



# EARN 2020 Executive Summary

## Introduction

The East African Regenerative Network (EARN) is an initiative that has grown out of a long-time partnership between the Reed Jules Oppenheimer Foundation (RJOF), Mainsprings, the Permaculture Institute of Tanzania (PIT), and the Valley Foundation. EARN aims to spread the practice of regenerative agriculture methods throughout East Africa. We believe that by using more sustainable forms of agriculture, people can improve food security and nutrition; improve environmental health and ecological viability; and improve economic viability and livelihoods. In 2020, EARN launched a formal grant program called the Regenerative Agriculture Program (RAP) to support organizations in East Africa to learn and implement permaculture practices<sup>1</sup>.

Ten organizations across four countries (Tanzania, Malawi, Rwanda, and Uganda) were awarded grants in the first round based on a number of criteria, including organization type, country location, target population reached, capacity to implement Permaculture, and annual operating budget. The selected grantees reach a diverse population of beneficiaries including youth farmers, people living with HIV/AIDS, women and children, people with disabilities, and many others. As part of the grant, each organization received full coverage of course fees to the annual Permaculture Design Course (PDC) for two staff members; paid travel to the Mainsprings campus for the PDC; free lodging and food at the PDC; site visits to support initial implementation<sup>2</sup>; \$3,000 to implement regenerative agriculture practices at their organizations; access to an online community of PDC graduates; and ongoing technical assistance, as needed.

## EARN Partner Highlights

All Permaculture partners were able to start their regenerative agriculture fields. As shown in Table 1, partners installed berms and swales and planted a significant number of diverse trees.

Table 1. Field Data (n=10)

	Average per Organization	Total
<b>Fields (#)</b>	1.4	14
<b>Berms (#)</b>	8.2	82
<b>Length of Berms (Meters)</b>	655.61	6,556
<b>Trees Planted (#)</b>	1019.6	10,196
<b>Types of Trees (#)</b>	12.9	79

<sup>1</sup>We use the terms “regenerative agriculture” and “permaculture” interchangeably, though the official definitions vary. See our website for more information: <https://earnafrika.org/>

<sup>2</sup>Due to COVID travel restrictions, we were only able to conduct a site visit with one organization in 2020.

## Key Successes

- **Improved water management:** minimized water loss and prevented soil erosion;
- **Decreased reliance on purchasing farm inputs:** switching to farm-generated inputs like compost and natural pesticides;
- **Increased crop diversity:** transition from mono-cropping to a more diverse system with fruit trees;
- **Increased crop yield:** including increased yield of coffee, bananas, and vegetables;
- **Outreach and education among community members:** conducted trainings for community members and organization staff;
- **Beginning to see positive environmental impacts:** improved bird population, greening of environment, and improved microclimate around the farm; and
- **Unintended positive impacts:** increased attendance to HIV-related clinic appointments due to information exchange while working on the Permaculture farm.

## Main Challenges

- **Animals and pests:** goats and animals eating crops due to lack of fencing;
- **Seasonal challenges/lack of rain:** delayed seasonal rains and reliance on rain as only water source;
- **Water management issues:** swales too shallow to handle heavy rain events;
- **Financial challenges:** high maintenance and input costs; general organizational downsizing; and
- **COVID-19 disruptions:** travel and work restrictions leading to a delay in implementation.

## Looking Forward

Organizations were asked to rank how hopeful they are about what their permaculture design will bring to their organizations. On a scale of 1-10, organizations responded with an average of 8.6, indicating that most organizations are very hopeful for what permaculture will bring to their organization. Organizations reported that they are hopeful that permaculture will improve food security and nutrition for their communities, increase biodiversity on their land, increase income generation, and improve environmental and economic sustainability. Looking forward, Permaculture partners shared the immediate next steps they would like to take next year as they continue to develop their permaculture farms, including improving land and water management, integrating livestock, increasing community outreach, and increasing biodiversity.

## Next Steps

EARN is excited for the progress that's been made so far and is looking forward to welcoming another class of Permaculture partners in 2022. After receiving feedback from our partners and reflecting on lessons learned in Year One, we have adjusted the grant process to be more efficient and streamlined moving forward. True to the spirit of Permaculture, we believe in continually observing and adapting to improve. In 2022, we will begin hosting monthly virtual "Bermside Chats" so that partners will have the opportunity to learn from and share with each other. We will also be conducting site visits so that we can help partners with initial installation of berms and swales, or offer additional technical assistance for those that are further along in the process. Further in the future, we plan to offer a Permaculture Training for Trainers so that we may build capacity and continue to expand the EARN movement.