



PBL Netherlands Environmental
Assessment Agency

ADVANCING LOCALLY LED APPROACHES FOR PEOPLE, CLIMATE, AND NATURE

A critical comparison of guiding principles for the Integrated Landscape
Approach and Locally Led Adaptation

Katie Minderhoud

With expert contributions from Nicola Sorsby (IIED)

May 2026

PBL

Colophon

Advancing Locally Led Approaches for People, Climate, and Nature. A critical comparison of guiding principles for the Integrated Landscape Approach and Locally Led Adaptation

© PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency

The Hague, 2026

PBL publication number: 5793

Corresponding author

Katie.Minderhoud@pbl.nl

Author(s)

Katie Minderhoud

With expert contributions from Nicola Sorsby (IIED)

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Laurent Umans (DGIS-MoFA) for his suggestion to bring together practitioner organisations for sharing experiences and reflections on locally led approaches and Paul Mitchell, Larissa Setaro and May Aung (IIED) and André Brasser (Tropenbos International - CLLI secretariat) for organising and facilitating the workshop in The Hague. We would like to thank Marcel Kok, Lucy Oates, Martine Uyterlinde (all PBL), Ebony Holland (IIED), Nathalie van Haren, Tamara Mohr and Janna Fleuren (all BothENDS), Candice Ramkissoon and Ainka Granderson (CANARI), Johan Meijer and Karen Stehouwer (both RVO), Kate Kloppers (South South North) and Imelda Phadtare (Save the Children) for their review and feedback on the policy brief. Lastly, we thank all partners for their participation in the workshop in The Hague.

Visualisations

Beeldredactie PBL

Production coordination

PBL Publishers

Accessibility

PBL attaches great importance to the accessibility of its products. Should you encounter any access-related problems when reading them, please contact us at info@pbl.nl, stating the title of the publication and the issue you are experiencing.

Parts of this publication may be reproduced, providing the source is stated, in the form:
Minderhoud, C.A. (2026) Advancing Locally Led Approaches for People, Climate and Nature, The Hague: PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency.

PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency is the national institute for strategic policy analysis in the fields of the environment, nature and spatial planning. We contribute to improving the quality of political and administrative decision-making by conducting outlook studies, analyses and evaluations in which an integrated approach is considered paramount. Policy relevance is the prime concern in all of our studies. We conduct solicited and unsolicited research that is both independent and scientifically sound.

The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) is a nonprofit international organisation which focuses on tackling global poverty while promoting the sustainable management of natural resources. IIED's mission is to build a fairer, more sustainable world through evidence-based action and collaboration. Its research emphasises the needs of vulnerable populations, ensuring their voices are heard in environmental policy-making.

Contents

List of abbreviations

Summary

1	Introduction	12
2	Approaches and principles	14
2.1	Integrated Landscape Approach	14
2.2	Locally Led Adaptation	19
2.3	Learning from comparison	22
3	Comparison of approaches	23
3.1	Exploring similarities and differences	23
3.2	Sharing strengths and addressing gaps	28
3.3	Synergies to support local action	34
4	Conclusions and recommendations	36
4.1	Concluding remarks	36
4.2	Recommendations	39
	References	42
	Appendix I Background information and methods	45
	Appendix II GA-LLA core partners	47
	Appendix III CLLI members	48
	Appendix IV Principles in full text	49

List of abbreviations

CLLI	Collaborative Landscape Learning Initiative
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DGIS	Directorate General for International Cooperation
FPIC	Free Prior and Informed Consent
GBF	Global Biodiversity Framework
GCA	Global Commission for Adaptation
IATI	International Aid Transparency Initiative
ILA	Integrated Landscape Approach
ILM	Integrated Landscape Management
IP&LC	Indigenous People and Local Communities
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem services
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
LLA	Locally Led Adaptation
LPFN	Landscape for People Food and Nature
MEB	Multiple Evidence-Based Approach
MSP	Multistakeholder platform
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
ODA	Official Development Assistance
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small Islands Development States
UNCBD	United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Summary

Locally led approaches: a strategy in need of support

Global environmental problems are ultimately felt at the local level. To respond to climate change, biodiversity loss, poverty, and inequity, effective local action is needed. While there is ample evidence that locally led approaches are prerequisite to address contextual environmental and development challenges in unison, facilitating support for local action proves challenging in policy practice. Support for local action is falling short in proportion to the need in multiple ways, either through lack of political will, insufficient commitment of funds, or - if political will and finance are in place - the practical challenges of devolving power and funds to the local level. Governments can step up their responsibility in providing such support through enabling policy frameworks and reliable funding arrangements, both in national contexts as well as through bilateral cooperation for development. Since locally led approaches will remain a critical strategy for the meaningful implementation of national and international policy goals, advancing locally led approaches deserves attention and continuous learning by policymakers, practitioners, and researchers alike.

Reflection and exchange on the meaning of locally led approaches

This policy brief synthesises insights from exchanges between practitioner organisations working on the Integrated Landscape Approach (ILA) and Locally Led Adaptation (LLA), two prominent locally led approaches that address interconnected development and environmental challenges. Both approaches are applied in practice in diverse local settings across the globe. In brief, ILA aims to bring together stakeholders within a landscape context to design and agree on a common theory of change and to commit towards shared long-term landscape goals. LLA refers to action taken to adapt to climate change, which is led by local actors, including citizens, local communities, local governments, civil society organisations (CSOs), and other stakeholders working at the local level.

This policy brief compares the respective principles underpinning ILA and LLA in order to identify shared lessons, mutual complementarities, and opportunities to strengthen the effectiveness of both approaches. With this policy brief we emphasise the need for continuous reflection and learning in support of locally led approaches. This brief is especially intended to contribute to that learning and to inspire practitioner organisations, such as local and international operating NGOs, donors and funding agencies, to invite more in-depth reflection and exchange on the meaning of locally led approaches and the enabling conditions they require. Findings may also be relevant for other initiatives aiming to advance locally led approaches, such as the recently launched Principles for Inclusive Nature Action (INA),¹ which draw on the LLA principles and the Shandia principles developed by the Global Alliance of Territorial Communities.² The policy brief shows the need for increased commitment and support towards advancing locally led approaches for people, climate, and nature.

¹ <https://www.iied.org/principles-for-inclusive-nature-action>

² [Emerging principles for supporting locally-led biodiversity action | International Institute for Environment and Development](#)

Comparison of approaches: principles and practices

This policy brief examines the complementarities and tensions between ILA and LLA, both conceptually and in practice. For example, while LLA brings a strong social and justice-oriented dimension - including explicit attention to local agency, power relations, and equity - ILA contributes a more ecological and place-based perspective focused on interdependencies, synergies, and trade-offs across development, environmental, and climate adaptation agendas. Drawing on practitioner reflections and relevant literature, this brief explores how insights from each approach can strengthen the other.

Both approaches could reinforce their acknowledgement of Indigenous Peoples and Local Community (IP&LC) rights and explicitly recognise the importance of embracing plural values of nature. This plural value perspective of nature ensures that the diversity in worldviews and values that IP&LCs hold in their connection to place, to culture, and traditional local knowledge systems are more visible and simultaneously increases their legitimacy. Making these values explicit also reveals a deeper level to unequal power dynamics, embedded in existing norms, beliefs, and institutional structures, specifically in how nature is viewed, conceptualised, and valued. Recognising plural values of nature can help challenge dominant framings of human-nature relations that prioritise certain ways of valuing nature over others (Carmenta et al. 2023). Greater attention to diverse values and knowledge systems is increasingly seen as important for addressing inequalities in environmental governance and responding to biodiversity loss and ecosystem decline (IPBES 2024).

The results of comparing the approaches are collected in one overview table (see Table 1). Any identified similarities and differences based on key components of both approaches are structured around six analytical dimensions. Each dimension is formulated as a question to make explicit how key components of the respective approaches contrast.

Table 1
Overview of key components of Integrated landscape Approach and Locally Led Adaptation

Dimension <i>Question</i>	Integrated Landscape Approach	Locally Led Adaptation
Problem framing <i>1. What is each set of principles addressing?</i>	'Common concerns' and 'wicked' problems at the intersection of environment and development at landscape level.	Climate adaptation action; flows of funding to the local level to invest in adaptation led by local actors.
Methods <i>2. What methods do they advocate for?</i>	Multistakeholder process; negotiating competing claims and balancing development needs and environment challenges.	Shifting power and resources to local actors on the frontlines of the climate crisis, especially in the LDCs and SIDS.
Actor constellation <i>3. Who are agents of change?</i>	Multi-stakeholder platforms or processes (MSP) bring together diversity of stakeholders to engage in dialogue, coordinate, and collaborate around a shared vision.	LLA advocates for shifting power and decision-making to the lowest appropriate level and so aims to shift power to local actors and centre local knowledge, needs, and priorities. Intermediaries and funders are critical components in this process.
Interpretation of local <i>4. How is 'local' defined?</i>	'Local' is interpreted as a place-based, landscape scale, related to geography or administrative jurisdictions.	'Local' moves beyond a place-based interpretation, expanding to include social and political systems and power structures within communities.
Approaches to power and justice	Rights and responsibilities are mentioned in relation to negotiating competing claims and resource management. No explicit	LLA has an explicit focus on equity and justice, specifically regarding the shift of power to local actors and on addressing structural inequalities faced by women,

5. How are power dynamics and justice dimensions addressed?	language on equity or justice and no explicit focus on shifting power to local communities. There is no mention of or focus on Indigenous Peoples (IP) ³ or their respective rights and no mention of the Rights of Nature.	youth, children, people with disabilities, people who are displaced, Indigenous Peoples, and marginalised ethnic groups. While the LLA principles do not use specific language around rights and responsibilities, nor on Rights of Nature, they are designed to address rights issues related to allocation and use of climate finance, particularly as that relates to structural inequality.
Role of finance 6. What is the role of finance in method and approach?	Funding or finance is not included in the core principles. Finance for the MSP is a key challenge (enabling finance); coordination of financial flows within MSP is a lever for coordination and collaboration between actors, institutions and sectors; investment agendas are used to attract finance.	LLA has a large focus on funding and reforming finance flows, specifically to direct funding to the local level. LLA principle 3 advocates for patient and predictable financing to address long-term adaptation challenges. Funding is considered patient when it has a long-term orientation and allows for flexibility in terms and conditions.

Conditions for success and potential synergies

The brief also identifies shared conditions for locally led approaches to deliver on their aims. Practically, both approaches rely on time, finance, and local capabilities as conditions for sustained engagement of stakeholders. Such stakeholder engagement processes need to be connected and directed towards ongoing investment in locally-owned governance arrangements and institutions for long-term impact. Taking the time to develop relationships and trust, especially when creating new or strengthening existing governance structures, requires patience and commitment towards an ongoing process. A project management mentality risks to overlook this strategic patience and fail to contribute to a solid foundation for lasting local capabilities and meaningful impact. Both approaches and their practitioner communities could build on each other’s strengths and collaborate to advocate for necessary support. This might include, for example, sharing experiences around common challenges to identify new strategies and joint efforts around finance and funding structures. Possible ideas for exchange might be on how to allocate finance in such a way that existing funds become less vulnerable to political change, how to engage multilateral funds as patient funding, and how to jointly advocate for support for local action, by building donor capacity on finance practices that best support local action.

