

**Landscape Approaches for Resilient and Equitable Rural Growth and Development:
*The Unifying “Blue Thread” of Green Prosperity***

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Participative landscape approaches to rural development have considerable advantages over conventional initiatives that are overly sectoral, e.g., narrowly focused on forestry, agricultural, fisheries, soil and/or water resource management projects. A landscape lens for development, however, provides opportunities to incentivize local communities to collaboratively and effectively discourage unsustainable land uses that undermine their local economy, while reducing the risk of social jealousy from those local people who might otherwise be excluded, e.g., agricultural productivity projects that include smallholder farmers but ignore community foresters or fishermen.

There are three defining elements of a development landscape (see *2013 FAO Climate-smart Agriculture, A Sourcebook, Module 2*, namely, its

- (a) STRUCTURE, which concerns the interaction between environmental features, land-use patterns and human-made objects;
- (b) FUNCTIONS, which are the provision of environmental services for farmers and society;
- (c) VALUES society puts on agricultural landscapes and the costs of maintaining and enhancing landscape provisions by agriculture.

These three elements are reflected in principles of landscape management to balance conservation and conservation goals articulated in a 2012 *National Academy of Sciences* special feature article (www.pnas.org/cgi/doi/10.1073/pnas.1210595110), in particular, Principle 7 (*clarification of rights and responsibilities*) and Principle 8 (*participatory and user-friendly monitoring*) as means of identifying the set of relevant local stakeholders whose engagement is indispensable for the sustainability of GP investments. Defining an appropriate development landscape, however, must of necessity rely not only the above three elements but the resources available to develop it during a specified time frame.

Two examples of on-going rural development schemes in the Sumatra province of Jambi under the Green Prosperity (GP) program of the Millenium Challenge Account – Indonesia (MCA-I) illustrate the value of a landscape approach to underpinning local economic growth in ways that sustainable reduce poverty, one in the lowland peat swamps of Muara Jambi District based upon improved water resource management, the other in upland Merangin District centered around run-of-river hydro investments, both in Jambi Province, Sumatra. GP consists of expanding renewable energy (run-of-river hydro, agricultural waste streams for bio-energy and solar cells) and increasing renewable natural resource productivity (agricultural, forestry and fisheries) aimed at reducing poverty through economic growth. Each GP investment comes complies with requirements of an Environmental and Social Management System (ESMS).

Landscape development for GP consists of a strategic blend of a range of self-reliant individual projects important for better landscape management in ways that are readily recognized by local communities. In combination, projects and their components selected in collaboration with local communities provide robust synergies that,

- (i) increase household incomes, especially of the poor whose knowledge, social and human assets add value to the landscape approach,
- (ii) reach across the wider local community, not just one sector of it, thereby reducing the risk of divisive social jealousy from those who feel excluded, and,
- (iii) strengthen social pressure to deter destructive environmental practices of those who enjoy elite capture of natural resources.

If for whatever reason, one of the component development projects fails, it should not overly burden the other(s), thereby avoiding the weakness of conventional integrated projects that are overly complex and inter-reliant.

GP landscapes may stretch *“from ridge to reef”*, from upper catchment areas to coastal areas, be small enough to nurture social cohesion between neighboring communities for appropriate coordinated behavior, manageable enough to be replicable yet large enough to be developmentally relevant. Often the key social, economic and political unifying feature is the accepted need to value and manage water resources (the *“blue thread”* that binds) on which the local economy depends -- water table and irrigation maintenance, hydroelectricity, drinking water, local industry and transport, etc. The importance of this *“blue thread”* (*“benang biru”*) resonates more at the local level than arguments about reducing greenhouse gas emissions, though safeguarding the former can indeed reduce the latter, e.g., better management of forests in upper catchment areas of waterways.

Realizing the unifying features of the *“blue thread”* depends upon developing landscapes that comprise neighboring village communities who readily appreciate the landscape logic of upstream-downstream relationships. Thus, sub-watershed management involving a few adjacent villages increases the likelihood of success in comparison with attempting the more ambitious task of managing entire river basins consisting of hundreds of villages. Scaling up sub-watershed management, however, can ultimately influence the whole river basin.

The likelihood of post-project continuity is increased by participative and formal empowerment of local communities across GP landscapes as enabling conditions for the GP investments, e.g., Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Multi-stakeholder forum (MSF), transparent natural resource licensing processes and formal geo-location of village areas, each in line with existing policies and institutions, are key elements to ensure crucial social inclusivity, in short participative land use management (PLUP) to enable sustainable landscape management. A Memorandum of Understanding between District, Provincial and the MCA-I articulating mutual benefits and obligations, strengthen the long-term commitment of national and regional parties to the essential participative, transparent and accountable elements of GP’s landscape approach.