

Shared goals – joined-up approaches?

Why action under the Paris Agreement, the Sustainable Development Goals and the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011 – 2020 needs to come together at the landscape level



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KEY MESSAGES

- Integrated management of ecosystems at the landscape level can greatly enhance the overall benefits that ecosystems provide to society, if approaches are in place that avoid degradation and loss of ecosystem services, take into account current and future vulnerabilities and maintain resilience.
- Enhanced coordination between national-level policy instruments for sustainable development, including strategies to address climate change, biodiversity loss, disaster risk reduction and land degradation, can provide large gains in efficiency. Linking these strategies, as well as their implementation, can help to make good use of available land resources, institutional capacity, expertise, skills and funding, and improve overall outcomes for human well-being.
- Action to promote the coherence of ecosystem-related policies and of their implementation can be taken by governments, funding institutions and other stakeholders such as NGOs or academia, including through creation of enabling structures and incentives, generation and dissemination of relevant knowledge, and demonstration of good practices.
- Positive examples of initiatives that integrate multiple policy goals exist and deserve wider recognition.



Suggested citation

Epplé, C., Wicander, S., Mant, R., Kapos, V., Rossing, T., Rizvi, A. R. (2016). Shared goals – joined-up approaches? Why action under the Paris Agreement, the Sustainable Development Goals and the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011 – 2020 needs to come together at the landscape level. FEBA discussion paper developed for CBD COP 13. UNEP-WCMC, Cambridge, UK, and IUCN, Gland, Switzerland. 8 pp.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following persons for review of the document and comments on the text: Alexandre Meybeck (FAO), Andrew Taber (The Mountain Institute), Angela Andrade (Conservation International), Edward Perry (Birdlife International), Hannah Reid (IIED), Henry Neufeldt (ICRAF), Sakhile Koketso (CBD Secretariat) and Sam Kanyamibwa (ARCOS).

Rationale

Resilience of ecosystem services is essential for a sustainable future

The services that ecosystems provide to people, for example water regulation, erosion control, provision of food, energy and raw materials, aesthetic and cultural values, or carbon capture and storage, are extremely important for human well-being¹. Many of the current and emerging challenges faced by societies are linked to a decline in the capacity of ecosystems to deliver these services. Ecosystems may become degraded as a result of pressures such as unsuitable management practices, over-exploitation or pollution, and climate change².

Actions to halt or reverse the process of degradation, including loss of biodiversity, can bring about environmental, social, economic and cultural benefits that reach far into the future. This can be achieved by increasing the resilience of ecosystems to pressures from climate change or direct human action.

Policy-makers and civil society representatives engaged in discussions on sustainable development are increasingly recognizing the importance of ecosystems for development pathways that allow human communities to thrive in the long term. This is reflected in a growing number of policy declarations and initiatives related to ecosystem restoration and nature-based solutions to climate change mitigation and adaptation, sustainable land management and disaster risk reduction.

Linking efforts across policy instruments

Many of the international agreements and initiatives that promote nature-based approaches as a solution to development challenges also call for these approaches to be implemented in a joined-up way, as it is clear that actions to maintain or restore ecosystems and their services can often contribute to several policy goals at once.

¹ For an in-depth explanation of the concept of ecosystem services, see: <http://www.millenniumassessment.org/documents/document.300.aspx.pdf>.

² SCBD (2014) Global Biodiversity Outlook 4. Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Montréal, Canada.





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Examples include the Paris Agreement, the UNFCCC decisions on REDD+ (in particular the Cancun safeguards), the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the New York Declaration on Forests, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals. A number of region-specific documents, such as the SAMOA³ Pathway declaration, or restoration initiatives like AFR100⁴ or Initiative 20x20⁵, also encourage integrated approaches.

However, insufficient coordination between the related policy instruments at the national level can lead to duplication of efforts and a risk that different interventions may undermine each other's success. For example, many countries have included plans for ecosystem restoration in their Nationally Determined Contributions, National Adaptation Strategies, National REDD+ Strategies, National Biodiversity Strategies and

Action Plans, National Action Plans under the UNCCD or their pledges under regional restoration activities, often without cross-referencing or a clear vision for achieving synergies between these efforts.

Positive examples of initiatives that improve the coherence of ecosystem-related policies and their implementation exist (see below), but deserve wider recognition. Stronger communication is needed, both with regard to the opportunities that managing ecosystems for multiple goals provides, and with regard to concrete possibilities for action.

Action can be taken by governments, funding institutions and other stakeholders such as NGOs or academia. Government action may include revising institutional mandates and creating structures and incentives to enhance coordination, for example through the establishment of designated budget lines for programmes that contribute to several institutional strategies or work plans at once.

³ Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action

⁴ African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative

⁵ Initiative 20x20 is a country-led effort to bring 20 mio. ha of land in Latin America and the Caribbean into restoration by 2020.

As experience in the field of biodiversity mainstreaming has shown⁶, other factors that can support policy integration are:

- the creation and dissemination of assessments that provide relevant biophysical and socio-economic data for the planning of multi-purpose interventions (including spatial analyses at relevant scales);
- the creation of monitoring and evaluation systems that cover the full range of expected social and environmental benefits of actions; and awareness-raising and capacity-building for staff within different institutions, as well as the wider public.

Pilot initiatives that demonstrate the advantages and feasibility of integrated landscape management to meet multiple goals can also make a strong contribution. The impulse for action can come from a variety of sources, and collaborations driven by 'champions' from the fields of government, civil society and science are often particularly effective.

