permaculture approach goes beyond food production and also tackles challenges like waste management with circular economy solutions, as well as sustainable energy production with charcoal production from food waste, as well as sanitary solutions and with compost toilets for example. Participants asked to what extent other sectors like WASH (water, sanitation, health) can be involved in implementing regenerative design in camps.

Given the identified manifold opportunities of regenerative solutions, the question arises:

«How can we multiply and scale regenerative solutions?»

As the discussion evolved, participants highlighted the effectiveness of train-the-trainer programs. Combined with demonstration centers and model frameworks, they can help to scale the positive impacts of regenerative solutions. To unfold their potential, relevant and locally supported co-creation of innovations with beneficiaries is advised. Research and (baseline) studies can help to better understand the circumstances of the target groups as well as the effectiveness of technologies. Education for the local communities and authorities is equally as important and very much needed. Promoting best practices requires effective documentation and information dissemination, with a focus on social media engagement. Building collaborations and partnerships through stakeholder mapping is essential to support a strong movement structure. Additionally, agricultural processes need to be rethought for further advancement. Regenerative agriculture means preferring OPS (open-pollinated seeds) over hybrids or GMOs (genetically modified organisms). Even seeds from the 1970s and 80s can still replicate themselves and multiply local seed production, contributing to self-sufficiency and the exchange of seeds

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among farmers and organizations. The group came up with the idea of a “seed production and conservation” working group.

In order to advocate for regenerative solutions on a framing and standard-setting level, proof of concept is key. Hence, the question is:

«How can we measure and evaluate the impact of such regenerative solutions?»

Each organization developed its own method of regeneration and consequently defined diversified measures. This leads to a higher weight of the overall proof and intensified self-development. Overall, this approach enhances standard-setting while allowing each grassroots organization the flexibility to grow and adapt.

Network: Participating organizations & common goals

The unique perspectives of all actors in the roundtable are relevant to intrinsically understanding and incorporating themes into advocacy. They showcase that Ugandan organizations are willing to implement regenerative solutions. However, collaboration and coordination make these efforts even more effective.

Extract of that network:

UNIDOS Social Innovation Center

Turning refugees into change makers – that is the goal of the Unidos Social Innovation Centre. In the Nakivale Refugee Settlement in South West Uganda the refugee-led organisation aims at empowering young refugees with entrepreneurial skills. “Our vision is to completely transform our refugee camp into a regenerative community, where everyone will become self-sufficient. We firmly believe that through developing strong entrepreneurial skills, we will be able to co-create, build resiliency and turn the hard and often painful situations that adversely impacted us in our home countries, into stories of success”, says founder Paulinho. Through the application of permaculture these determined refugees do not only regenerate soil and ecological environment but also their own lives and the community.

Contact:

Paulinho Muzaliwa, founder and director of UNIDOS

<https://unidosprojects.org/>

Nature and Creativity for the Future Generation (NCFG)

Indigenous NGO is working with farmer communities with less resources in Uganda. We are a member of Green light future Union which is a consortium focusing on agroecology. NCFG promotes agroecology, seed regeneration, use of available resources, environmental conservation methods, and safe water in communities.

We have a [demonstration farm](#) to showcase what we preach. Agriculture students use it as a practicing classroom. Roundtable discussion on refugees and restoration is important for us to share our experiences, expertise, challenges, and solutions as we aim at environment restoration.

Kind regards

Francis

Partners Empowering Agro-ecology and Community Education (PEACE)

We are a community-based organisation (CBO) found in Buikwe District, village Bukaya. Majorly with a focus in Agro-ecology which involves environmental conservation, recreation through raising nurseries and tree planting and empowering local smallholder farmers.

Our vision: To promote Innovativeness and Climate Action.

Roundtable Generation Restoration e.V. Regenerative solutions in refugee camps and settlements

Mission: To promote tree planting to smallholder farmers through raising our own nursery beds and by giving out free seedlings to farmers, Rotary Clubs, schools, and the government.

Contact person:

Peter Kibuuka, Rotarian, Director PEACE

Eco Mamas Uganda

Eco Mamas Uganda: Our mission is to enhance the quality of living for youth, women and families in poor rural areas through education involving environmental sustainability, permaculture, holistic nutrition, herbal medicine, yoga and healthy food preparation.

