



# permaculture

EARTH CARE, PEOPLE CARE, FUTURE CARE

## Regeneration and Agroforestry in Sierra Leone's Tonkilili District

*Abu Gbori*

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Friends of the Environment (FOTE), a permaculture institute in the Tonkilili District of Northern Sierra Leone, is educating local farmers and school children on agroforestry techniques to revert slash-and-burn forests back to diversity, while providing sustainable incomes.



Sierra Leone is made up of districts and chiefdoms (as of 2017 there were 190 chiefdoms) where chiefs and the ruling families have the power to raise taxes, control the judicial system, allocate land and resources in the area. The Konike chiefdom in Tonkilili District is the main beneficiary of Friends of the Environment (FOTE).

When I arrived in Sierra Leone to teach at the Government Technical Institute (GTI) in Masingbi town, I was shocked and saddened by the immense deforestation in the area. Years of tree felling and slash and burn to clear land for growing crops had wiped out the incredible biodiversity of the local forests. "Sierra Leone's forests contain 216 million metric tons of carbon in living forest biomass. Sierra Leone has some 938 known species of amphibians, birds, mammals and reptiles according to figures from the World Conservation Monitoring Centre."\*

Agricultural development had been halted because the soils were barren and empty of nutrients. This led able bodied youths needing new work to either to leave the area to work in diamond mines, or move into commercial motor bike training or trading of imported items – all unhealthy, tough and unreliable futures.

The GTI was established by the Sierra Leone government to educate and establish localised agriculture, construction, electronics and electrical installation and automobile repairs and maintenance. I wanted to create positive change in the area and this began with the birth of FOTE. The main aim was to engage the community in addressing problems such as deforestation and barren soils, enabling local people to take control of their futures and develop healthy and regenerative solutions that work for everyone.

I started by raising awareness of the implications of deforestation through the Outreach and Awareness Raising Campaign Project (OARCP) and the Livelihood Support Agroforestry and Fruit Crops Propagation Project (LSAF CPP). With this awareness and information, local authorities enacted by-laws to halt the rampant tree felling and provide important regulations on the use of fire to clear land. With community engagement came localised projects in agroforestry, organic farming, school gardening, environmental protection and water and soil conservation.

Ten water heads have been mapped in seven targeted communities within the chiefdom that are currently used for drinking, fishing, crop production and other domestic chores. However, due to loss of tree cover along the water's edge, they completely dry up every dry season.



The founder and coordinator Abu Gbori of the Friends of the Environment, demonstrating at a meeting of the school garden initiative

## Outreach and Awareness Raising Campaigns

In 2018, we established five school-based Friends Of The Environment Clubs in five schools within Masingbi Town, which is one of the specific objectives of Outreach and Awareness Raising Campaign Project (OARCP). The clubs aim to raise awareness about the negative impacts of current practices and share positive solutions for environmental protection and conservation. This information will hopefully be taken home, and shared within the wider community, using people's personal networks.

Regular seminars on earth care and people care are organised for the local communities, sharing permaculture techniques such as agroforestry, using cover crops, forest regeneration, water management, creating healthy soil and regenerative methods of farming.



Friends of the Environment school club members in the school garden of a member school © Abu Gbori

## Trickle Down Knowledge

School gardens are making a big impact in educating the next generation. The School Based Clubs in Agricultural Practices (IAP) teach children how to propagate edible crops and trees for agroforestry, creating a wide range of useful plants, basically for free. These can then be sold to generate an income, and are also used to reforest the school grounds, providing biodiversity, food (which is also sold), areas to play, and working towards reducing soil erosion and water loss. The hope is this new permaculture knowledge will trickle down into students' homes and communities, whilst also giving the children aspiring futures in regenerative agriculture that will be good for the planet and the people.

## Agroforestry and Fruit Crops

In 2018, we also launched the pilot phase of Livelihood Support Agroforestry and Fruit Crops Propagation Project (LSAFCPP) for environmental protection and sustainable fruit crop production in strategic places in the chiefdom. We wanted to restore and plant areas of economic and community importance like school surroundings, local streams, around Peripheral Health Units (PHUs) and areas deeply affected by deforestation. Our aim is to provide agroforestry and fruit tree seedlings for those communities in need. Our pilot phase of LSAFCPP saw 200 seedlings planted on the GTI campus – the trees have established well and are already preventing soil erosion. They will soon be providing shade and ground cover too.



