

Potential for integrated landscape approaches

A review of Ghana's national environment and development policies

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Key messages

- This brief explores Ghana's national environment and development policy climate and whether it is conducive to operationalizing an integrated landscape approach (ILA).
- Ghana's policy framework is geared towards large-scale, near-term development, raising questions regarding environmental impacts and related socioeconomic reverberations. Concerns surrounding future development plans stem from Ghana's past and present challenges with competing land uses.
- Ghana has many policies and management schemes that support reconciling conservation and development needs; however, barriers to implementation persist.
- Challenge areas include: establishing a transparent change logic that is understood and endorsed across sectors and stakeholder groups. This requires identifying common concern entry points and clarifying rights and responsibilities.
- We suggest a greater commitment to these principles and the adoption of a landscape approach hold potential to enhance social and ecological outcomes in Ghana. Engaging with Ghana's existing Community Resource Management Area (CREMA) program is an opportunity in this regard.

Integrated landscape approaches

Integrated landscape approaches (ILA) are widely promoted as a strategy for addressing interconnected issues such as biodiversity loss, food security, and poverty. Broadly defined, a landscape approach is a participatory process for reconciling competing land uses for improved socioeconomic and environmental outcomes (Sayer et al. 2013). This process involves multiple stakeholders coming together to identify and negotiate synergies and trade-offs, ideally resulting in more sustainable and equitable land and resource management. A landscape approach is not prescriptive, it will vary depending on context-specific social and environmental needs defined

by local stakeholders. However, Sayer et al. (2013) outline ten overarching principles to guide landscape approach implementation (see Figure 1). Some principles are likely to be more relevant than others, depending on the landscape and as needs evolve over time.

With the ten principles in mind, it is important to examine whether existing policies enable collaboration between stakeholders and are conducive to a landscape approach. Landscapes are political spaces, meaning current governance structures and policies are indicative of potential challenges and opportunities for operationalizing a landscape approach.

As part of the Collaborating to Operationalise Landscape Approaches for Nature, Development and Sustainability (COLANDS) initiative, which seeks to operationalize landscape approaches in Ghana, Indonesia, and Zambia, a review of national environment and development policies was conducted for

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Figure 1. Ten principles for a landscape approach.

Source: Sayer et al. 2013.

each landscape⁴. In this brief we discuss the findings for Ghana. We reviewed the objectives of Ghana's Medium-Term National Development Policy Framework for the period 2018-2021. We discuss several policies and natural resource management schemes that promote development objectives and their potential to support a landscape approach.

Development objectives

Ghana is in a period of growth, with national wealth more than doubling between 2000 and 2014 (World Bank 2020). This, paired with a positive democratic political environment, creates opportunity for development that benefits the greater population. However, Ghana's increasing population and rapid growth intensifies pressure on land and other resources, making commitments to reconciling conservation and development needs critical. Ghana's Medium-Term National Development Policy Framework (2018-2021) *Agenda for Jobs: Creating Prosperity and Equal Opportunity for All* is the sixth in a series of policy frameworks designed to guide Ghana's development (MTDP 2017). The framework is coordinated by the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC), responsible for synthesizing development priorities identified through a multi-level process. The process necessitates coordination across scales and stakeholder groups through the Metropolitan/Municipal/ District Assemblies (MMDAs), designed as a platform for multiple stakeholders (Principle 5) to identify community needs; and development priorities and Cross-Sectorial Planning Groups (CSPGs), required to convene at least once every three months (MTDP 2017).

The policy framework calls attention to commercial production of oil and gas as an emerging opportunity for the country. In collaboration with the private sector, oil exploration is expected to accelerate in the Voltaian, Keta, and Accra basins (MTDP 2017). The Voltaian Basin alone covers approximately 40% of the country's land mass (CBD NBSAP 2016). It is evident Ghana's policy framework is geared towards large-scale, near-term development, which raises questions regarding environmental impacts and related socioeconomic reverberations. Concerns surrounding future development plans stem from Ghana's past and present challenges with competing land uses. A growing population, agriculture expansion, intensification of cocoa and oil palm, illegal timber harvesting, and illegal small-scale mining (commonly known as *galamsey*) have increased social tensions, contaminated water sources, and degraded land and biodiversity (CBD NBSAP 2016; MTDP 2017; NG HDR 2018). The national policy framework acknowledges the need to reconcile conservation and development needs and outlines a number of focus areas for the 2018-2021 timeframe. For example, the framework commits to ensuring the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Petroleum Commission work together on environmentally sound exploration and production of oil and gas. Other focus areas include restoring degraded land, improving land administration and management, expanding protected areas, and increasing resilience to climate change (MTDP 2017).

Reconciling conservation and development

Several contemporary policies support these broad objectives in Ghana. For instance, the National Environmental Policy (2014) aims to integrate environmental consideration into sectorial, structural, and socioeconomic planning at all levels (FDMP 2016). A National Climate Change Policy (NCCP) was launched in 2014 to guide Ghana towards a climate resilient economy through low-carbon growth (MTDP 2017). A pillar of the national climate change agenda is Ghana's REDD+ Strategy (Forestry Commission 2016) and the supporting National Forest Reference Level (FRL) plan. The FRL will serve as the baseline for monitoring emissions reductions from REDD+ activities aimed at reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (National REDD+ Secretariat 2017).