The paradox of locally led approaches operating beyond the ‘local’

Both the ILA and LLA approaches offer valuable and complementary perspectives for addressing interconnected development and environmental challenges. At the same time, the analysis points out an important paradox. Locally led approaches require enabling political, financial, and institutional systems *beyond* the local level to succeed. The success of locally led approaches relies

³ While the Landscape Approach principles under review for this comparison do not include explicit reference to Indigenous Peoples, there are other organisations which have paved the way in making this connection, both in policy context (for example in the goals formulated in the CBD Global Biodiversity Framework) as well as by the Satoyama Initiative (see https://satoyamainitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Landscape-Approaches-Manual_20240118.pdf) and Proforest and Landesa with their work on a guidance report on Respecting Rights of Indigenous People and Local Communities in Landscape Initiatives (see [A guide for practitioners on Minimum Safeguards and Evolving Best Practices](#) (2023))

on policy coherence, knowledge exchange and shared implementation strategies that cut across policy and scale levels. Locally led approaches require nested support systems at the regional, national, and international level to deliver. Practitioner organisations identified two key priorities to achieve this. Firstly, there is need for broad recognition that local ownership and leadership is essential in navigating change processes which seek to balance development ambitions and environmental challenges. Secondly, there is an urgent need for increased and consistent support for local action, both financially and in terms of reliable partnerships and shared policy goals and visions. This resonates with the broader ‘Shift the Power’ movement in international development, based on the notion that the Global South should be in the lead of its own development agenda and not following donor-led agendas (Partos, 2021).

Another conclusion is that recognition and inclusion of diversity of knowledge is foundational in development processes. To deliver on development and environmental goals, knowledge has to come from, be held, and developed and adapted by local actors. Local knowledge needs to be amplified in order to build on the existing, contextualised knowledge base and capacities of local actors. And lastly, we highlight the importance of the shared policy umbrella and knowledge base provided by global policy agendas for climate and biodiversity, which provide a long-term vision and surpass short-term policy changes in national priorities and foreign policy agendas. These policy frameworks (i.e. climate, biodiversity) as well as the supporting evidence can be used strategically to hold national governments to account in how they contribute to implementation and delivery of these global goals and targets.

Recommendations for practitioners

The recommendations directed towards practitioners are, first, to continue emphasising the importance of locally led approaches and their potential to strengthen attention to equity, inclusion, and local agency in development processes. Practitioner organisations play an important role by ensuring that questions of participation, representation, and power remain visible in the design and implementation of development interventions. Secondly, practitioners are the principal advocates for locally led approaches and positioned to engage donors to endorse principles in support of locally led development. Such endorsement is the starting point for donors to change practices from within, where the terms are set for ODA funding, programmes and partnerships. The third recommendation is about how to follow through, from donors endorsing principles to enacting them in practice by embracing co-creation, flexibility, and long-term collaboration in partnerships. Practitioners can help make explicit what this change looks like in (donor) policy context, through partnership engagement and dialogue but also by leveraging on accountability mechanisms that enhance transparency and accountability in donor practices.

Recommendations for donors

The recommendations directed towards donors and government point to concrete steps for enacting principles in practice. First, be transparent and concrete as a donor about how commitments towards advancing locally led approaches are translated into internal procedures and partnership processes. Communicate externally and make visible how these changes are prioritised and acted upon. Secondly, take implications for monitoring and (internal) accountability seriously. Embracing locally led approaches such as ILA and LLA requires new ways of monitoring, both for learning as well as for accountability purposes. This calls for fundamentally revisiting monitoring frameworks and shifting focus towards learning, prioritizing process-sensitive and participatory monitoring that includes local definitions of what success looks like. Lastly, in line with efforts geared towards policy coherence, ensure that core values and principles in support of local action are made explicit across policy frameworks, across policy domains and policy levels –

because this is not limited to donor policy context but cuts across policy domains within national government.

1 Introduction

Strengthening support for locally led approaches

Global environmental problems are ultimately felt at the local level. To respond to climate change, biodiversity loss, poverty and inequity, effective local action is needed. Locally led approaches are a prerequisite to meet local needs, honour rightsholders, and address contextual environmental and development challenges. However, the conditions and support for local action are often lacking. Structural support for local action is falling short in proportion to the need in multiple ways, either through lack of political will, insufficient commitment of funds or – if political will and finance are in place – the practical challenges of devolving power and funds to the local level. Governments can step up their responsibility in providing such support through enabling policy frameworks and reliable funding arrangements, both in national contexts as well as through bilateral cooperation for development. In development discourse, civil society organisations have called for locally led approaches for many years, and the need for integrated and locally led action on the nexus of poverty and environment is increasingly pressing in times of geopolitical tension and climate crisis.

ODA policy context

Globally, development budgets are under threat, with the elimination of USAID as the most stark and recent example and OECD reporting a historic decline in ODA of 23% in 2025 ([OECD, 2026](#)). These numbers illustrate a trend of major donors retracting commitment and funds from development assistance. Western donor governments tend to prioritise short term, national economic and security interests over development cooperation and global environmental agreements. This is not only a setback in raising international efforts in moving towards global climate and biodiversity targets. ODA decline affects the most marginalised and most vulnerable communities directly, as they are most exposed and hardest hit by climate change and biodiversity loss. Apart from these recent developments, there is a longstanding concern that ODA is not substantive enough and financial flows for climate and nature should better enable the most vulnerable communities and countries to adapt to climate change and sustainably use and conserve biodiversity. This resonates with the call for ‘Shifting the Power’, based on the notion that the Global South should be in the lead of its own development agenda and not following donor-led agendas. These challenges in the ODA policy context combined are an urgent invitation to call attention to locally led approaches within as well as outside the traditional aid paradigm, to support local action towards sustainable development.

Aim and research questions

This policy brief examines the complementarities, differences, and potential synergies between the Integrated Landscape Approach (ILA) and Locally Led Adaptation (LLA), two approaches that have gained increasing prominence in efforts to address interconnected development, climate, and biodiversity challenges. Both approaches emphasise locally grounded action and cross-sector collaboration; however, they have largely evolved in separate policy and practitioner communities. Bringing them into dialogue offers opportunities for mutual learning and may help strengthen support for locally led and integrated approaches in development and environmental governance.

To explore these linkages, practitioner organisations working on ILA and LLA participated in a workshop in September 2024 which enabled a dialogue around the central question: What are the points of intersection between ILA and LLA principles? The dialogue focused on points of convergence and divergence between the approaches and their respective principles, their application in practice, opportunities for collaboration, and shared challenges in the current

political and funding context. The insights and findings from the workshop were complemented by further literature review and analysis. In this follow up analysis, we included four sub questions to further structure and elaborate on the workshop findings, by asking:

1. what are similarities and differences comparing ILA and LLA?
2. What are strengths and gaps in both approaches and what do they bring to each other?
3. What are opportunities for collaboration and synergies between approaches?
4. What are shared conditions for locally led approaches to deliver on their aims?

This policy brief details our shared findings. Find further details on the method and the practitioner groups in the Appendices.

Reinforcing underlying values

This policy brief aims to sharpen conceptual understanding of locally led and place-based approaches. We emphasise the need for continuous reflection and encourage ongoing dialogue to contribute to enabling conditions for locally led approaches. Findings may also be relevant for other initiatives aiming to advance locally led approaches such as the recently launched Principles for Inclusive Nature Action (INA)⁴, which draw on the LLA principles and the Shandia principles developed by the Global Alliance of Territorial Communities.⁵ We particularly highlight how LLA and ILA intersect and reinforce underlying values and motivations to drive change in a local context, since these connections and linkages are not always actively recognised and supported in policy nor in practice. For example, ILA practitioners can make their interventions more sustainable by explicitly incorporating locally led actions, or LLA practitioners can strategically work across different spatial scales and explicitly use the landscape-scale as an entry point for an integrated approach in their analysis and for coordination between stakeholders.

Structure of the report

This policy brief is divided into three parts. Following the introduction in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 starts out with an introduction of the concepts and underlying principles for the Integrated Landscape Approach (2.1) and Locally Led Adaptation (2.2). We then explain the rationale for comparing the two approaches (2.3). Chapter 3 presents the findings of the comparison of approaches with an overview table and a discussion of the identified similarities and differences (3.1), as well as identified strengths, gaps and shared conditions for local action to deliver on their aims (3.2). The opportunities for synergies between the approaches are presented in 3.3. Chapter 4 draws conclusions which reiterate the need to shift away from donor-driven agendas towards locally-defined priorities and governance processes. This is followed by recommendations for practitioner organisations and for development actors, both in policy and finance. These recommendations point out opportunities and necessary changes to support and strengthen locally led, integrated, and place-based approaches to development, climate action, and nature restoration.

⁴ <https://www.iied.org/principles-for-inclusive-nature-action>

⁵ [Emerging principles for supporting locally-led biodiversity action | International Institute for Environment and Development](#)

2 Approaches and principles

2.1 Integrated Landscape Approach

Definition

The landscape approach is a multifaceted integrated strategy that aims to bring together multiple stakeholders from multiple sectors to provide solutions at multiple scales (Reed et al. 2015). It aims to address increasingly widespread and complex environmental, economic, social, and political challenges that typically transcend traditional management boundaries (Reed et al. 2015).

Landscape approaches, as the name implies, aim to tackle these challenges specifically at the landscape scale through an iterative collaborative stakeholder process, in which shared understanding and capacities are built and conflicting interests over resource allocation, management, and use are negotiated (Sayer et al., 2013, EcoAg, 2013). The main goal of a successful, integrated landscape approach would be to bring together all stakeholders and their objectives, and, given the landscape characteristics, design and agree on a common theory of change in which shared long-term landscape goals are formulated. Although, with more stakeholders involved, the process of implementing a landscape approach could become more complex, this would also increase the possibility of designing an inclusive theory of change with broad social support, thereby improving the chances for the approach to be successful on a longer term and a larger scale (Van der Horn and Meijer, 2015).

Historical origin of the concept

Early conservation theory promoted landscape scale thinking, but the actual formulation of landscape approaches is based on the recognition that the needs of people in a given landscape need to be prioritised, needs which ultimately shape the landscape in question (Sayer et al. 2013). Historically, the landscape approach draws on integrated spatial planning, a concept that was popularised in the 1980s. This was inspired by discussions on nature conservation strategies in developed economies and fuelled by debates on trade-offs between conservation goals and livelihood needs in these economies. Since the 1990s, particularly after the Rio Earth Summit of 1992, the landscape approach became more strongly linked to sustainable development (Meijer et al., 2020). To define the concept, the landscape approach is the general term for collaborative, place-based initiatives that span multiple sectors and scales beyond individual land management units (e.g. watershed management, integrated coastal zone management, and 'ridge to reef' or bioregional approaches). An *integrated* landscape approach (ILA) emphasises the collaborative management process of stakeholders involved. See text box 1 for an example of a landscape programme, to illustrate design and scope in practice.

