



MEV-CAM GOOD PRACTICES:
ENGAGE, LEARN, INSPIRE



LIVE FENCING IN UGANDA



BACKGROUND

Women in the Karamoja sub-region of Uganda often have to carry heavy loads of dry wood from distant locations to create fencing to close off and protect their homesteads. It takes around three bundles to build one meter of wooden fence. These fences are replaced nearly every two to three years.

To create a more efficient and sustainable method of fencing, live fencing was introduced in the Karamoja sub-region through the Global Environment Facility's 'Fostering Sustainability and Resilience for Food Security in Karamoja sub-region' project, implemented by FAO.

Live fencing is the planting of thorny trees around the perimeter of the homestead (*manyatta*) to create a natural fence. This reduces the need to replace and repair perimeter fences and reduces the number of trees cut down for fencing construction. Live fencing also encourages the planting of trees, improving environmental sustainability, and improving greenery within the homesteads. It boosts biodiversity with bushes and undergrowth creating a habitat for small animals and birds.

MEV-CAM'S GOOD PRACTICES AT A GLANCE

This good practice was extracted by the Food and Agriculture Organisation's Making Every Voice Count for Adaptive Management (MEV-CAM) initiative, working alongside communities participating in GEF-6's Resilient Food Systems projects to be upscaled throughout GEF-7's Sustainable Forest Management Impact Program on Dryland Sustainable Landscapes interventions. This document aims to show the impact of good practices on local communities, from their own perspective. MEV-CAM is now working to share this insight through the South – South Cooperation Knowledge Gateway, a platform designed to link the local knowledge held in these good practices with technical guidance.

FIVE SIMPLE STEPS TO IMPLEMENTATION

1

Identify the area or homestead to be fenced.

2

Mobilize the community members in the homestead to create a tree nursery to raise and plant the required seedlings.

3

Maintain the tree seedlings. When they reach knee height, they are tied together in a chain-link formation using small bits of string to create thorny fence. The fence takes about three to four years to establish.

4

Once established, the trees are pruned to promote growth of new stems and control the canopy growth.

WHAT HAS THIS PRACTICE ACHIEVED?



Twelve tree nursery beds were established in the Kotido district, with 8 906 trees transplanted.



8 426 Kei-Apples planted around 12 homesteads covering spaces of 100 x 100 meters each.



In Moroto district, 5 500 Kei-apple seedlings were used to fence around 232 meters across four homesteads, reducing deforestation.

WHY SHOULD THIS PRACTICE BE UPSCALED?

Gender

Live fencing promotes ecosystem restoration by addressing socio-economic objectives, especially those related to gender inclusion. Live fencing improves gender equality because:

- It is usually women and girls who bear the responsibility of finding fence wood, often trekking long distances to remote areas and carrying them back.
- This exposes women and girls to violence on the way, and health problems from carrying heavy loads.
- Replacing fencing with live fencing cuts down their workload and improves their quality of life.
- It also increases the time they have available to carry out livelihood activities or education.

Restoration

Restoration projects at all scales contribute to the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration. Livefencing contributes to ecosystem restoration by:

- Decreasing deforestation by replacing fence wood with natural trees.
- Improving soil health.
- Improving biodiversity by creating a habitat for small animals and birds.

Sustainability

Live fencing is both environmentally and economically sustainable in the long term:

- Communities see the long-term benefits of using live fences as an alternative to concrete or wooden fencing, including saving money and time on rebuilding fences every few years.
- Setting up tree nurseries means communities have the knowledge and skills to raise seedlings as an economic activity too, not just for fencing. Other complementary income generating enterprises should be included to provide alternative sources of income.

TIPS FOR REPLICATING THIS PRACTICE

- It is important that the practice also teaches communities to establish community tree nurseries, rather than just how to grow the fencing. In this way, the practice is more sustainable and they will be able to raise seedlings and avoid the high cost of purchasing them from the commercial tree nurseries.
- This practice works better when communities have similar cluster settlement pattern because the exercise is labour intensive.
- To best replicate this practice, it is useful to incentivise local farmers to take part through the provision of wheel barrows, panga knives and polythene tubes for seedlings.
- Most importantly, local farmers must be aware of the benefits of live fencing and be willing and interested in learning assisted natural regeneration methods.

INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE?

- FAO: [South-South Cooperation Gateway](#)
- [Uganda | Resilient Food Systems](#)
- Guide: [A step-by-step approach toward a gradual adoption of the full conservation agriculture technology: an example from Timor-Leste](#)



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