We are developing a community resource and learning center. We are currently working on the first phase of the construction of the house based on a permaculture concept that will accommodate students, teachers and other guests.

We've got 4 small groups :

- 1. Vegetable and herbal medicine.*
- 2. Value addition - porridge flour making.*
- 3. Livestock - local poultry*
- 4. Packaging - Paperbag making to help mitigate against plastic pollution.*

We wish to connect with organizations and individuals who are willing to share knowledge or contribute financially in the construction of the house that will help facilitate, trainings and accommodation.

Contact person:

Adam Suleman, Project Coordinator Eco Mamas Wakalenge Ecovillage

<https://www.ecomamasglobal.com/copy-of-current-projects>

Moram Organics

MORAM ORGANICS is a 3 month old Community Based Organization located in Busia Uganda and trying to link peasant farmers to Agro ecotourism opportunities and culture. We are trying to end poverty and also ensure no hunger amongst our communities by running 3-day resident workshops that introduce participants to hands-on low-cost sustainable crop production techniques, low-cost high quality feed production for livestock including use of the black soldier fly and earthworms for poultry and pig production and Agroforestry.

It's composed of 24 members, largely women, who work together, save their food in a communal food granary, save their diverse indigenous seed in a community seed bank and save some money every month for insurance in times of adversity including benevolence and gladly share this knowledge with visitors during workshops.

Sitting on 6.5 acres of land, the project has begun to establish a permaculture design with much interest in having a food forest and we are working toward acquisition of clean energy solutions including the solar energy supply and eco stoves. Members of Moram Organics are reported to be happier, healthier and more hopeful for a better future!

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Study from Wycliff in Kyangwali refugee settlement

I have spent the past 6 months in Kyangwali refugee settlement, looking at the forest restoration.

Each refugee household is allocated a piece of land measuring 30 by 30 meters and nowadays it has reduced to 20 by 50 because of the increased population. This is standard in all the settlements.

Since the Ugandan refugee policy shifted from a humanitarian approach to a self reliance where the food rations were reduced and stopped in settlements in western Uganda, the refugees grow their own food. Allocation of land to refugees was one of the measures to promote this self reliance.

In my findings (not yet published), fruit trees were the most grown, mainly the grafted ones most preferred in Kyangwali with *Artocarpus heterophyllus* (jack fruit) as the most common species. There are

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implementing partners for UNHCR mainly environment with Nsamizi organisation in most of the western Uganda refugees.

Your project is missing?

If you want to share your work with the roundtable network, please send us your organization or project description to vorstand@gen-r.de and we will add it to this online document here.

Coordinating these efforts is the motivation and reasoning behind the establishment of Generation Restoration e.V.

Several action points and challenges have been identified by the participants that will be the basis for our second roundtable on October 28th 2024 9am EAT online (Zoom - [register here](#))

Challenges

- scalability, resistance to change, lack of knowledge, comfort zoning, issues of policy and relations
- context of communities
- information gap
- conflicting interests (commercialization)/funding?
- mindsets
- competition of money and transformative process
- duplication of work
- getting funders/donors
- capacity building (implementation process/decision-making process/ training participants)
- integration (sufficient quantifiable data/sophisticated software)
- climate change (extreme weather while pursuing regenerative solutions)
- timing

Action points

- networking (share the knowledge/experience)
- more training's
- engaging the local community (communities of practice)
- mapping of key stakeholders
- get accessibility to long-term funding (what can you achieve in only one-year? (UNHCR))
- study
- PPPs (Public-private partnerships)
- policy advocacy to the government
- set clear goals
- financing/existing capacity (maybe among each other?)
- awareness creation and outreach
- climate change mitigation (continued)

All participants stated to be devoted to transforming the challenges into opportunities, embracing the action points, and bringing that passion to the next roundtable.

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Be part of Generation Restoration!

Important Links:

- Save the Date: Online Roundtable on 28 October 2024, 9am EAT ([Registration here](#))
- [Join WhatsApp Group](#) of the Roundtable
- [Join LinkedIn Group](#) of Generation Restoration
- Share your projects with us (send them to vorstand@gen-r.de)
- [Subscribe for news](#) at www.GenR.world
- distribute the information among your personal and professional network



Let's grow together!

SAVE THE DATE - register now!

Next Roundtable: online

28.10.2024, 9am EAT

Registration form:

<https://form.campai.com/inDlpCijfXCY>