Integrated landscape approaches emerged as a response to the complex, interconnected, wicked problems that intersect at the landscape level. Among these are climate change, deforestation, biodiversity loss, poverty, food insecurity, water scarcity, and pollution (Reed et al., 2016). Tackling issues at the intersection of development and environment is increasingly pressing and calls for multisectoral approaches. However, translation to practice has fluctuated over time, where sectoral focus in policy and finance continues to dominate and challenges this integrative perspective in practice. Only in the early 2000s an integrated landscape approach became more formalised and it

was actively embraced as an implementation strategy by development and conservation organisations and internationally operating NGOs.

Particularly the publication by Sayers (2013), *Ten principles of the landscape approach to reconciling agriculture, conservation, and other competing land uses*, sparked renewed interest in the approach (see Figure 1 below). These principles aimed to synthesise ‘best practice’ and were based on an extensive consultative process.⁶ They are targeted at those seeking development and conservation outcomes in multiple-stakeholder contexts (Sayer et al. 2013). Since then, there has been a growing community of practical, academic, and institutional actors who are actively involved in and committed to learn and share experiences through international fora, such as the [Global Landscape Forum](#) and the [Satoyama Initiative](#), as well as in localised practitioner settings within organisations and partnerships. The [Collaborative Landscape Learning Initiative](#) (CLLI) is an example of such learning effort among practitioner organisations and formed part of the workshop which inspired this policy brief (see Appendix 3 on CLLI).

Today, private sector, civil society organisations, and donors are exploring landscape approaches and experimenting with scaling initiatives, either through business operations (following supply chains into sourcing areas) or by means of a scaling mechanism to support local action to benefit from existing tools and gain access to partnerships and funding (e.g. 1000 Landscapes for 1 billion People). However, a consistent definition and recognition of these efforts by governments is still lacking, which is needed to ensure legitimacy and to add up local efforts to national-level efforts in reaching climate and biodiversity goals (Meijer, 2021). Although the promise and potential of the landscape approach is gaining traction as a viable response to tackle development and environmental challenges in unison, the structural and systemic changes in policy and finance to enable place-based and inclusive collaborative stakeholder processes are falling behind and inhibit systematic uptake at scale.

Purpose and intent: what does it respond to?

Broadly speaking, integrated landscape approaches aim to do two things. First of all, they allow for place-based contextualisation of both development and environmental challenges and opportunities in their specific environment and geography. Secondly, the inclusion of stakeholder engagement and collaborative planning allows for inclusivity in identifying needs and interests, to address competing claims, and to mobilise collective capacity towards shared goals (Arts et al. 2017). This collaborative process includes exploring scenarios and a shared vision for the future as well as different change pathways on how to get there (Meijer et al. 2018). The rationale underpinning all of this is the recognition that there is no fixed state (end goal) to the landscape approach, but rather that there is the adaptive capacity to respond to external challenges and shocks (resilience) and work towards equitable benefit sharing and wellbeing.

⁶ From Sayer et.al. (2013) p.8350: “Representing a consensus view, these principles were discussed by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) during the 15th Meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (35). Following a lengthy consultative process and eventual acceptance by the CBD, we expect that these principles will have traction in guiding landscape approaches to environmental management for some time to come.”

While the landscape approach centres around this localised change process and development agenda driven by stakeholders, there is also increased attention for this approach as an implementation pathway to deliver on global goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as climate and biodiversity goals. This goes hand in hand with the connection to relevant policy fora, such as for climate (UNFCCC) and biodiversity (UNCBD). As managed and natural ecosystems come together in a landscape, the landscape scale enables the integration of multiple ecosystem functions and services, as presented in *'Seizing the landscape opportunity to catalyse transformative biodiversity governance'* (Meijer, 2021).

Practitioner initiatives (such as [Landscape for People, Food and Nature](#), or LPFN) actively contributed to a knowledge base around shared terminology and facilitated uptake of this language in policy context, most notably the concept of Integrated Landscape Management (ILM). Integrated Landscape Management emphasises the process of stakeholder collaboration and recognises the wide array of forms and intensity of cooperation, depending on the governance structure, size and scope, number and types of stakeholders involved (Heiner et al. 2017). Through development of process steps for implementation of ILM and by making tools and policy guidelines available this effort helped create shared understanding and support for landscape approaches in international and national policy contexts (Heiner et al. 2017).

The necessity of building this shared understanding is evident today in the continued push for policy coherence, acknowledging that policy levels need to align and work together across scales for a landscape approach to be effective (Gutierrez et.al., 2025). Policy coherence is understood as the result of systematically promoting mutually reinforcing policy goals and actions that create synergies between sectors and governance levels. This process of policy coherence has to work across scale levels, both from an ecological perspective as well as where governance processes are concerned that affect the landscape. Coordination across scale levels is key to identify and tackle drivers of loss and environmental degradation at the source and to ensure institutional levers for change are embedded systemically, through national or regional institutions, policies and regulations and access to investment and financial incentives.

Figure 1
Ten principles of the landscape approach



Source: J., Van Vianen, Reed J., and Sunderland T.C.H. "From Global Complexity to Local Reality: Aligning Implementation Pathways for the Sustainable Development Goals and Landscape Approaches." Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), 2010. <https://doi.org/10.17528/cifor/005865>.

Text box 1: Case example for Integrated Landscape Approach - “Reversing the Flow” (RtF)

Reversing the Flow (RtF) supports communities in vulnerable situations to improve their water security and climate adaptiveness, making them more resilient. The programme enables locally led water management, landscape restoration and climate adaptation actions. Experience shows that traditional top-down approaches do not succeed in delivering sustainable results for these vulnerable communities. So, Reversing the Flow is community-driven, starting from locally available resources, aims and priorities.

Water, livelihoods, ecosystems, and climate issues are connected. RtF takes a landscape-level approach to address these challenges and find solutions. A landscape development plan connects communities in the area and facilitates priority setting with stakeholders for sustainable solutions across sectors. Local partners support communities in prioritising, organising and realising these actions themselves. United in grassroots organisations, community members work together to address water and climate issues.

The programme aims to achieve the following goals:

- Vulnerable communities can effectively use and replicate inclusive nature-based solutions to restore landscapes, improve water security, and create climate-resilient livelihoods.
- Decision-makers accommodate communities to influence decisions over policies and investments that impact their landscapes, water security and livelihoods.
- Formal development actors, including the Netherlands, will apply locally-led development principles to design programmes which ensure that local vulnerable groups benefit.

The programme provides funding, facilitates policy dialogues, and enables knowledge development & learning from grassroots up to the global level. Funding trickles down to grassroots organisations who self-implement community-led interventions. RtF works in Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Kenya and Sudan. Local hubs select vulnerable landscapes where communities face recurring challenges such as droughts, floods and cyclones. The programme runs from 2021 up to 2032. In the current active first phase, 10 local NGOs have received a subsidy of around 1 million euros for a period of 4-5 years. 70% of this budget ends up in the communities.

RtF applies learning-oriented monitoring at all levels to support adaptive programming and an external mid-term evaluation is planned for early 2027.

For more information and updates about Reversing the Flow: <https://english.rvo.nl/subsidies-financing/rtf>

2.2 Locally Led Adaptation

Definition

Locally led adaptation (LLA) refers to action taken to adapt to climate change, which is led by local actors, including citizens, local communities, local governments, civil society organisations (CSOs), and other stakeholders working at the local level. LLA puts a strong emphasis on shifting the balance of power in finance and decision-making away from finance providers and towards local actors who are on the frontlines of the climate change and nature loss crises, supporting them to channel finance according to their needs and priorities. Many local actors are supported by intermediary organisations which champion LLA internationally. Support is provided through capacity building, financing, communications, reporting, advocacy, and influencing.

Historical origin of the concept

The LLA principles were developed in consultation with over 50 stakeholder organisations under the Global Commission for Adaptation (GCA), which was established by the Netherlands in 2018 ([IIED 2021](#)). However, the ‘Locally Led Adaptation’ term has its foundation in a longer history of social movements involving a wide range of people and organisations, especially in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), which recognised that money was not getting to where it was most needed and were therefore calling for greater agency in adaptation planning and action. This work builds on the long history of community-based adaptation and community-driven development, as well as localisation approaches in the humanitarian sector, encapsulated in 2016’s [Grand Bargain](#), an agreement which committed humanitarian agencies to scale up the amount of funding directly reaching communities (see also the follow up: [Grand Bargain 2021](#)). This collective movement called for innovation to create a viable and tested alternative to top-down, donor-driven approaches. It was born out of decades of frustration with the status quo and a growing awareness that marginalising local experience and knowledge can lead to maladaptation and reduce the effectiveness and sustainability of adaptation actions.

The approach underpinning LLA articulates an alternative way of building resilience and is informed by examples of how adaptation finance can more successfully support local priorities. The emerging collective voice driving this agenda has deep roots across the Global North and South but has been championed most and driven by grassroots organisations, activists, and practitioners from developing countries that have long been dealing with the impacts of, and adaptation to, climate change.

Today, this social movement has coalesced around the [Principles for Locally Led Adaptation \(LLA\)](#), which were launched in January 2021 at the Global Climate Adaptation Summit (see Figure 2, below). The Principles for LLA are now endorsed by more than 130 organisations, including national governments in the South and North, bilateral donors, multilateral agencies, philanthropies, NGOs, CSOs, and research institutes. The ‘LLA Alliance’, led by IIED, supports the uptake of the principles and manages a global Community of Practice (CoP).

Purpose and intent: what does it respond to?

LLA responds to a growing call by recipient countries – especially in the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Development States (SIDS) – that finance is not reaching those who are hit hardest and need it most. There is a need to innovate in ‘business unusual’ approaches to finance adaptation differently. This collective voice – being supported by non-state actors – is calling to transform the finance system, shift the power dynamics, and put the rights, needs, and priorities of Indigenous Peoples and local communities at the centre of decision-making, providing them with flexible, long-term, core support to implement their own adaptation agendas. Within this shift of power to the local level, structural inequalities faced by women, youth, children, disabled people, displaced people, Indigenous Peoples and marginalised ethnic groups need to be addressed. Donors and policymakers in the climate, biodiversity and development spaces are increasingly recognising that local experience and knowledge is essential to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss, and marginalising these local actors can lead to poorly designed and poorly implemented projects, with no basis and no sustainability in the longer run, ultimately leading to maladaptation (IIED 2021 and IIED 2024).

Members of the LLA CoP share a desire to build trust across all actors in the finance delivery chain and innovate in how to work collaboratively to deliver effective action on climate, nature, and poverty at the scale and pace that is needed. Building trust that finance is reaching the countries and communities who are experiencing the worst impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss is critical to the continued legitimacy of the Paris Agreement and the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF). Text box 2 provides a case example of the Generating Ambition for Locally Led Adaptation programme, illustrating an ongoing initiative.

Figure 2

The Principles for Locally Led Adaptation (credit: IIED; www.iied.org/principles-for-locally-led-adaptation)



Full text and explanation for each of the eight LLA principles can be found in Appendix 4.

