

# Public Policy to Support Landscape and Seascape Partnerships:

## Meeting Sustainable Development Goals through Integrated Territorial Action

A policy brief by:



### Why Strengthen Landscape and Seascape Partnerships?

Governments have recently launched major policy initiatives to address the multiple urgent land and resource challenges facing their countries: food and water insecurity, climate change, land degradation, biodiversity loss and the threats to health and livelihoods in the context of a global pandemic. Public, private and philanthropic funders have committed billions of dollars to meet these issues. But policymakers face serious difficulties in translating their

policy goals into practical action on the ground by the myriad local communities and businesses who use, manage and steward those resources.

A promising strategy is to work through multi-stakeholder Landscape and Seascape Partnerships (We refer to such initiatives below collectively as Landscape Partnerships or LPs). These long-term, voluntary collaboratives of local stakeholders from different sectors are emerging worldwide to align policies and actions to better manage natural resources and the ecosystems they depend on. The efforts of LP partnerships



may complement, reinforce or link with territorial or jurisdictional governance.

LPs with agreed long-term objectives can provide a common planning and negotiation platform for coordinating the local implementation of employment and livelihood programs, regenerative agriculture, sustainable cities, and environment programs like land and marine protected areas and area-based conservation programs. Multi-stakeholder representation and governance can confer greater legitimacy and local commitments to these programs. They can bring the voices of all those affected by policies (or lack of them) to the table. Some LPs can provide inputs to design and implement policies such as ecological fiscal transfers, debt for nature swaps, payment for ecosystem services and blended finance.

A growing number of countries have made landscape regeneration—including community development, ecosystem restoration and sustainable agriculture and food systems—vital policy goals. But few of them have developed structured policies and programs for long-term

continuous support. Instead, we see highly fragmented, uncoordinated, small-scale, short-term or sectorally siloed projects championed by government agencies, NGOs and companies.

Even where projects are large and multi-sectoral, there are overlapping mandates and insufficient coordination of related activities. Interventions are designed in capital cities rather than by local stakeholders. Locally organized landscape partnerships and their thoughtfully developed and negotiated visions and collaborative action plans are often ignored or undermined when large (usually sector-specific) public or private investment programs are implemented.

To advance sustainable development at a territorial and landscape scale requires strong public policy and program support for LPs.







## Policy Support Needed by Landscape Partnerships

Fortunately, there is rich experience to inform more robust public policies and programs. This paper highlights diverse landscape examples: the Cerrado region of Brazil, the Galapagos Marine Reserve in Ecuador, the Government of Ethiopia's watershed management program in the Central Highlands, the Chalatenango Department of El Salvador, the Maya Biosphere Reserve of Guatemala, the Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve of Mexico, De Marker Wadden in the Netherlands, Bohol Island in the Central Visayas region of the Philippines, the uMngeni landscape in South Africa and the Northern Uganda region. We also draw lessons from the national programs of Australia (Landcare), Chile and Colombia (the 20X20 program), Costa Rica (national reforestation policy/program), Namibia (Community Conservancy Program) and Scotland (Regional Land Use Partnerships). We gleaned findings as well from a 2021 review of 14 examples of territorial development, and from in-person and online consultations with LPs.

Landscape Partnerships require strong

institutional support of four key types to meet their potential for achieving multiple local and national goals:

### **Supportive government policies.**

Governments need to recognize territorial-level collaborative landscape action as a coherent and essential operational mechanism to implement local and national policy priorities toward Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and nationally determined contributions (NDCs) to lower greenhouse gas emissions. These represent not just a whole-of-government but a whole-of-society approach to meeting sustainable development challenges. Specific policies are critical to their success and scope of action, such as regularizing land tenure and protecting rights to land, forest and ecosystem services. Policies that encourage coordination and policy coherence among sectoral agencies greatly facilitate integrated landscape planning, action and monitoring.

**Technical services and local capacity development.** Good landscape planning requires access to technical data and advisory services about landscape processes and evolving analysis of socio-



economic interactions. Partnerships need guidance on landscape governance, laws, inclusive green and blue business practices, market mechanisms and integrated landscape monitoring systems design. Developing strategies and practices for sustainable landscape management requires science and research specific to the landscape. As with territorial approaches more broadly, programs need to strengthen and sustain local capacities for facilitating and implementing LPs. Governments can provide such services directly or facilitate NGOs, businesses and other actors to do so.

### **Financial and business services.**

Even when they have formed effective collaborative platforms and have strong leadership, technical capacities, robust strategies and action plans, LPs find mobilizing and coordinating the finance required for multiple coordinated public, private and civic investments to be a key challenge. LPs need support to build stronger financial knowledge, skills and tools. In addition to providing short-term project finance for landscape regeneration, financial institutions and the overall financial architecture must

be set up to fund coordinated long-term investment for landscape regeneration at scale. National and sub-national governments have an important role in providing or catalyzing financial services to address these challenges.

### **Connections for knowledge exchange and learnings.**

Landscape Partnerships want to learn from one another. They also need clear communication channels connecting them to experts who can help them, and to prospective buyers of landscape-friendly products. To achieve their goals, LPs need access to specialized expertise on good governance, legal matters and the design of markets that incentivize sustainable landscape management.

Designating a strong national or state office to mobilize and coordinate government, civil society, businesses and other actors in support of LPs can contribute to all of the above.





## Key Ingredients for Success

Experience and research highlight seven ingredients for success in designing and implementing national and subnational government support:

**1) Commitment to participatory landscape governance.** Agencies providing support to landscape partnerships embrace principles and philosophies that respect and empower community identity, the locally constructed landscape vision, community-led initiatives and ownership of the LP by local actors.

**2) Public policy frameworks that explicitly strengthen LPs for integrated territorial development.** Public sector policy frameworks and specific laws and programs strengthen LPs and make them visible.

**3) Long-term support services responding to locally defined needs.** Governments institutionalize ongoing legal, technical, financial and networking support for LPs that respond to their evolving needs.

**4) Strategic coordination among service providers.** Support organizations build on their synergies and actively coordinate efforts to reduce inefficiencies, unnecessary duplication and institutional conflict.

**5) Proactive engagement of business in LPs.** Governments help businesses and supply chains align with the landscape development strategy while helping LPs work effectively with businesses.

**6) Long-term financing for landscape enabling and asset investments.** Governments provide or facilitate grant financing for LP development; align different pools of public finance in the landscape; and help LPs develop financial mechanisms and mobilize financing for their landscape investment portfolios.

**7) Constructive engagement with LP networks.** National and sub-national governments engage constructively with LPs' own networks to support their learning and participation in policy processes.





## First Steps Toward Designing Effective Policy and Program Support

We propose that national and subnational governments take five initial steps to design effective policy and support systems for LPs, collaborating with LPs and allied non-governmental, civil society and business organizations:

- Set up a multi-sector task force to develop strategies to institutionalize support for LPs and analyze successful case examples;
- Identify and engage existing LPs, and businesses that are already actively collaborating in LPs;
- Assess government policies, decision structures and coordination mechanisms related to LPs;
- Assess current and potential services provided by existing institutions to LPs;
- Draft a strategy and alternative solutions to strengthen policy and support services for LPs, to discuss and refine in a national landscapes dialogue.

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