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Regreening Africa (Ghana): Restoring Land, Lives, and Livelihoods

Introduction

Across Ghana's northern landscapes, once-fertile lands have been stripped bare by deforestation, overgrazing, and the mounting effects of climate change. The loss of vegetation has not only eroded the soil but also weakened livelihoods, leaving many rural families vulnerable to drought and food insecurity.
In response to this crisis, the Regreening Africa Project emerged as a bold and hopeful initiative proving that with the right knowledge, partnerships, and community willpower, even the most degraded landscapes can flourish again.
Launched in 2017 with support from the European Union, Regreening Africa works across eight African countries, including Ghana, to restore degraded farmlands, enhance food production, and build resilience against climate change.

Project Overview

Project Name: Regreening Africa – Ghana Component
Implementing Partners: World Vision Ghana, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), CARE, ICRAF (World Agroforestry Centre), and local NGOs.
Funding Partner: European Union (EU)
Implementation Regions: Northern, Upper East, and Upper West Regions
Timeline: Phase I (2017–2023); Phase II launched in 2024
Overall Goal: To restore over 200,000 hectares of degraded land and empower communities to manage natural resources sustainably.

Core Objectives

1. Reverse land degradation through ecological restoration and agroforestry.
2. Improve food security and income for smallholder farmers.
3. Strengthen climate resilience in drought-prone areas.
4. Foster community stewardship and policy support for sustainable land use.

Strategies and Interventions

a. Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR): FMNR is the project's heart and soul a low-cost technique that revives tree growth from existing roots and stumps. Rather than replanting forests, farmers protect and nurture what is already beneath the soil.

b. Tree Planting and Assisted Regeneration: Where natural regrowth is limited, the

project supplements FMNR with targeted planting of native and fruit-bearing trees such as shea, baobab, acacia, moringa, and mango.

c. Agroforestry and Sustainable Agriculture: By integrating trees into crop systems, farmers boost yields, improve soil fertility, and reduce erosion.

d. Fire Management and By-laws: Over 11,900 community fire volunteers have been trained to protect regreened areas.

e. Local Nurseries and Capacity Building: Community-managed nurseries ensure a steady supply of seedlings while creating jobs for youth and women.

Achievements and Impact

• Over 200,000 hectares of degraded land restored across Northern Ghana.
• Thousands of farmers trained and empowered to adopt FMNR and agroforestry practices.
• Increased vegetation cover and improved soil fertility.
• New income streams from fruits, seedlings, and sustainable tree products.
• Women's cooperatives benefit through shea nut harvesting and seedling nurseries.
• Local by-laws and stewardship committees ensure long-term sustainability.

Success Factors

1. Community Ownership: Farmers lead the process, ensuring long-term care.
2. Cultural Integration: FMNR builds on traditional ecological knowledge.
3. Diverse Partnerships: Collaboration bridges science with practice.
4. Multi-dimensional Benefits: Combines environmental healing with livelihoods.
5. Continuous Learning: Field schools and peer mentoring spread innovation.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Challenges:
• Seedling survival during dry seasons.
• Bushfires and grazing threats.
• Land tenure insecurity.
• Sustained funding after donor support.

Lessons:
• Empowering local governance is crucial.
• Linking regreening to income guarantees sustainability.
• Restoration must be both ecological and economic.

Broader Impact and Replication Potential

Regreening Africa has proven that land restoration is not just an environmental mission—it is a pathway to social and economic transformation. The Ghana component serves as a model for integrating restoration into national development. Its methods can be replicated in urban or campus environments through mini-forests, community gardens, and pocket parks.

Conclusion

The story of Regreening Africa (Ghana) is one of resilience and renewal. In communities once marked by barren soils and hopelessness, new life now grows. Trees provide shade, water flows again, and farmers find dignity in restoring the land that sustains them. This project stands as living proof that when science meets community wisdom, landscapes and lives can be transformed.

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Why It Inspires Me

Regreening Africa (Ghana) stands out because it proves that large-scale restoration does not require expensive technology just collective will, traditional knowledge, and consistent care. The project gives power back to the people who depend most on the land and shows that regeneration is possible even in the harshest conditions. It is an inspiring example of how climate action can restore dignity, opportunity, and hope for thousands of families one tree at a time.

What Made the Project Successful?

The success of the Regreening Africa Project lies in its community-centered approach, use of simple restoration techniques, and partnerships between organizations and local farmers.

1. Farmer-Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR)

Instead of relying only on new tree planting, the project focuses on reviving naturally occurring tree stumps and roots that still survive underground. Farmer's prune and protect these shoots, allowing native trees to regrow naturally. This low-cost technique restores soil fertility, prevents erosion, and provides shade for crops and livestock.

2. Community Ownership and Training

Local communities are not just beneficiaries — they are the leaders of change. Over 11,000 farmers have been trained in FMNR, fire control, and agroforestry techniques. Through farmer field schools, they learn how to manage trees, improve yields, and diversify income sources.

3. Integration with Livelihoods

The project links environmental restoration with income generation. Communities earn from shea nuts, moringa, mangoes, and sustainable tree products, giving them strong incentives to protect and expand green cover. Women's cooperatives, in particular, have benefitted through seedling nurseries and processing of tree-based products.

4. Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration

The project is implemented by World Vision Ghana, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), and the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), in collaboration with local NGOs and traditional authorities. This mix of science, policy, and local wisdom ensures that regreening becomes part of community life, not just a short-term project.\\

Who It Serves?

The Regreening Africa Project directly serves smallholder farmers and rural families in Ghana's Northern, Upper East, and Upper West Regions — areas most affected by land degradation and drought.

- Farmers gain improved soil fertility and crop productivity.
- Women benefit from new economic opportunities through shea nut and seedling production.

- Communities experience better access to fuelwood, shade, and improved microclimates.
- Future generations inherit more resilient landscapes and sustainable livelihoods.
- Local by-laws have been introduced to safeguard trees and discourage bush burning.

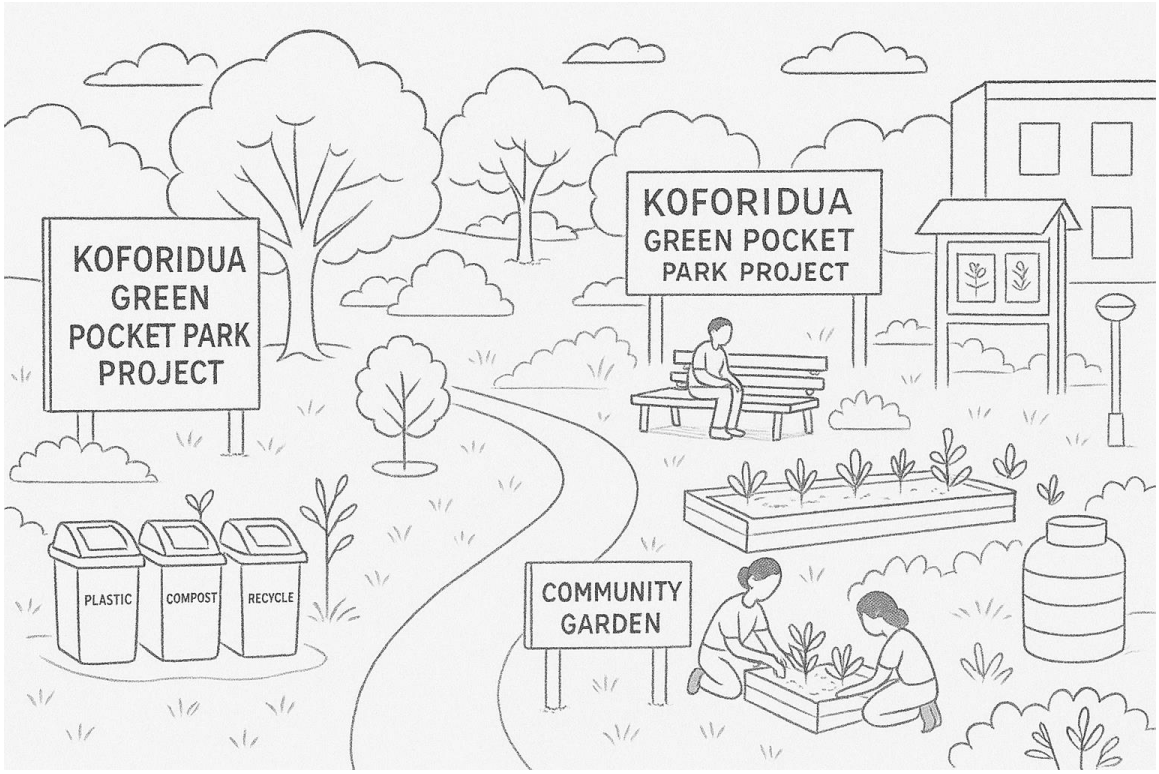
Community Regreening Vision: Transforming the Abandoned Lot Near Koforidua Technical University

In the heart of Koforidua, just beside Koforidua Technical University, lies an open, neglected space once used as a dumping ground for waste and construction debris. Over time, it has become overgrown with weeds and scattered plastics, contributing to heat, odor, and environmental pollution in the area.

This space, though currently unproductive, has great potential to become a community green hub a place where students, residents, and nature coexist in harmony. It matters because transforming this site into a pocket park will not only beautify the campus surroundings but also provide students and residents with a peaceful place to connect with nature, learn about sustainability, and promote climate awareness

Vision: “Koforidua Green Pocket Park Project”

Inspired by the success of Regreening Africa (Ghana), I propose transforming the abandoned lot into a small-scale regreening and learning park that supports both people and the planet. The project will serve as a model for urban ecological restoration proving that even small spaces can make a big difference.



How This Idea Supports People and the Planet

The Koforidua Green Pocket Park will make the community healthier by improving air quality, reducing heat, and offering space for recreation. It promotes equity by being open to all students, staff, and residents alike fostering social connection and shared environmental responsibility. Ecologically, it strengthens resilience against climate change by restoring green cover and conserving water. The project will also serve as a model for small-scale urban restoration efforts across Ghana

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