▶ Project *brief*

Monitoring Large-Scale Forest Restoration in Africa: Perceived Priorities, Barriers and Enablers

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- **Experts rank biophysical and economic restoration indicators higher than institutional ones**
- **A lack of capacity and technology is perceived as the main barrier to monitoring**

Background and objectives

The pan-African AFR100 initiative aims to restore 100 million hectares of degraded land by 2030 to strengthen food security, biodiversity, and climate resilience. Effective monitoring is crucial to track the progress of this ambition, inform policy, and validate investments. However, complex landscapes and diverse stakeholder requirements often complicate this task. We present findings from a 2-hour session conducted by the TeStaMoni-FLR project at the 2025 Regional Landscape Monitoring Accelerator workshop in Accra, Ghana. The session had two goals:

- Identify and prioritize key indicators for restoration monitoring.
- Assess the barriers and enablers for tracking these priority indicators.

Approach

We held a structured expert elicitation with 56 government representatives and practitioners from nine AFR100 countries. In six breakout groups, each exercise combined group deliberation to build a shared understanding with individual scoring to capture diverse opinions. Breakout groups began by listing their current FLR monitoring indicators and metrics. Each participant then used a three-dot vote to prioritize indicators. This limit was designed to ensure focus and encourage trade-offs.
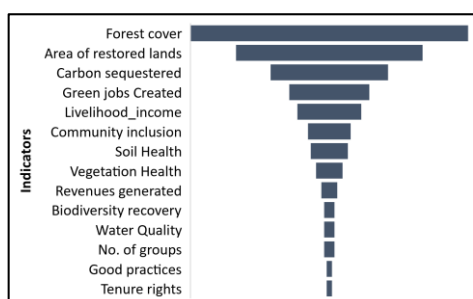

Figure 1: Standardized scores as a percentage of the maximum score, based on the aggregated number of dots for key indicators of 56 participants (Source: own illustration).

Next, participants assessed their group's top three indicators from their national perspective.

They scored if the following diagnostic categories were an Enabler that helps monitoring, a Barrier that hinders it, or Neutral:

- Methodology: A clear and scientifically robust design.
- Technology & infrastructure: Functional tools and systems.
- Capacity & resources: Human and financial support.

Results

Participants identified 14 indicators, with top priorities including forest cover, restored area, carbon, green jobs, and livelihoods (Figure 1).

"Capacity & resources" and "Technology & infrastructure" are the main perceived monitoring barriers (Figure 2). "Methodology", in contrast, was largely seen as an enabler (except for carbon and water quality).

Conclusions

A critical gap exists between restoration ambitions and the capabilities for monitoring. Closing this gap requires targeted investment in two key areas:

- Building the capacity and infrastructure to implement monitoring.
- Developing robust, accessible methods, especially for complex indicators.

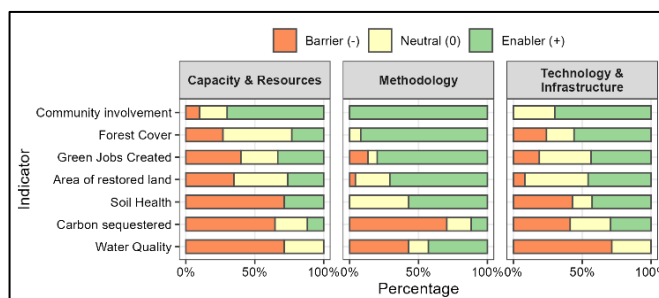This dual approach is essential to credibly track the most valued outcomes of restoration.

Figure 2: Proportion of scores for top indicators by diagnostic category. Only indicators selected as a "Top 3" priority within a breakout group were scored (Source: own illustration).