Text box 2

Case example for Locally Led Adaptation – ‘Generating Ambition for Locally Led Adaptation’ (GA-LLA)

One initiative currently underway within the LLA Community of Practice is the **Generating Ambition for Locally Led Adaptation (GA-LLA)** programme, funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This €15m partnership enables a consortium of nine partners, led by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), to implement a long-term strategy for LLA by building on existing institutional capabilities, fostering partnerships, and enhancing accountability to address climate, nature and inequality challenges.

The three key objectives of the programme are to:

1. Strengthen and mobilise local and other actors' capability to effectively deliver LLA at all scales,
2. Build trust and redistribute power through radical partnership models, and
3. Implement upward and downward accountability processes to equitably share risk and responsibility.

The project began in August 2023 and will run until July 2028. In the spirit of the locally led adaptation principles to decentralise responsibility and resources across the consortium of partners, the work included an initial 12 months to design the programme.

GA-LLA is only one example of many LLA initiatives which have emerged from within the LLA Community of Practice and the wider movement on LLA. Other initiatives are also underway: several donors are recognising the need to fund LLA approaches and are opening up funding streams focusing on LLA, and many other organisations across sectors and geographies are researching, implementing, and advocating for LLA approaches. The CoP exists as a space to share lessons, stories, and challenges from LLA practitioners across the world.

For more information and updates about Generating Ambition for Locally Led Adaptation (GA-LLA):

<https://www.iied.org/generating-ambition-for-locally-led-adaptation>

2.3 Learning from comparison

Now that both ILA and LLA have been introduced in the sections above, we briefly remark on the rationale behind comparing approaches and their respective principles. The purpose of this exchange on principles is not about perfecting ‘approaches to development’ on paper, because it is practices that matter for implementation and impact. However, principles matter because they influence how interventions are designed, justified and evaluated. Reflecting on both principles and practices combined offers a meaningful foundation for discussion and exchange, because it seeks to investigate to what extent abstract ideals and values translate into the desired impact in reality. This reflection can also reveal what helps or hinders this implementation in practice that could be addressed or supported.

Secondly, comparing approaches is analytically useful because it allows for reflection on how each approach frames key questions such as: what is considered effective action, whose knowledge, interests and needs are prioritised, and how success is defined. All of these questions provide entry points for learning and allow for a more thorough exploration of the rationale behind an approach, backed by principles, to understand what was intended and how it worked out. This reflection is especially relevant when learning from contextual experiences contributes to both improving practices as well as inspire adjustment or refinement of principles. Specifically in practitioner networks and multistakeholder partnerships operating in complex social change contexts such learning practices (i.e. triple loop learning⁷) are embraced as part of capacity building and partnership processes. Reassessing practices and methods, strategies and approaches, and values and principles iteratively and in relation to each other deepens reflection and learning, because it helps challenge assumptions and explores root causes by questioning mental models and belief systems.

From a policy perspective, this deep dive into principles is an invitation to pay close attention to the way in which approaches and their respective principles influence intervention design and impact. How do approaches translate to practices in their own distinct ways? And how do principles matter in the process? Integrated Landscape Approach or Locally Led Adaptation principles provide guideposts that help bridge the gap between formal commitments to locally led development and implementation realities. A solid understanding of how approaches differ and what they share can be a helpful resource to advance how policy makers make inquiries and communicate among themselves and with practitioners about the meaning of localisation and locally led. It also may shift their perspective on what counts as impact. Commitments to ‘localisation of development’ in ODA requires active engagement and reflection from donors on how policy goals translate to local contexts and how approaches and principles mediate results.

⁷ Triple loop learning is a learning hierarchy which distinguishes between single loop learning at the level of practices (*are we doing things right?*), double loop learning at the level of strategies and approaches (*are we doing the right things?*), and triple loop learning reflecting on values and principles which guide strategies and practices (*how do we decide what is right?*). Effective learning alternates between the three levels. (MSP Guide, 2019; p.115-116)

3 Comparison of approaches

In this chapter we present the findings of our analysis. We start with general reflections on what both approaches have in common, followed by the more specific identification of similarities and differences based on key components of both approaches (3.1). This comparison is structured around six analytical dimensions and presented in an overview table (Table 1). Together, these dimensions provide a consistent framework for examining how each approach conceptualises and operationalises locally led, place-based action, and for identifying areas of convergence, divergence, and complementarity. Based on this comparison, we then elaborate more in depth on the respective strengths each approach brings to the other and where gaps remain (3.2). Finally, we suggest possible synergies to consider in support of advancing locally led approaches (3.3).

3.1 Exploring similarities and differences

General reflections on shared common ground

In this section we explore similarities and differences between the two sets of principles of ILA and LLA approaches. To start with, we share three general reflections which provide contextual understanding of the common ground ILA and LLA share, in what they aim to deliver and how they are implemented. Firstly, both approaches address wicked problems in the context of socio-economic development in relation to environment (nature, climate) and resource management challenges. Wicked problems are problems which are hard to define, highly interconnected with other problems, and which do not often have a straightforward solution (Rittel & Webber 1973).

Secondly, both approaches are often applied in the context of development assistance and international cooperation with a steering role by donors and associated implementation actors in the Global North, including (I)NGOs and their locally based partner organisations. While ILA and LLA share the intention to support local action and local ownership, there is an undeniable involvement from outside actors who hold power and influence by setting policy goals and priorities as well as deciding on (availability of) funding. In the case of the landscape approach, for example, the private sector is now more frequently taking the lead in setting up landscape initiatives or deploying elements of a landscape approach in order to deal with challenges in sourcing geographies and securing commodity supply. Specifically ISEAL has brought attention to this development by looking into the need for credible assurance through systematic monitoring of efforts and impacts in landscapes and jurisdictions to ensure sustainability claims by corporate actors are justified and supported with evidence (ISEAL 2019).

Lastly, both approaches place strong emphasis on the collaborative process itself, focusing on ‘how to do something better’ rather than focusing on outcomes alone. Within this collaborative process, explicit attention is paid to inclusion, representation, and participation as qualities to ensure an effective and legitimate process. Part of this focus on the process also entails that perceptions of success and failure of the process and interventions are determined by the stakeholders themselves and susceptible to changing contexts. There is a commitment towards taking a long-term perspective (over several years or even decades) and to place people at the centre, acknowledging that there is no quick fix for wicked problems. The investment is directed towards the process and the capacities of actors to collaborate over time.

Identification of similarities and differences between ILA and LLA

Recognizing this shared common ground, we now bring forward identified similarities and differences based on key components of both approaches. Six analytical dimensions emerged inductively from the workshop discussions and were subsequently refined through engagement with relevant literature to provide the structure for comparison of approaches as presented in the table below. These dimensions reflect recurring points of emphasis in both bodies of work, including problem framing, methods of implementation, actor constellations, spatial interpretations of “local”, approaches to power and justice, and the role of finance. Each dimension is formulated as a question to make visible how key components of the respective approaches contrast. Following the table, we briefly elaborate on each dimension and the related question with reflections from the practitioner’s workshop and relevant literature.

Table 1
Overview of key components of the Integrated Landscape Approach and Locally Led Adaptation

Dimension <i>Question</i>	Integrated Landscape Approach	Locally Led Adaptation
Problem framing <i>1. What are each set of principles addressing?</i>	‘Common concerns’ and ‘wicked’ problems at the intersection of environment and development at landscape level.	Climate adaptation action; flows of funding to the local level to invest in adaptation led by local actors.
Methods <i>2. What methods do they advocate for?</i>	Multistakeholder process; negotiating competing claims and balancing development needs and environment challenges.	Shifting power and resources to local actors on the frontlines of the climate crisis, especially in the LDCs and SIDS.
Actor constellation <i>3. Who are agents of change?</i>	Multi-stakeholder platforms or processes (MSP) bring together diversity of stakeholders to engage in dialogue, coordinate, and collaborate around a shared vision.	LLA advocates for shifting power and decision-making to the lowest appropriate level and so aims to shift power to local actors and centre local knowledge, needs, and priorities. Intermediaries and funders are critical components in this process.
Interpretation of local <i>4. How is ‘local’ defined?</i>	‘Local’ is interpreted as a place-based, landscape scale, related to geography or administrative jurisdictions.	‘Local’ moves beyond a place-based interpretation, expanding to include social and political systems and power structures within communities.
Approaches to power and justice <i>5. How are power dynamics and justice dimensions addressed?</i>	Rights and responsibilities are mentioned in relation to negotiating competing claims and resource management. No explicit language on equity or justice and no explicit focus on shifting power to local communities. There is no mention of or focus on Indigenous Peoples (IP) ⁸ or their respective	LLA has explicit focus on equity and justice, specifically regarding the shift of power to local actors and on addressing structural inequalities faced by women, youth, children, people with disabilities, people who are displaced, Indigenous Peoples, and marginalised ethnic groups. While the LLA principles do not use specific language around

⁸ While the Landscape Approach principles under review for this comparison do not include explicit reference to Indigenous Peoples, there are other organisations which have paved the way in making this connection, both in policy context (for example in the goals formulated in the CBD Global Biodiversity Framework) as well as by the Satoyama Initiative (see https://satoyamainitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Landscape-Approaches-Manual_20240118.pdf) and Proforest and Landesa

	rights and no mention of the Rights of Nature.	rights and responsibilities, nor on Rights of Nature, they are designed to address rights issues related to allocation and use of climate finance, particularly as that relates to structural inequality.
Role of finance 6. What is the role of finance in method and approach?	Funding or finance is not included in the core principles. Finance for the MSP is a key challenge (enabling finance); coordination of financial flows within MSP is a lever for coordination and collaboration between actors, institutions and sectors; investment agendas are used to attract finance.	LLA has a large focus on funding and reforming finance flows, specifically to direct funding to the local level. LLA principle 3 advocates for patient and predictable financing to address long-term adaptation challenges. Funding is considered patient when it has a long-term orientation and allows for flexibility in terms and conditions.

The first question, *What are each set of principles addressing?*, touches on the core mission of each approach. Where the landscape approach centres around ‘common concerns’ as a starting point for collaboration, which are shared (equally) among stakeholders and jointly defined, LLA focuses on adaptation responses to climate change impacts. This means that LLA could fit within a landscape approach, since climate change is an example of a common concern affecting stakeholders. However, in the dialogue the question was raised ‘who defines that common concern in a landscape’ and whether this sufficiently accounts for existing inequalities and power imbalances between stakeholders (highlighted in LLA principle 2), acknowledging the risk that interests of powerful stakeholders will overlook such structural inequalities.

The second question, *What methods do they advocate for?*, highlights that LLA is more about a power shift by means of devolving decision-making to the lowest appropriate level and empowering local actors to take action, whereas the landscape approach features the multistakeholder partnership or process (MSP) as the stage for negotiated decision-making, prioritisation of common concerns, and weighing interests and trade-offs. This could, and sometimes does, lead to a certain level of decentralisation or reorganisation of governance arrangements (Van Oosten 2021), but an MSP can also navigate (imperfect) institutional structures as they are.

This connects to question three, *Who are agents of change?*, where LLA clearly aims to empower local actors at the lowest appropriate level, the landscape approach does not explicitly mention local actors or communities as a key actor group.⁹ Instead, it refers more broadly to landscape

with their work on a guidance report on Respecting Rights of Indigenous People and Local Communities in Landscape Initiatives (see [A guide for practitioners on Minimum Safeguards and Evolving Best Practices](#) (2023)).