Pilot agroforestry nursery © Abu Gbori

Because the pilot was successful, we have made a request to the beneficiary communities for an area of land to create a demonstration site and nursery. Four hectares (10 acres) has already been donated and we plan to design the site using permaculture so that local people can learn and adopt these regenerative practices. Having our own demonstration site will enable us to have a larger impact on teaching local people. We will have the space to teach more people about conservation, forest regeneration, endangered plant species and the value of crop rotation. This will encourage a shift from the traditional slash and burn method towards sustainable techniques such as compost making, soil building, water and soil conservation, irrigation for the dry season and much more.

We want to raise 30,000 agroforestry trees for the chiefdom, and supply thousands of plantain and banana plantlets (a staple crop in the area) to needy farmers by the end of 2023.

\* [https://rainforests.mongabay.com/deforestation/2000/Sierra\\_Leone.htm](https://rainforests.mongabay.com/deforestation/2000/Sierra_Leone.htm)  
([https://rainforests.mongabay.com/deforestation/2000/Sierra\\_Leone.htm](https://rainforests.mongabay.com/deforestation/2000/Sierra_Leone.htm)).

**Abu Gbori** is a Sierra Leonean and a graduate with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Agriculture General from Njala University in Sierra Leone. He is currently working as a lecturer and Head of Agriculture Department at the GTI and is the founder and coordinator of the Friends Of The Environment (FOTE).

*Friends Of The Environment* is a runner-up in the Permaculture Magazine Prize: [www.permaculture.co.uk/news/finalists-permaculture-magazine-prize](http://www.permaculture.co.uk/news/finalists-permaculture-magazine-prize)  
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For more information on the project, visit:

[www.facebook.com/Friends-of-the-Environment-](https://www.facebook.com/Friends-of-the-Environment-114892750368461)

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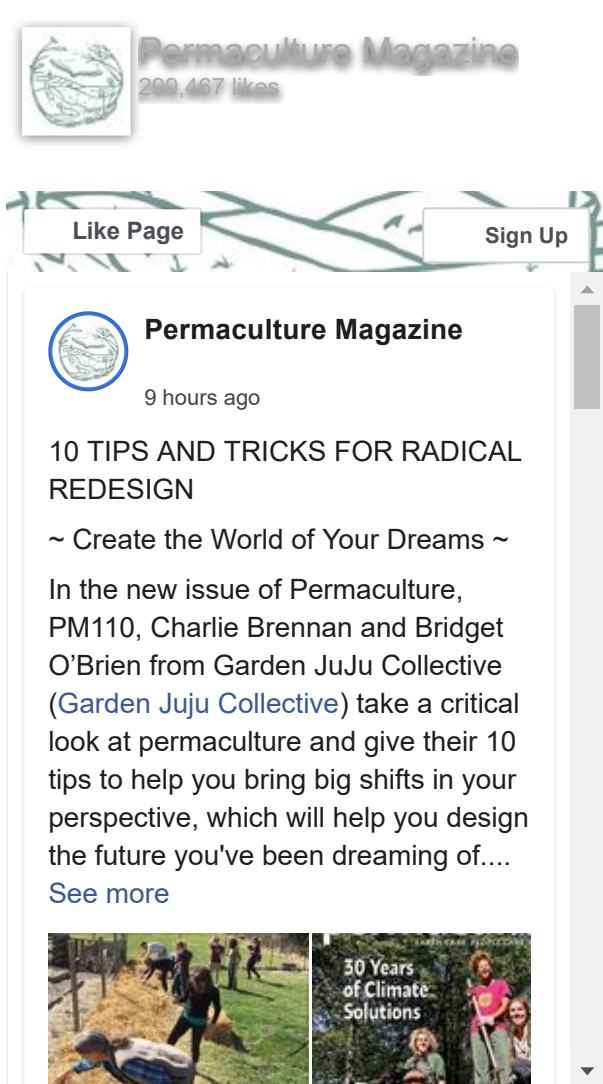


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### 10 TIPS AND TRICKS FOR RADICAL REDESIGN

~ Create the World of Your Dreams ~

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