The Forest and Wildlife Policy of 2012 regulated by the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources (MLNR) marked a shift in policy focus from timber to conservation. The policy calls for sustainable conservation and development of forest and wildlife resources to sustain socioeconomic and cultural benefits, while fulfilling Ghana's commitments to international agreements and conventions (Adom 2017; MLNR 2012). Related to this, the Forestry Development Master Plan (FDMP) (2016-2036) seeks to transform the forestry sector by implementing the objectives of the Forest and Wildlife Policy and the NCCP. The plan intends on taking an ecosystem-based strategy approach that considers the interactions between government, organizations, industry, traditional authorities, and landowners (FDMP 2016).

Two natural resource management schemes that embody the above policies are the Modified Taungya System (MTS) and

⁴ The review is available as a chapter in *Operationalizing Integrated Landscape Approaches in the Tropics* (2020): <https://www.cifor.org/knowledge/publication/7807>

Community Resource Management Areas (CREMAs). The MTS is a co-management reforestation arrangement between the Ghana Forestry Commission and local communities (Foli et al. 2018). The scheme is a legally binding land lease that recognizes farmers as co-owners of forest plantations until tree crops mature (around three years) (Acheampong et al. 2016). During this time, farmers can intercrop food crops and receive 100% of the proceeds. They are also entitled to 40% of tree revenues once the trees have matured after three years (Acheampong et al. 2016; Foli et al. 2018).

The second scheme, CREMA, was initiated in the early 2000s by the Wildlife Division of the Forestry Commission to sustainably manage natural resources outside of protected areas; in turn, reducing pressure on wildlife and forest reserves (Foli et al. 2018). In exchange for sustainable management, communities are granted rights to the economic benefits derived from natural resources within the CREMA. Today, there are approximately 30 CREMAs across the country (Foli et al. 2018). The passage of the pending Wildlife and Resources Management Bill would help mainstream CREMAs and community participation in wildlife and forest resource management into Ghana's institutional framework. A study by Foli et al. (2018) assessed locally embedded natural resource management initiatives in Ghana and Burkina Faso that showed potential to be entry points for an integrated landscape approach. The study found Ghana's CREMA scheme met most of the desired criteria for operationalizing a landscape approach and showed potential to be scaled up for far-reaching landscape governance (Foli et al. 2018). With this said, lessons learned from studies analyzing CREMAs in practice must be carried forward. These include the need for training programmes for CREMA committee members and others who take on leadership positions (Owusu-Ansah 2020), meaningful community participation, and proper benefit-sharing mechanisms (Ahmed and Gasparatos 2020).

A landscape approach for Ghana: challenges and opportunities

Despite the apparent progress in recent policy development, barriers to implementing these policies and natural resource management schemes persist. A need for coordination across sectors and stakeholder groups has become the prevailing narrative throughout the literature assessing Ghana's policies and development objectives (CBD NBSAP 2016; Mensah 2005; MTDP 2017; NG HDR 2018; VNR Report 2019). When applying the ten principles of the landscape approach (see Sayer et al. 2013) to the key findings of Ghana's national policy review, two clear gaps emerge: a need to strengthen stakeholder capacity (Principle 10) and negotiate a transparent change logic (Principle 6) across sectors. In order to establish a transparent change logic that is understood and endorsed across sectors and stakeholder groups, identifying common concern entry points (Principle 2) and clarifying rights and responsibilities (Principle 7) is needed. As we detail above, the structure of the CREMA programme is an opportunity to address these principles, and in turn, focusing on these principles can improve CREMA outcomes. Evidence shows co-management results in more positive socioeconomic, institutional, and ecological

outcomes when rights and decision making opportunities (Principle 7) are devolved to local communities, particularly when marginalized groups are included, such as women and farmers (Ahmed and Gasparatos 2020; Soliku and Schraml 2020). A potential challenge is the high transactional cost required (financial, technical, transportation, etc.) to enable long-term collaboration and capacity building opportunities (Principle 10).

A review of the Medium-Term National Development Policy Framework process revealed there are existing platforms that could be leveraged to enhance stakeholder engagement. For example, the Metropolitan/Municipal/District Assemblies (MMDAs) are designed as a platform for multiple stakeholders (Principle 5) to identify community needs and development priorities. The Cross-Sectoral Planning Groups (CSPGs) required to convene at least once every three months also have potential for multi-stakeholder collaboration. As we discussed, there are many policies that support integration of development and conservation objectives (i.e. National Environmental Policy, Forestry Development Master Plan, REDD+, the Forest and Wildlife Policy, etc.) and encourage multifunctional (Principle 4) landscapes; the challenge is ensuring that these policies are enacted.

Recommendations

Although policies and platforms are in place to facilitate improved collaboration across sectors and stakeholder groups, rectifying these issues at the national scale is an enormous undertaking. A commitment to up-scale CREMAs could be an excellent opportunity to work towards the aforementioned landscape approach principles. Engaging with the existing CREMA platform to operationalize a landscape approach would be a timely endeavour with large-scale natural resource extraction on the horizon. Cross-sectorial and multi-stakeholder collaboration is crucial if Ghana is to concurrently fulfil environmental commitments.

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