Making good use of limited resources

Many advantages can be gained from bringing together the different initiatives to address challenges for sustainable development (including those from climate change) through better management of ecosystems. Most notably, integrated planning can ensure a more efficient use of the available land area, institutional capacities and funding. Joining forces between different units of government and civil society groups can also add political

weight and make it easier to gain high-level support.

A practical advantage that should not be underestimated is that collaboration between different groups of practitioners (such as those working on climate change, biodiversity, sustainable land management and disaster risk reduction) can enable a fruitful exchange of knowledge, methodologies and expertise. However, at present similar tasks are often addressed separately under each policy process. These include assessing drivers of ecosystem degradation and conversion, identifying options for ecosystem conservation, restoration and sustainable management, engaging with other sectors (e.g. agriculture, energy, infrastructure development) and local communities, and developing monitoring systems.

Examples of particular areas of expertise that different communities of practice can bring to the table are:

- Identification of (climatic and non-climatic) threats to the resilience of ecosystems and the long-term wellbeing of the human communities that depend on the services they provide (EbA experts)
- Development of land use scenarios, definition and application of social and environmental safeguards, and analysis of opportunity costs (REDD+ experts)
- Instruments for the conservation and sustainable management of ecosystems, such as different categories of protected areas, Payment for Ecosystem Services schemes or certification standards (biodiversity experts).

⁶ See e.g. Huntley & Redford (2014) Mainstreaming biodiversity in Practice: a STAP advisory document. Global Environment Facility, Washington DC, USA.

A vision for sustainable landscapes

Integrated management of ecosystems at the level of landscapes can greatly enhance the overall benefits that ecosystems provide to society, as significant increases in one ecosystem service can often be achieved at limited cost to another⁷. In order to ensure sustainability in the long term, it is crucial to use ecosystems in a way that avoids degradation, takes into account current and future vulnerabilities and maintains resilience.

Options for enhancing ecosystem resilience to climate change include reducing existing non-climatic pressures and addressing degradation that has already occurred, enhancing the connectivity of fragmented ecosystems, and maintaining the diversity of species at all trophic levels⁸.



In order to identify suitable management approaches in a given landscape context, technical information on ‘what works where’ needs to be combined with an open and inclusive discussion of stakeholder needs, capacities and priorities.



Examples of land use options that could play an important role as part of sustainable landscapes include managing forests, grasslands and peatlands in a way that contributes to livelihoods while protecting carbon stocks, water resources and soils, as well as reducing the risk of flood, droughts and wildfire; or implementing agroforestry approaches that increase biomass carbon, diversify livelihoods, protect crops from climate extremes, and provide a sustainable source of firewood and other fuels⁹.

⁷ See e.g. Austin et al. (2015) Reconciling Oil Palm Expansion and Climate Change Mitigation in Kalimantan, Indonesia. PLoS ONE 10(5): e0127963, doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0127963; or Harvey et al. (2014) Climate-Smart Landscapes: Opportunities and Challenges for Integrating Adaptation and Mitigation in Tropical Agriculture. Conservation Letters, 7(2), 77–90.

⁸ Epple & Dunning (2014) Ecosystem resilience to climate change: What is it and how can it be addressed in the context of climate change adaptation? UNEP-WCMC, Cambridge, UK.

⁹ Epple et al. (2016) Managing ecosystems in the context of climate change mitigation: A review of current knowledge and recommendations to support ecosystem-based mitigation actions that look beyond terrestrial forests. Technical Series No.86. Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Montreal, Canada.

Building on good practices

A growing number of countries are using the development or update of national policy documents as an opportunity to foster linkages between different aspects of environmental and development policies. Examples include the inclusion of ecosystem-based activities for climate change mitigation and adaptation in National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (e.g. Uganda, Cameroon, Sri Lanka)¹⁰, the development of a strategy on forests and climate change that includes ecosystem-based adaptation and mitigation actions as well as references to the National Biodiversity Strategy (e.g. Peru)¹¹, or the inclusion of ecosystem-based actions that are expected to contribute to both climate change mitigation and adaptation in the Nationally Determined Contributions to UNFCCC (e.g. Mongolia, China)¹². There are also good examples of EbA

projects that aim to achieve (and monitor) benefits for climate change mitigation, and the concept of ‘climate-smart landscapes’ is gaining traction among funders and practitioners¹³.

In order to promote the wider adoption of integrated approaches both at the level of policies and in the practice of initiatives on the ground, awareness of the large and often untapped potential for synergy needs to be raised at all levels. Those who wish to support the management of ecosystems to achieve multiple benefits should therefore not only invest in the replication, further development and upscaling of positive examples like the ones mentioned in this paper, but also in monitoring their impact and communicating about them.

¹⁰ <https://www.cbd.int/nbsap/search/default.shtml>

¹¹ <http://www.bosques.gob.pe/archivo/ff3f54 ESTRATEGIACAMB IOCLIMATICO2016 ok.pdf>

¹² <http://www4.unfccc.int/ndcregistry/pages/All.aspx>

¹³ See e.g. Minang, P. A., van Noordwijk, M., Freeman, O. E., Mbow, C., de Leeuw, J., Catacutan, D. (Eds.). (2014). Climate-smart landscapes: multifunctionality in practice. ICRAF, Nairobi, Kenya.





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About the FEBA partnership

The Friends of EbA (FEBA) group is an informal network of over 30 organizations with an interest in promoting collaboration and knowledge sharing on Ecosystem-based Adaptation through joint events and initiatives, as well as the development of position papers and technical documents on EbA.

FEBA
Friends of EbA

This document is an output of the FEBA working group on climate change and biodiversity.

The following FEBA member organizations have been involved in its development:



UNEP



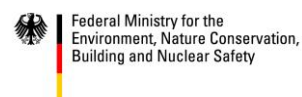
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