⁹ The term ‘community’ is scrutinised and also critiqued for the assumption that by defining a group as a homogeneous construct runs the risk of overlooking diversity and heterogeneity within and between people in that group, especially in for example more transitory geographical settings such as peri-urban, migrant or scattered settlements. Here we choose to use the term despite this valid critique, because the conceptual academic debate acknowledges two core elements which provide the justification for what constitutes a community, namely the combination of social relationships that

stakeholders who participate on (assumed) equal footing in an MSP. LLA practitioners stress that bringing someone to the table does not give them equal power and agency to participate in decision-making, raising concerns around inclusivity and representation of communities in the MSP process. There is also a clear role for funders and intermediaries here in supporting capacities for local action by sharing knowledge, raising awareness and drawing relevant connections to advocate for change in global systems. While this scope extends beyond the direct sphere of influence of local actors it does directly affect their situation. Such knowledge and awareness can strengthen local actors own strategies and positioning to address structural inequalities and challenge issues of extractivism and pollution in policy spaces from local to global level (see also next paragraph on agency).

The fourth question, *How is local defined?*, elicits diverse perspectives and interpretations around the definition of 'local'. In the context of a landscape, 'local' is most often interpreted as place-based; in other words, an area defined by geography and/or administrative boundaries. On the other hand, in LLA 'local' goes beyond this place-based understanding and represents a site of agency, and is therefore a more political concept related to power, agency, decision-making, and control. Although there is still a place-based understanding of 'local' in LLA as a site of increased vulnerability to the impacts of climate change, this also carries political meaning as a site of power and agency. In addition, one point was made in the dialogue that the meaning of 'territory', as understood in Indigenous culture, touches on a deeper set of values related to sense of place through identity, culture, history, community, and spirituality, which is not always recognised or taken on board in the definition and delineation of the landscape.

The fifth question, *How are power dynamics and justice dimensions addressed?*, highlights that the landscape approach has no explicit language on equity or justice and no explicit focus on shifting power to local actors. LLA clearly emphasises this shift of power to *'the lowest appropriate level'* (principle 1) and aims to *'address structural inequalities faced by women, youth, children, people with disabilities, people who are displaced, Indigenous People, and marginalised ethnic groups'* (principle 2). Reflections from participants during the dialogue raise concerns that the landscape approach does not sufficiently integrate considerations of justice and lacks reflections on and adequate responses to deal with power asymmetries, vested interests, and inequalities in access to, management over, and distribution of benefits from natural resources. At the same time, participants considered ILA principle 7, on the clarification of rights and responsibilities, a powerful entry point to redress environmental degradation, but it was considered not to suffice to address (historical/cultural) justice and equity dimensions. The LLA principles do not mention wording around rights and responsibilities, meaning both sets of principles lack more explicit wording around rights of Indigenous Peoples and Rights of Nature, which would otherwise enable the recognition of different worldviews and the plural valuation of nature as part of a justice and equity agenda.

The sixth and final question focused on finance, by asking *what is the role of finance in method and approach?* LLA explicitly focuses on reforming finance flows as a core strategy to enable and support local action, while finance is not included in the core principles of the landscape approach. However, since the publication of the landscape principles, additional guidance for implementation

form the connections between people and their connection to a shared place. People can be related to each other in the same place, and still hold very different ideas, memories, beliefs and knowledge (Titz 2018).

has been developed, among which detailed guidance for Integrated Landscape Management (ILM). The importance of a landscape finance strategy is an integral part of ILM and covers available strategies through the concept of integrated landscape finance (ILM Practical Guide 2022). Finance is a shared challenge in both approaches and reliable and patient funding is considered a prerequisite to support collaborative action. Funding is considered patient when it does not require short term results based on rigid performance targets or direct return on investment, has a long term orientation and allows for flexibility in terms and conditions. The difference in approach to finance is LLA's focus on reforming financial flows to empower local actors to control and decide on their own priorities, thereby explicitly addressing power dynamics in allocation and decision-making (IIED 2022). In the context of integrated landscape approaches, finance challenges relate both to the funding of the process of long-term stakeholder collaboration (often referred to as *enabling finance*), as well as exploring and developing new business models and investment schemes in the physical landscape that can deliver on social, economic, and environmental returns (ILM Practical Guide 2022).

Overall, LLA brings a stronger and more explicit focus on power relations, equity, and local agency, while ILA contributes a stronger ecological and landscape-scale systems perspective. LLA touches more explicitly on structural conditions to enable local action by addressing governance, finance, and justice dimensions, which bring questions of power and equity, interests, and inequalities to the forefront with the ambition to contribute to significant change herein. The landscape approach brings out more prominently the systemic understanding of environmental challenges and ecological processes in the landscape and how this interacts with development ambitions, while LLA does not have this broad environmental scope and focuses only on climate impacts and risks.

3.2 Sharing strengths and addressing gaps

In this section, we assess which strengths each approach can bring to the other, starting with what Locally Led Adaptation (LLA) can bring to the Integrated Landscape Approach (ILA) and then the other way around. We will then reflect on shared gaps in both approaches, particularly concerning their principles and methods.

What can LLA bring to ILA?

LLA principles can bring the social justice dimension to the landscape approach

During the discussion, practitioners reflected that the landscape approach does not sufficiently integrate considerations of justice and lacks reflection on and adequate response to deal with power asymmetries, vested interests, and inequalities in access to, management over, and benefits from natural resources. Moreover, it is not clear how decision-making is devolved in the landscape approach. While there is attention for coordination between stakeholders through governance processes and active exploration of how to effectively work across different scales, there is no specific attention for how this translates to delegated decision-making and necessary shifts in power, mandate, and means across and between governance scales. Moreover, strategies to devolve decision-making work out differently for an ecological agenda compared to a social justice agenda. While issues related to ecological systems can be understood through ecosystem processes and with a resource management lens, a social justice agenda takes a different starting point, by acknowledging different worldviews and value frameworks which affect how the ecosystem is understood. This is foundational for defining ecological problems, solutions and subsequently dealing with issues of justice and fairness among actors relating to their (conflicting) needs, interests, and questions around access and benefit sharing.

Overall, participants noted that there is a lack of attention and tools for addressing power asymmetries and questions of justice in the landscape approach. The landscape approach tends to take a managerial and techno-ecological focus on resource management without recognising and accounting for (historical) distributive justice and equitable benefit-sharing in relation to resource access and control. LLA considers structural injustices more centrally, but it is not always clear at what level of analysis and intervention these structural inequalities are dealt with. Moreover, justice dimensions lack a clear grounding in ecology and geography in the physical environment. A point of connection between the two approaches is the principle on rights and responsibilities and existing knowledge and strategies how politics around land and resources are central in many IP&LC's quest for recognition as well as epistemic, procedural, and distributive justice; this is a body of knowledge which should be brought more to the centre of both ILA and LLA. Practical recommendations in existing guidance on respecting rights of IP&LC in landscape initiatives centre around allocating time and resources for community participation and capacity building, conducting land mapping with a focus on participatory mapping processes and connecting to community led-initiatives (Proforest and Landesa 2023).

In conclusion, LLA brings attention to the social justice agenda by addressing both ecological challenges and questions around social justice in parallel, which opens up opportunities to reflect more explicitly on devolved decision-making at appropriate scale levels. LLA's combined focus on devolving decision making and addressing inequalities highlights the importance of scrutinising how power is baked into (invisible) value frameworks and (unquestioned) institutional structures.

LLA brings local communities forward as key stakeholders for legitimate local action in the landscape approach

During the discussion, it became clear that, in terms of stakeholder engagement and participation, the landscape approach does not explicitly mention or prioritise the role of communities, nor does it, by design, specifically enable communities to step up or take the driving seat in local change processes. By considering local communities or community representatives as any other stakeholder, there is a risk of overlooking inequality in power and agency in these participatory processes. There can be practical barriers to effective participation for community representatives; for example, the ability to participate depends on location, time, means, and mandate to represent the wider community. More fundamental concerns can also be at play regarding safety and security and questions around the legitimacy of the process, for example in cases where IP&LC communities are protecting their territories from corporate interests without sufficient recognition and protection of their rights. This was also voiced as a direct concern in the discussion, that *'bringing someone to the table (for example a community member as a representative) does not give them decision making power and agency'*. Another observation was made regarding agency and capacity. While the landscape approach seems to build on the assumption that external intervention is necessary to capacitate stakeholders to act, LLA as an approach is centred around the recognition and enabling of local actors.

In conclusion, LLA highlights the role of local communities as key stakeholders for legitimate local action and acknowledges their existing knowledge and capabilities in mobilising, planning, and implementation of action plans that serve their direct needs and work towards a sustainable future.

LLA brings an awareness to the enabling conditions for stakeholder processes to mature and become effective, which can strengthen a landscape approach

There are three aspects that LLA embraces as preconditions for long-term success: time, finance, and investment in local capabilities. It was noted in the discussion that LLA practitioners are keenly aware of the temporal dimension of participatory, bottom-up processes. Patience is required to allow relations and ownership of the process to grow over time. Landscape principles lack this sensitivity around the time it takes to build trust and relationship, with a more pragmatic, operational approach towards stakeholder participation. Nonetheless ILA is still frequently criticised - by donors, implementing partners and stakeholders - for the amount of time it takes to mobilise an MSP. This can either be explained by donor timelines where short term project interventions need to deliver quick, tangible results, or, alternatively, be rooted in a different understanding of and ideas around (formal) participation, rules of the game, and possibly, as suggested in the discussion, mirror cultural beliefs from the donor countries' culture, ideology, and governance assumptions around efficiency and effectiveness.

The second aspect concerns finance. LLA has an explicit principle about finance, while finance is not mentioned in the landscape approach principles. Both approaches rely on finance in two ways, for process funding (enabling finance) to allow for long-term engagement between stakeholders and implementation budget or investment capital to finance interventions, either material (infrastructure) or non-material (education). LLA specifically targets the mobilisation of climate finance for the local level, which is a powerful strategy.¹⁰ Landscape approaches can model this for a broad range of environmental and development agendas that intersect in landscapes, for

¹⁰ [The good climate finance guide for investing in locally led adaptation | IIED Publications Library](#)

example by targeting a broad range of donors, through fundraising as well as advocacy. There are already collectives which have a more targeted strategy in their engagement with multilateral and bilateral donors, such as Global Landscape Forum and 1000 landscapes for 1 billion people, which focus on mobilising finance for landscape initiatives.

Finally, the third aspect relates to investing in local capabilities. LLA takes local capabilities as a starting point and all efforts are invested in strengthening and embedding these capabilities in local institutions. Landscape approaches, when implemented as temporary interventions, run the risk of not sufficiently embedding the processes, interventions, and monitoring and learning in locally-owned governance arrangements and existing institutions.

In conclusion, time, finance, and investment in local capabilities are conditions for sustained engagement of stakeholders. This process needs to be connected and directed towards ongoing investment in locally-owned governance arrangements and institutions for long-term impact.

What can ILA bring to LLA?

