



Global  
Landscapes  
Forum

# Background Brief

## Landscapes and the post-2015 development agenda

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One of the main outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), held in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012, was the agreement by Member States to launch a process to develop a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), accompanied by a guiding outcome document, “The Future We Want,” which set the frame for the Post-2015 Development Agenda. As with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), poverty is at the heart of the post-2015 agenda—but the SDGs aim to go further: calling for eradication, rather than just halving, extreme poverty; placing a much stronger emphasis on equity within and among nations; and putting a strong emphasis on ecosystem and natural resources management as a core element of sustainable development.

Since then, the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals has been working to define a limited set of aspirational goals and targets through an innovative, constituency-based system of representation, with extensive involvement of relevant stakeholders. The Working Group recognizes that the overarching objectives of, and essential requirements for, sustainable development are: poverty eradication, changing unsustainable and promoting sustainable patterns of consumption and production, and protecting and managing the natural resource base for economic and social development. It also reaffirms that climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time.

The zero draft of the SDG proposed goals and targets from 19 July 2014, highlights primary challenges as poverty, food security and nutrition, health, gender equity, education, sustainable energy, infrastructure and cities, as well as conserving

and protecting aquatic resources and terrestrial ecosystems while halting land degradation and biodiversity loss. The SDG agenda has been extended beyond the MDGs in important areas where integrated approaches are essential for success. For instance the goal on water goes beyond domestic water needs to include integrated water resources management; the food security goal extends to sustainable agriculture and suggests targets on adaptation and enhancing soil quality. Other specific goals target aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems beyond natural resources management, recognizing nature and ecosystem services as the foundation of human wellbeing.

In the current SDG draft, proposed goal No. 15 refers specifically to sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, with subsections referring to conservation, restoration and “sustainable management of all types of forests.” In a separate UN process, the New York Declaration on Forests and Action Agenda that emerged from the UN Climate Summit in September 2014 supports key goals of the proposed SDGs with non-binding commitments to significantly reduce deforestation, restore degraded landscapes and set ambitious SDG targets. This declaration was signed by dozens of governments, large companies and civil society and indigenous organizations.

Achievement of a sustainable post-2015 development agenda is not possible without considering forests and forestry, agriculture, oceans and fisheries and other human endeavors in an integrated fashion, through multi-stakeholder, multi-sector and multi-level coordination in specific locations – through what is called a “landscape approach”.

## Common questions

- How many SDGs should there be, how will they be measured, and are natural resources, soils, water, biodiversity, forests adequately addressed in the targets?
- How can sustaining natural resources be integrated into all relevant aspects of the sustainable development agenda, to avoid the compartmentalization of ecosystems and to overcome current sectorial approaches?
- To what extent will the SDGs be able to shape post-2015 development, and how can landscape approaches support that agenda?

## Key points of debate

The panels under this theme will address four important aspects of the future development agenda.

- **How should forests be incorporated into the SDGs in an integrated landscape approach, and how can this be implemented?**  
Governments the world over plan, budget and implement on a sectorial basis, often dooming prior attempts at such integrated approaches to failure. Future endeavors must draw from past experience and bring the globally formulated SDGs into the practical arena of national public policy. This includes exploring how the financing, planning, monitoring and accountability frameworks associated with the post-2015 agenda and the new climate agreement could interact synergistically.
- **What is the relationship between forests and food security and nutrition?**  
The food-energy-water nexus is one key linkage: water in terms of precipitation, watershed management and water flows benefiting from tree/forest cover; energy and nutrition with regard to dependence on biomass fuels by most poor countries in Africa, whereby forests and trees are important in cooking healthy foods of the right quality and quantity, while loss of trees reduces agricultural productivity through loss of fertility. New scientific studies are emerging on the diverse contributions of forests to food security, dietary diversity and nutrition – central issues in the SDGs on hunger, food security and poverty.
- **What tools can improve landscape management and achievement of SDGs?**  
Multiple tools have been produced to foster the implementation of policies and processes aimed at engaging communities, restoring ecosystems and alleviating poverty. A few examples: Research on the engagement of communities in REDD+ benefit-sharing aims to help countries assess and identify the most appropriate mechanisms for their country context. An assessment methodology provides analysis on feasibility, costs and benefits and stakeholder engagement for landscape restoration. And geospatial modeling has been used to associate a lack of bushmeat availability with stunting and thus to inform the design of appropriate policy recommendations.
- **How can landscapes simultaneously preserve culture and biodiversity while also fostering food security and economic development?**  
The changing availability of natural resources and ecosystem services highlights the need to preserve the multiple functions of landscapes with respect to food security, economic development, bio(cultural) diversity and climate. Resource use will need to be more efficient, especially regarding the reduction of food losses, which account for more than 10 percent of the world's total energy consumption (FAO 2011). Options include investment in industrialized value chains and modern agricultural practices, yet these may have unintended consequences. Research demonstrates the importance of managing biocultural diversity and involving all interest groups through landscape approaches.

## Recommendations

- Implementation of the SDGs will require a combination of incentives, investments and regulations with strong attention to changing behaviors.
- Implementation of landscape/integrated approaches call for multi-stakeholder, multi-sector engagement. National governments have a responsibility to ensure an enabling framework and environment for effective participation by a wide range of stakeholders, including public and private entities with multiple interests—with particular attention to poor, under-represented or marginalized groups.
- Evidence from research and learning from past experience should inform policies and processes of reform.

## Remaining knowledge gaps

The SDGs still need to be finalized; indicators and monitoring systems for each goal are not yet defined. Global and national political processes will set the aspirations of the SDGs and frame the targets that set the implementation agenda. At the next level, nations will have to set their own quantified targets and define indicators of progress that can be monitored. Landscape approaches will be particularly challenging given the difficulty of integrated interventions, hence SDG implementation in this arena will require support from research.



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