

# Blog “Sustainable Land Management in Sub-Saharan Africa: Improving livelihoods through local research”



## INTRODUCTION

Our bi-monthly blog is intended for project staff as well as interested stakeholders from science, policy and practice, to share experiences and mutually learn. It is an opportunity to showcase the multi-faceted nature in which we improve livelihoods and sustainable land management through local research.

This first blog of 2024 will introduce the projects and summarise a selection of highlights from the past year along with some examples of planned activities for the next year.

Funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), within the strategy of its platform Research for Sustainability (Forschung für Nachhaltigkeit, FONa), the **INTERFACES** project works with four regional projects – **COINS**, **DeclaRe**, **InfoRange** and **Minodu** – to strengthen the integration, coherence and reach in the area of sustainable land management.

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2023

The projects have moved into action in 2023 with a lot of enthusiasm consolidating the research teams in each project and building relationships with communities in the respective study areas. Unlike typical research models that bring in stakeholders at the end of a project for outreach, the four regional projects and the accompanying project have been able to systematically include local stakeholders from kick-off meetings, launching events to



various workshops throughout 2023 – the very first full year of the funding phase.

## FIELDWORK

In 2023 **COINS**, **DeclaRe** and **InfoRange** were busy in the field. **COINS** researchers designed and conducted a socio-economic survey in Senegal and a larger field visit, which included interviews in Ghana, having fine-tuned study sites in the respective countries.



A fully operational **DeclaRe** has ongoing field experiments and surveys are being conducted with first results already available. **InfoRange** conducted exploratory fieldwork including stakeholder analyses and participatory rangeland mapping. **INTERFACES** will focus on project implementation in Benin and Ghana, with a visit having taking place in Ghana in 2023 aiming to understand drivers and bottlenecks of innovation implementation.

## EDUCATION AND CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

**DeclaRe** has seen progress over the past year with 12 doctoral projects underway. **InfoRange** has offered intense PhD training to foster transdisciplinary and participatory approaches via Zoom sessions connecting students in Kenya, Namibia and Germany throughout 2024. In the **Minodu** project, students, practitioners and researchers are collaborating to consolidate knowledge and are organised in three sub-teams based in Berlin, Lomé and Kara. [Hybrid](#)



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[courses](#) were initiated on 6 November, featuring 11 modules simultaneously conducted in Germany and Togo involving intercultural collaboration. **INTERFACES** has also been involved in educational activities over the past year having successfully completed five trainings on gender in research and implementation processes, having established a [colloquium series](#) and an e-certificate is in progress to enhance capacity building efforts.

## OUTREACH AND NETWORKING

All regional projects organised participatory and inclusive meetings with a variety of stakeholders over the past year. A major [multi-stakeholder workshop](#) was organised jointly by **INTERFACES**, **COINS** and **DeclaRe** in Northern Ghana, shortly followed by **DeclaRe's annual meeting** in Parakou, which included guests from **INTERFACES** and DLR-PT. Both **Minodu** and **InfoRange** invited community stakeholders at their project launches in early 2023. At the **Minodu** project's [official launch](#) in Togo more than 100



participants came together creating a forum in which connections could be made with motivated students eager to learn and contribute to on-the-ground change with community stakeholders. This enthusiasm was rolled over into a technical workshop. The **InfoRange** project

had its kick-off meeting in Ngurunit, northern Kenya, and brought together researchers from Namibia, Kenya and Germany in lively dialogue with pastoralist community representatives including herders, livestock keepers, traders, and local governance authorities among other community members. As the accompanying project, **INTERFACES** organised the first [Status Seminar](#) with a keynote by Mr. Johns Muleso Kharika from UNCCD followed by two days of virtually organised closed sessions to facilitate



participation across all consortium members in the various projects. **INTERFACES** also organised a pre-conference [workshop](#) at Tropentag on “Researching Sustainable Land Management in sub-Sahara Africa” with participation across all projects. A further highlight for impact-oriented support activities was the launch of the website “[Sustainable-Landmanagement-Africa.net](#)”.

## INNOVATIONS

Innovations derived from local research to improve livelihoods ties the five projects together. Already in the first year of the project's run, **COINS** has set up an Innovation Lab in Senegal and **DeclaRe** is underway with the development of their Decision Support System (DSS). **InfoRange** screened available ICT tools to support livestock and rangeland management as well as veterinary service. Work is in progress for the **INTERFACES** led gender-responsive Theory of Change and additionally participatory learning platforms are being developed in collaboration with local stakeholders in Ghana.



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## PLANNED ACTIVITIES FOR 2024

With research teams consolidated and study sites defined, 2024 will bring a lot of data collection across the projects, especially with PhD students getting more fieldwork done having finalised their proposals. Furthermore, there will be a number of internal trainings offered for all project members to learn from each other's expertise.

## FIELDWORK

Especially **COINS** and **InfoRange** have many field visits planned for the upcoming year. Starting off the year with fieldwork in Senegal for **COINS** to do a participatory mapping exercise as well as socio-economic survey that is planned for in Ghana. In close collaboration with its partner institutes,



**InfoRange** is also primed for fieldwork on rangeland governance and monitoring, developing a user-friendly animal health reporting system and utilising machine learning for visual rangeland scoring, among others. Also **DeLaRe** will do fieldwork in 2024 for

data collection in Benin and Ghana. **INTERFACES** will concentrate on research regarding gender, land, incentives linked to implementation in Ghana, along with multi-stakeholder workshops in Senegal and Benin.

## EDUCATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING

**Minodu**, **InfoRange** and **INTERFACES** in particular having made good head way in the first year on education and capacity building, **Minodu** and **InfoRange** will continue with the hybrid courses and PhD trainings

respectively and **INTERFACES** with the colloquium series providing a platform for discussions. **DeLaRe** will continue to make progress in training and capacity building with their 12 PhD students. Furthermore, communication and media training sessions will be offered throughout the year in order to enhance skills and knowledge.



## OUTREACH AND NETWORKING

Throughout 2024 **INTERFACES** will continue its impact-oriented support activities in outreach and networking with the organisation of side-events at international conferences, such as Tropentag as well as FARA-organised events. Furthermore active participation and stakeholder engagement will continue at an array of meetings and events with a focus on Germany, internationally as well as pan-Africa. **DeLaRe** together with **INTERFACES** will co-organise a workshop to engage with stakeholders in Benin along with setting up a participatory learning platform. Preliminary arrangements will be set in motion for the upcoming Status Seminar in Ghana in 2025.

## INVITATION

We warmly welcome you to join our growing community on FARA's D-Groups. This is a forum that encompasses all African and non-African stakeholders committed to enhancing Africa's agricultural productivity, competitiveness, and markets to help achieve the national, regional, continental, and global SDGs for poverty and hunger reduction, and environmental sustainability. We have our very own community [here](#) as well as sub-community for PhD candidates [here](#). We look forward to using this platform for many fruitful discussions and exchanges.

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## FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

You are welcome to follow us for updates on the research programme on our [website](#) and follow us on [LinkedIn](#).



All projects and their activities are funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) as part of the platform strategy [Research for Sustainability](#) (FONA). The funding phase is from mid-2022 to mid-2026.

## MEDIA

Previous blog contributions:

[“Connecting Climate Knowledge Across Continents”](#)

Videos:

[Insights into the research project INTERFACES](#)

[Impression Video First Status Seminar](#)

[Impression Video Tropentag 2023](#)

[Colloquium Series](#)



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