ILA brings an ecological, place-based perspective to interdependencies, synergies, and trade-offs between development, environment, and climate (adaptation) agendas

The landscape approach is a spatially-integrated approach at the intersection between environment (nature, ecology) and development (human needs, economy and society) systems. Especially in our response to climate change, where nature and ecosystems hold a large part of both mitigation and adaptation solutions, LLA can benefit from the entry point that the landscape approach has to offer in understanding ecosystem services and ecological systems at the landscape scale. While many actors using LLA approaches do integrate broader environmental considerations, the LLA principles only address the need to understand climate change and its associated impacts and risks, without addressing the broader environment in which this plays out. In addition, ecosystems operate across scale levels, from local to global with unpredictable effects and feedback loops, which calls for more attention to the vulnerabilities and dependencies from a spatial and temporal understanding of the natural environment when planning for local adaptation measures. The landscape approach acknowledges this interconnection between nature, climate, and people and the complexity of a systems approach, while it also offers a way to take multiple systems, multiple actors, and multiple interests into account in order to understand interdependencies, synergies, and trade-offs.

In conclusion, the landscape approach offers foundational knowledge and understanding of the ecological systems that play out at the landscape scale, which are essential to design and implement effective and efficient local adaptation measures. Ideally, then, these provide inspiration for multifunctional opportunities and nature-based solutions in LLA.

ILA can help to address drivers of environmental harm and climate change at the appropriate policy level, extending (policy) engagement and advocacy beyond landscape scale

Based on this ecological perspective and a systems understanding of the natural environment, a second strength of the landscape approach is that it can help anchor problems in their broader environmental context. This brings a different focus to LLA and can help ensure that adaptation measures respond to a range of drivers of vulnerability. For example, spatial planning and nature-based solutions can serve multiple development and environmental goals beyond just a climate response, for example through interventions targeting biodiversity restoration and ecologically sustainable food systems. This focus on identifying root causes of environmental harm also allows for an expanded notion of locality and landscape scale beyond the actual place and geography of the landscape. It invites us to consider how drivers external to the landscape are steered by

activities and policies that come from different government levels and governance scales. These need to be dealt with to appropriately connect drivers of climate change, biodiversity loss, and land degradation. Most often these drivers are steered from outside the landscape through institutional, financial, and corporate-driven interests.

On the other hand, sustainability efforts at these respective governance scales can work in similar ways to reinforce solutions in the landscape by consistently embedding them in policies, laws, and practices across scale levels. This explicitly relates to identifying the sources and drivers of loss and degradation and calls for greater accountability and fair burden sharing at the appropriate spatial scale and respective policy levels to enable adaptation and support marginalised communities. Finally, this ecological perspective is a critical entry point to tackle issues around resource allocation, management, and benefit sharing, because it helps to understand system properties and feedback loops that can guide the appropriate resource use and management. An example is how water allocation and distribution is informed by the larger context of a hydrological system such as a watershed or river basin, to enable fair and sustainable access to water across users and while also ensuring system level resilience by anticipating climate change impacts.

In conclusion, the landscape approach draws attention to the source and associated drivers of environmental degradation because it seeks to understand ecological processes at the landscape scale, which are connected to ecosystems and policies at other scale levels.

The landscape approach seeks to clarify rights and responsibilities in the use and management of land and resources, which is a powerful way to redress environmental degradation

The principle on clarifying rights and responsibilities was already an important touchpoint between the two approaches, both from an ecological management perspective, when dealing with root causes of environmental degradation as well as from a justice perspective, when considering inequalities in decision making and access and benefit sharing. The acknowledgement of rights and responsibilities in relation to resource management and use is fundamental to address land use, land use practices, and allocation and distribution issues which are not made explicit in LLA. LLA does emphasise the need to address structural inequalities (principle 2) but not specifically in relation to land and resources in the physical environment. This aspect could be picked up as an integral part of the core mission on ‘devolved decision-making’ (principle 1) and ‘investing in local capabilities’ (principle 4).

Another viewpoint related to rights and responsibilities is the suggestion by practitioners that the landscape approach can help empower communities to address and deal with the causes of their (climate-related) environmental challenges which originate outside of their landscape. Advocating for proportionate response levels in other sectors and industries can be strategically connected to and aligned with local adaptation efforts. This is based on the premise that climate action should accelerate elsewhere, specifically pointing to the historical burden of GHG emissions in industrialised countries. Explicitly connecting local challenges to global responsibilities, by showcasing how climate change plays out across scale levels, could be a strong mix of advocacy for action as well as a call for support for local adaptation. It is potentially also a much needed critical perspective on proposed solutions and interventions such as carbon credits and biodiversity offsets, deployed by corporate and financial actors. Such instruments focus on offsetting rather than reduction, and risk both greenwashing and leakage without taking appropriate mitigation measures.

In conclusion, the landscape approach brings a systems understanding to ecological systems and environmental challenges, which is useful for LLA, both within and outside the landscape. This can

inform local governance response and advocacy strategies to mobilise support from other scale levels.

Shared gaps: what both approaches are lacking

Both approaches could strengthen their recognition of IP&LC rights and explicitly recognise plural values of nature, both of which could reinforce the understanding of plural knowledge and worldviews in relation to nature

If there is a desire to contribute to a social justice agenda and the aim is to better protect the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IP&LCs), then this needs to be made more explicit in both approaches and in their respective principles. Protecting the rights of IP&LCs and protecting nature partly overlaps, because expropriation of land and resources has historically gone hand in hand with marginalising IP&LCs, backed by a dominant narrative which reduces nature into a tradeable commodity for economic gain and wealth appropriation. This hegemonic view, framing human-nature relations as if humans are separate from and superior over nature, has justified exploitation of nature and people, enhancing (historical) inequalities and injustices over time, and is now named and understood as an underlying cause for biodiversity loss and nature's decline (IPBES, 2024). Shifting this paradigm towards a plural value perspective of nature makes the diversity in worldviews and values that IP&LCs hold in their connection to place, to culture, and traditional local knowledge systems more visible and increases the legitimacy of relational values. Making these values explicit reveals a deeper level to unequal power dynamics, which are embedded in existing norms, beliefs and institutional structures, specifically in how nature is viewed, conceptualised and valued. Plural values of nature are therefore seen as a crucial lever to challenge the framing of human-nature relations in which humans are separate from and superior over nature (Carmenta et. al. 2023). This highlights again the distinct meaning of 'local' as a spatial scale versus the meaning of territory for Indigenous People, where the wellbeing of the environment is experienced as an extension of people and their community, their past and their future, and holds a deeper truth and value around practices of care and protection than legal instruments can formalise.

Connecting to networks and initiatives which strive to advance and protect IP&LC knowledge and rights is a direct opportunity for action. For example, Centres of Distinction on Indigenous and Local Knowledge ([COD-ILK](#)) hosts a network of leaders and experts which promote the integrity and value of the knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities (IP&LCs) in science and policy (FPP 2020). Other existing instruments which protect IP&LCs are, for example, the right to self-determination and free prior and informed consent ([FPIC](#)). FPIC is recognised in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People ([UNDRIP](#)). While FPIC is an internationally recognised concept and considered a best practice, it depends per country whether it is legally enforced. Similarly, the language and instruments around human rights and IP&LC rights are also not sufficiently enacted and applied in the context of LLA and in landscape approaches. There is a specific guidance report on this exact topic, written by Proforest and Landesa (2023), titled *Respecting Rights of Indigenous People and Local Communities in Landscape Initiatives: A guide for practitioners on Minimum Safeguards and Evolving Best Practices* ([find the report here](#)).

Neither set of principles was designed with biodiversity action at the forefront, despite the fact that protecting nature (including water, food, and livelihoods) is vital to climate adaptation and other landscape scale problems and solutions

While the landscape approach looks at the intersection of development and environmental challenges, and LLA focuses on climate change impact and response options, neither have much attention for biodiversity loss and the urgency around protecting, conserving, and restoring nature. However, the ecosystem approach, within the context of biodiversity policy, has become more central over time, acknowledging this place-based, mesoscale as a relevant intervention level to take action to protect and restore biodiversity. Drawing connections between biodiversity, climate, and human development reveals how our relation to nature and how we value nature for its intrinsic, instrumental, and relational contribution to human wellbeing goes to the core of how we address our socio-economic and environmental challenges and solutions. What the dialogue raised, above all, is that there are multiple pathways for action and multiple approaches to organise change, but a fundamental shift is necessary in how we understand our dependency on a stable and healthy natural environment. This realisation comes with the responsibility to continuously learn and adapt, to the best of our knowledge, in how we meet our needs while restoring balance with the natural world. Essentially, we need to shift practices of extraction and degradation into positive feedback loops of regeneration.

There have been several efforts to think through how LLA can be applied more widely to biodiversity action, including the formulation of the Principles for Inclusive Nature Action ([INA](#)) (see text box 3), which are based on the LLA principles and the Shandia principles.¹¹ This effort is led by the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), and the INA principles were launched at CBD COP16 in Cali in October 2024. Going forward, such collaborative efforts towards shared understanding and strategic positioning, guided by principles, can contribute to more firmly embedding biodiversity in LLA and ILA as well as garner support for implementation.

¹¹ [Principles for inclusive nature action | International Institute for Environment and Development](#)

Text box 3: Principles for Inclusive Nature Action - at a glance

The principles for Inclusive Nature Action are intended to provide a guiding framework to help governments, donors, non-governmental organisations and other stakeholders support and scale up transformative action to conserve, restore and sustainably use and manage biodiversity in ways that are locally-led, gender-responsive and inclusive of a wide diversity of rights holders (IIED 2025).

INA Principles:

1. Recognise and respect rights
2. Devolve decision making and strengthen local leadership
3. Recognise and address structural and intersectional inequalities
4. Encourage flexible, adaptive biodiversity programming
5. Provide direct, patient, flexible, predictable and accessible funding
6. Recognise the mutual value of scientific, and local and traditional knowledge
7. Promote collaborative and coherent action and investment
8. Safeguard local actors, beyond 'do no harm'

Source: <https://www.iied.org/principles-for-inclusive-nature-action>

3.3 Synergies to support local action

Building on the comparison of principles and how each approach can strengthen the other, opportunities emerged for a more strategic joint effort in garnering support for local action, which both ILA and LLA strive for in their approach. The relevance of locally led approaches extends well beyond the context of development cooperation and support for local action is a relevant implementation strategy for multiple, interlinked global policy agendas of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as environmental policy agendas for climate (UNFCCC), biodiversity (UNCBD) and land degradation (UNCCD). Therefore exploring synergies is relevant from both a policy perspective as well as from implementation perspective by practitioner organisations. While these opportunities for synergies were not explicitly discussed by the practitioner groups during the dialogue themselves, we list them here to bring attention to this shared agenda and potential for future collaboration between LLA and ILA communities of practice and other relevant initiatives with shared goals and objectives.

Based on the insights from the dialogue analysis, there are three areas which offer concrete opportunity for synergies between the two approaches and respective practitioner groups which can be of benefit to their shared agenda in advancing locally led approaches. We present these synergies as recommendations as to how the ILA and LLA communities of practice can work together in support of this shared agenda.

