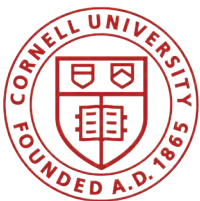# Public Policy to Support Landscape and Seascape Partnerships:

## Meeting Sustainable Development Goals through Collaborative 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 challenges. But policymakers face serious difficulties in translating their

policy goals into practical action on the ground by myriad local communities and businesses that 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 manage natural resources and the ecosystems they depend on better. The efforts of LPs

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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. LPs can help design and locally implement national policies such as ecological fiscal transfers, debt for nature swaps or payment for ecosystem services.

A growing number of countries have made landscape regeneration–for community development, ecosystem restoration and sustainable agriculture and food systems–a vital policy goal. 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 LPs and their thoughtfully developed and negotiated visions and collaborative action plans are often ignored or undermined when large public or private investment programs are implemented.

To advance sustainable development at the scale of territories and landscapes requires strong public policy and program support for LPs.

# Types of policy support needed by Landscape Partnerships

Fortunately, rich experience can now inform more robust public policies and programs. This paper draws lessons from diverse landscapeS: the Cerrado region of Brazil, the Galapagos Marine Reserve in Ecuador, 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 Philippines, the uMngeni landscape in South Africa and the Northern Uganda region. The analysis also draws 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), as well as a review of 14 territorial development initiatives, and consultations with LPs.

These sources found that LPs 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 an 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. Policies that encourage coordination and policy coherence among sectoral agencies greatly facilitate integrated landscape planning, action and monitoring. Specific policies are critical to their success and scope of action, such as protecting rights to land, forest and ecosystem services and formalizing multi-level participatory governance.

**Technical services and local capacity development.** Good landscape planning requires access to technical data and advisory services to understand landscape processes and analyze socio-

economic-ecological 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. Programs are needed 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 it a key challenge to mobilize and coordinate the finance required. Multiple sources of public, private and civic funding need to be aligned. LPs need support to build stronger financial knowledge, skills and tools. In addition to funding individual projects and businesses that contribute to landscape regeneration, financial institutions and the overall financial architecture must be shaped to fund LP processes and coordinate 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.

LPs want to learn from one another. They also need clear communication channels connecting them to experts who can help them and prospective buyers of landscape-friendly products. To achieve their goals, LPs need access to specialized expertise on good governance, legal matters and market designs 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 supporting LPs embrace principles and philosophies that respect and empower community identity, the locally constructed landscape vision, community-led initiatives and LP ownership 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 encourage national and subnational governments to take initial steps to design policy and support systems for LPs, collaborating with LPs and allied NGOs, civil society and businesses:

- 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.

For more information, please visit www. ecoagriculture.org.