Synergy 1: actualisation and improvement of both approaches by building on the identified strengths and supporting evidence

The first opportunity is to apply the insights of this dialogue and expand the existing approaches with an explicit commitment towards embracing and supporting IP&LC rights and plural valuation of nature as part of a shared commitment towards incorporating a social justice agenda. This would entail the actualisation of both LLA and ILA principles by means of connecting to the supporting evidence base presented by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and

Ecosystem Services (IPBES) on plural values assessment in relation to recognition of worldviews and plurality of knowledge (IPBES, 2022). The principles could be further strengthened by including Indigenous Peoples' land recognition and recognition of nature's values, rights and Nature's Contribution to People (NCP). This would also lead towards embracing a pluralistic evaluation framework, following the Multiple Evidence-Based approach (MEB) which combines scientific knowledge as well as indigenous knowledge and community insights as proposed by the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) (Tengö 2014; PBL 2024).

Synergy 2: Exchange between practitioner groups to learn from practice and continuously learn and improve

Sharing concepts and principles can be realised by putting the experience in practice at the centre of learning and exchange between practitioner groups. Learning and exchange with like-minded practitioners outside of the project or programme context can shine new light and fresh perspectives on complex local realities, especially considering questions around sustainability and justice. With this shared foundation of understanding the similarities and differences of ILA and LLA, a next step could be the continuation of exchange for the purpose of learning and continuous reflection and improvement. This type of exchange can also prove helpful to explore and understand where the approaches face tensions or trade-offs. For example, does the landscape approach landscape-scale focus sometimes conflict with highly localised LLA priorities? And how to deal with this in practice?

Synergy 3: Engaging donors and rallying public support through joint outreach and finance strategies

Sharing experiences around common challenges can lead to new strategies and joint efforts, for example around finance and funding structures. Different ideas were raised in the dialogue on how to allocate finance in a way that existing funds become less vulnerable to political change, how to engage multilateral funds as patient funding, or how to advocate for and educate donors. Separating finance flows is a donor requirement and not a local reality, which requires innovative strategies to deal with these funding flows in donor contexts. This is a topic around which practitioners could share experiences on how they navigate this. The principles of both LLA and ILA have a donor perspective and need to build the capacity of the donors how local action can best be supported. For example, how can the landscape approach and LLA programme voice a shared message to climate and biodiversity funds? The LLA CoP includes a number of bilateral and multilateral donors, who engage with practitioners in the various forums the CoP convenes, helping to increase their capacity to develop LLA-aligned programmes.

4 Conclusions and recommendations

Based on the insights derived from the comparison of ILA and LLA approaches and principles, this report ends with concluding remarks and recommendations. The concluding remarks touch on overarching priorities which have practical yet profound implications for the implementation, partnerships and policy context of locally led approaches. The aim here is to connect back to the ODA policy context and reiterate the need to shift away from donor-driven agendas towards locally-defined priorities and governance processes. The second part of this chapter brings forward recommendations on how to contribute to this shift and how to create structural support for locally led approaches, in governance as well as in resource mobilisation.

4.1 Concluding remarks

Questions regarding legitimacy, power dynamics, and perspectives on justice are central to development interventions and outcomes

Whether visible or invisible, power dynamics are always at play in any local context. These power dynamics extend beyond the locality, because outside actors also affect local power dynamics. Therefore any development intervention or approach has to be intentional and explicit about how power dynamics are explored, navigated, and addressed, especially when considering a broad perspective on justice dimensions, including for example procedural justice, recognitional justice, and representational justice.¹² When analysing power dynamics among stakeholders, a foundational starting point is to recognise communities as rightsholders. In a position of rightsholders it is acknowledged that communities are entitled to a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. When power dynamics and justice dimensions are made explicit in discussion among partners, this can help raise awareness on how different actors involved are influenced by each other's objectives and value frames. Such awareness, and the insights gained as a result, are necessary for legitimate and conscious effort towards justice in the context of development interventions. For locally led initiatives focusing on adaptation, biodiversity, and sustainable land use and restoration, and more particularly within the landscape approach, this means paying explicit attention to who holds power and, more importantly, who does not. This helps those in positions of power outside of the local context (policymakers in general, also donors and funders from the Global North), to become more aware of how inequalities and injustices are perpetuated if not addressed (Oates & Verveld 2024).

Recognition and inclusion of diversity of knowledge is foundational in development processes

To deliver on development and environmental goals, knowledge has to come from, be held, and developed and adapted by local actors. Feminist and decolonial thinkers have long highlighted how knowledge hierarchies silence women, Indigenous Peoples, and other minority groups (Spivak, 1988; Escobar 2017). Locally led approaches must explicitly counteract these exclusions. Local knowledge needs to be amplified in order to build on the existing, contextualised knowledge base and capacities of local actors. Donors and international development and research actors experience difficulties in understanding and valuing local knowledge and, given current power

¹² Rahman (2023) presents an analytical framework which combines lenses of power and lenses of justice which provides clear insight into their intersection in the practical setting of development interventions.

disparities in decision-making, this makes them (unknowingly) ‘gatekeepers’ on what knowledge is deemed relevant.

Locally led approaches address this shortfall by seeking to build on, strengthen, and contribute to local knowledge and capacities held by local actors. The local context provides a rich space for learning and knowledge generation and knowledge exchange should therefore be balanced and tailored, with humility and curiosity. This implies the balancing act of not imposing or dumping outsiders knowledge without any request, but rather carefully assessing and making available potentially relevant (new) information. In this way development interventions or initiatives become shared learning trajectories and enable mutual exchange of knowledge and capabilities.

In practice, this means that partnership processes require keen attention to recognise the distinct value and importance of diversity of knowledge, including, for example, both Indigenous knowledge as well as scientific knowledge.¹³ Taking local knowledge seriously does not start with participation in meetings, but already at an earlier stage through active inquiry and investment in the capacity of local actors to articulate, share, and advocate for their knowledge on equal footing. Long-term commitment and trust are prerequisites to this process of inquiry and support in partnerships. Recognising this vital aspect of partnership processes calls for reflexivity on behalf of donors as well as a fundamental shift in their accountability structures, known for static quantitative metrics as measure for development impact and lack of awareness of how ideological value frames are imposed. In the context of monitoring and evaluation practices this would require a shift of focus towards what impact and success looks like for local actors themselves.

Locally led approaches are not limited to the local level and it is important to include policy engagement at different policy levels as a core strategy and condition for success

Locally led initiatives are often constrained by their policy environment. Therefore support should not only focus on local efforts but also on fostering knowledge exchange between local groups and advocating for improvements in national and international policies. Locally led is not limited to a delineated locality or local scale, but seeks to connect across spatial scales to engage with relevant policy actors at the regional, national, and international policy level to address sustainability challenges and embed solutions at the appropriate level and with the appropriate instruments, through legislation, taxation, or institutions. Locally led approaches require supportive systems at regional, national, and international levels to truly succeed and be sustainable.

Thinking across spatial (geographic), temporal (time), and administrative (institutions) scales opens up the opportunities to review how resource management and service provision is organised and whether this is still fit for the future. Climate change affects ecosystems and ecological functions, and adaptation responses have to factor in dynamics at these different scale levels. For example, access and availability of water in the hydrological system of a water basin depends on changing precipitation patterns, water retention capacity of aquifers, vegetation and soil properties, and water use and management, allowing for replenishment and retention. These dynamics are unfolding and interacting at different scale levels. As a two-way street, locally led approaches should include a strategy for policy engagement at multiple levels, spanning from local to international, with consideration of spatial, temporal, and administrative scales to build necessary adaptive governance capacity together across policy levels.

¹³ This speaks to epistemic justice, recognizing and addressing who controls the production, validation, and use of knowledge (Duchkova and Deventon 2023).

Global policy agendas for climate and biodiversity provide a long-term vision and surpass short-term policy changes in national priorities and foreign policy agendas

The value of multilateral environmental agreements lies in their provision of a shared policy umbrella and knowledge base to address the interconnected challenges of human development and the environmental agendas of climate, biodiversity, and land degradation. At the same time, these policy frameworks also address and support a social justice agenda by means of inclusion and representation of local actors in decision making. For example, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) explicitly recognises the importance of the full participation of local people at all levels and works towards securing various forms of land rights, including informal and customary land tenure systems within land governance. Within the Global Biodiversity Framework of the United Nations Convention of Biological Diversity (UNCBD), the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) have contributed profound policy guidance and advice in acknowledging plurality of knowledge through their work on *The Diverse Values and Valuation of Nature* (2022) as well as with most recent IPBES reports on Nexus and Transformative Change Assessment (2024). Both the targets that are set and the evidence generated in these spaces of multilateral collaboration provide an important and consistent narrative which serves as a valuable reference point compared to the more volatile policy shifts at national level. These policy frameworks (i.e. climate, biodiversity) as well as the supporting evidence can be used strategically to hold national governments to account in how they contribute to implementation and delivery of these global goals and targets. More effort is needed to align national policies with these long term visions and to mobilise support for local action in national implementation strategies.

4.2 Recommendations

Lastly, here we provide three general recommendations for practitioners to make the relevance and importance of locally led approaches explicit, especially in dialogue and in partnership with donors and funders. These will be followed by specific recommendations for policymakers, applicable in the position of donors and government in national policy context.

Recommendations for practitioners

- **Emphasise the importance of locally led approaches and explicitly embrace attention for justice dimensions as an integral part of development processes.** Power relations and justice dimensions shape the entire development landscape, including who defines priorities, who controls funding, and who is held accountable. Justice should be embedded not just in process design but in financing, governance, and institutional mandates. Acknowledge other existing sets of principles to learn from and strengthen this discussion, e.g. the Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) principles, the Shandia principles, Principles for Inclusive Nature Action (INA), thereby acknowledging other locally led approaches and that ILA and LLA are not the only ones.
- **Engage with donors to endorse the principles and support their implementation in practice to ensure alignment with these principles in their funding and policy priorities.** There are already 130+ organisations who have endorsed the LLA principles to commit to make changes to their ways of working in line with LLA.¹⁴ Endorsing these principles and the journey that follows requires a shift in mindset which is centred around trust, commitment, and partnership. Both ILA and LLA require time to build trust and to result in impact, which is counterintuitive to today's managerial style of steering for results. However, the quickest way to achieve meaningful impact is through long-term commitments that take an inclusive and participatory approach. Policy programmes need to take this into account, and policymakers and practitioners need to design programmes collectively to tap into these synergies (see Reversing the Flow with 10-year duration above as an example).
- **Encourage donors to go beyond endorsing principles by actively applying them in their funding practices.** This includes, first of all, adapting partnerships, processes, and financial mechanisms, thereby embracing co-creation, flexibility, and long-term collaboration, to genuinely support locally led action and generate lasting impact. Secondly, at a global level, a critical effort to improve transparency of financial flows in public and private aid is through [Publish What You Fund](#) and the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI). Transparency is partially about accountability, but data availability also helps create the

¹⁴ [LLA Alliance: join the endorsers of the locally led adaptation principles | International Institute for Environment and Development](#)

path for locally led development and shifts the power for coordination and prioritisation to local and national actors. This is vital for meaningful transparency and accountability.¹⁵

Recommendations for policymakers

Additionally, there are specific recommendations for international and national policy makers, both in the position of donors as well as more generally the role of government in creating an enabling policy environment, to meaningfully engage with locally led approaches and to provide a conducive setting and reliable support for local action.

- **Be transparent and concrete as a donor about how steps are made in internal procedures and partnership processes to show what it looks like to act on principles in practice.** Concrete examples of changes in practices by donors are:
 - *In strategy development:* Ensure that civil society organisations (CSOs) supporting local groups are meaningfully involved in the design of funding strategies and programmes.
 - *In programming:* Review requirements for funded programmes to demonstrate how principles are being operationalised in practice, or fund adaptive learning and reflection spaces for implementing partners to adjust approaches based on these principles.
 - *In funding decisions:* Include CSOs in key decision-making spaces, including governing and advisory bodies.
 - *In funding mechanisms:* Assess funding volumes, eligibility criteria, application procedures, programme design, and monitoring processes for their accessibility and responsiveness to local groups' realities and capacities.
 - *Long-term commitment and adaptive learning:* Invest in long-term processes rather than short project cycles. Foster continuous learning, reflection, and adaptation based on monitoring, community feedback, and changing circumstances.
- **Take implications for monitoring and accountability seriously.** Embracing locally led approaches such as ILA and LLA requires new ways of monitoring, both for learning as well as for accountability purposes. This calls for fundamentally revisiting monitoring frameworks and shifting focus towards learning, process-sensitive, and participatory monitoring that includes local definitions of success. Such reform of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices requires co-design to explore jointly with IP&LC how to structure such M&E approaches that better reflect locally led, justice-centred outcomes. This will also bring attention to qualities and conditions in partnership arrangements and the process of implementation, instead of only measuring quantifiable results. In addition, accountability runs two ways and requires donors to build in mechanisms for accountability towards affected communities, and ensure transparency in planning, funding, and governance.

¹⁵ [Promoting meaningful accountability and transparency for locally led adaptation | International Institute for Environment and Development](#)

- **Ensure that core values and principles in support of local action are made explicit across policy frameworks across policy domains and policy levels.** This speaks directly to the importance of policy coherence and navigating multi-level governance which is necessary to ensure locally led action is not undermined by higher-level policy or market forces. Prioritise supportive regional, national, and international policies that align with and support local action. Prioritise and emphasise values and principles such as:
 - *Inclusive participation* Ensure the meaningful and informed participation of local communities, Indigenous Peoples, and other rights holders - especially women, youth, and marginalised groups - at all stages of decision-making, implementation, and monitoring.
 - *Recognition of land and resource rights:* Acknowledge and strengthen formal and customary land and resource tenure rights, including collective and community-based systems. Secure land rights are essential for long-term stewardship and resilience.
 - *Equity and justice:* Promote fair distribution of benefits, responsibilities, and risks, paying special attention to power imbalances, historical injustices, and the rights of future generations.
 - *Local knowledge and leadership:* Respect and integrate Indigenous, traditional, and local knowledge alongside scientific evidence. Support locally led initiatives and leadership to ensure solutions are context-specific and rooted in lived experience.
 - *Joint action on climate and nature goals:* For many Indigenous Peoples and other local actors, climate change and nature loss are inseparable from one another and have the same solutions at the local level. Many policymakers now also recognise the problem with siloed working between the different UN conventions - see the statement released by UNFCCC and UNCBD presidencies: [COP28 Joint Statement on Climate, Nature and People](#).

References

- Brouwer, H., and J. Woodhill, with M. Hemmati, K. Verhoosel, and S. van Vugt (2019). *The MSP Guide: How to design and facilitate multi-stakeholder partnerships*. Wageningen: Wageningen University and Research, WCDI, and Rugby: Practical Action Publishing.
- Carmenta, R., J.G. Zaehring, P. Balvanera, E. Betley, N.M. Dawson, N. Estrada-Carmona, J. Forster, J. Hoelle, B. Lliso, J.C. Llopis, A. Menon, M. Moeliono, K. Mustin, U. Pascual, N.D. Rai, J. Schleicher, C. Shelton, A. Sigouin, E.J. Sterling, and E.L. Yuliani (2023). 'Exploring the relationship between plural values of nature, human well-being, and conservation and development intervention: Why it matters and how to do it?' *People and Nature* 5: 1720-1738.
- Duchkova, H., and J. Leventon (2023). *Epistemic justice: How can diverse forms of knowledge improve policy making?* Cambridge: SSH CENTRE.
- Escobar, A. (2018). *Designs for the pluriverse: Radical interdependence, autonomy, and the making of worlds*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Forest Peoples Programme, International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity, Indigenous Women's Biodiversity Network, Centres of Distinction on Indigenous and Local Knowledge and Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (2020). *Local Biodiversity Outlooks 2: The contributions of indigenous peoples and local communities to the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and to renewing nature and cultures. A complement to the fifth edition of Global Biodiversity Outlook*. Moreton-in-Marsh, England: Forest Peoples Programme.
- Gutierrez, V. et. al. (2025). 'Advancing landscape and seascape restoration: The case for policy coherence and good practice sharing.' A policy brief by Commonland and Climate Focus.
- Heiner, K., S. Shames, and S. Scherr (2017). 'Public policy guidelines for integrated landscape management.' Working Paper by EcoAgricultural Partners for LPFN.
- Horn, S. van der, and J. Meijer (2015). *The landscape approach*. The Hague: PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency.
- IPBES (2022). *Summary for policymakers of the methodological assessment report on the diverse values and valuation of nature of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)*. Bonn: IPBES Secretariat.
- IPBES (2024). *IPBES Transformative change assessment: Summary for Policymakers*. Bonn: IPBES Secretariat.
- ISEAL (2019). *Credible assurance at a landscape scale, discussion paper by WWF and ISEAL Alliance*.
- Kok et. al. (2024). *A prospective evaluation of the ambition of the Kunming-Montreal global biodiversity framework goals and targets*. The Hague: PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency.
- Least Developed Countries Initiative for Adaptation and Resilience (LIFE-AR) (2024). *Demonstrating locally led adaptation principles in practice*. London: IIED.
- Meijer, J.R., C. van Oosten, S.M. Subramanian, E. Yiu, and M.T.J. Kok (2021). *Seizing the landscape opportunity to catalyse transformative biodiversity governance: A contribution to the CBD post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework*. The Hague: PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency.

- Meijer, J., E. Berkhout, C. Hill, and M. Vardon (2020). *Integrated landscape management and natural capital accounting: working together for sustainable development*. The Hague: PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency.
- Meijer, J., S. Shames, S.J. Scherr, and P. Giesen (2018). *Spatial modelling of participatory landscape scenarios: synthesis and lessons learned from exploring potential SDG progress in 3 case studies*. The Hague: PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency and EcoAgriculture Partners.
- Oates, L. et al. (2024). *Just transitions: Conceptual tools for policy reflection*. The Hague: PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency.
- OECD (2025). *Cuts in official development assistance: OECD projections for 2025 and the near term*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Proforest and Landesa (2023). *Respecting rights of indigenous people and local communities in landscape initiatives: A guide for practitioners on minimum safeguards and evolving best practices (Version 1.0)*. Oxford: Proforest and Landesa.
- Partos (2021). *Shifting the power, future brief series No.2*. The Hague: Partos.
- Rahman, M.F., D. Falzon, and S. Robinson et al. (2023). 'Locally led adaptation: Promise, pitfalls, and possibilities.' *Ambio* 52: 1543–1557.
- Reed, J., L. Deakin, and T. Sunderland (2015). 'What are "Integrated Landscape Approaches" and how effectively have they been implemented in the tropics: A systematic map protocol.' *Environmental Evidence* 4 (1): 1–7.
- Reed, J., et al. (2016). 'Integrated landscape approaches to managing social and environmental issues in the tropics: Learning from the past to guide the future.' *Global Change Biology* 22 (7).
- Rittel, H.W. and M.M. Webber (1973). 'Dilemmas in a general theory of planning.' *Policy Sciences* 4(2): 155-169.
- Sayer, J., et al. (2013). 'Ten principles for a landscape approach to reconciling agriculture, conservation, and other competing land uses.' *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 110(21): 8349-8356.
- Scherr, S. J., S. Shames, and R. Friedman (2013). 'Defining integrated landscape management for policy makers.' *EcoAgriculture Policy Focus* 10(1): 228.
- Soanes, M., A. Bahadur, C. Shakya, B. Smith, S. Patel, C. Rumbaitis del Rio, T. Coger, A. Dinshaw, S. Patel, S. Huq, M. Musa, M. Rahman, S. Gupta, G. Dolcemascolo and T. Mann. (2021). *Principles for locally led adaptation*. London: IIED.
- Spivak, G. C. (1988). 'Can the subaltern speak?', in: *Marxism and the interpretation of culture*, eds. C. Nelson and L. Grossberg, 271-313. Champaign: University of Illinois Press.
- Steinbach, D., A. Bahadur, C. Shakya, M. Thazin Aung, C. Burton, C. Gallagher, S. Mbewe, S. Greene, B. Regmi, A. Granderson, C. Ramkisson, W. Kostka, L. Andon, T. Greenstone-Alefaio, G. Dolcemascolo, S. Gupta, A. Tewary, M. Lopez, J. Barnes, A. Mirza, M. Bodrud-Doza, F. Akhter, S. Rozario, and C. Reyes (2022). *The good climate finance guide for investing in locally led adaptation*. London: IIED.

- Tengö, M., E.S. Brondizio, T. Elmqvist, P. Malmer, M. Spierenburg (2014). 'Connecting diverse knowledge systems for enhanced ecosystem governance: The multiple evidence base approach.' *Ambio* 43(5): 579-91.
- 1000 Landscapes for 1 Billion People (2022). *A practical guide to integrated landscape management*. Washington, DC: EcoAgriculture Partners, on behalf of 1000 Landscapes for 1 Billion People.
- Titz, A., T. Cannon, and F. Krüger (2018). Uncovering 'community': Challenging an elusive concept in development and disaster related work.' *Societies* 8(3): 71.
- UNU-IAS and IGES (2023). *Using landscape approaches in national biodiversity strategy and action planning*. Shibuya: UNU-IAS.
- Van Oosten, C. (2021). *Landscape governance: from analysing challenges to capacitating stakeholders*. Wageningen: Wageningen University.
- Van Vianen J., J. Reed, and T.C.H. Sunderland (2010). 'From global complexity to local reality: Aligning implementation pathways for the Sustainable Development Goals and landscape approaches.' Bogor: Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR).

Appendix I Background information and methods

Details on meeting

On September 18th 2024, a learning session was hosted by CLLI and IIED to facilitate an open exchange between the practitioner organisations affiliated with CLLI Community of Practice and the GA-LLA consortium. The session consisted of introductory presentations on the Integrated Landscape Approach by PBL (as a member of CLLI) and Locally Led Adaptation Principles by IIED. After these presentations discussion was prompted by drawing connections between the two sets of principles. The group split up in five breakout groups, each focusing on a specific set of principles, but free to explore and discuss the full range. In breakout groups, the participation was balanced between ILA and LLA practitioners. Insights from breakout group discussions were presented back to the group and at the end of the meeting, key takeaways were formulated. The minutes and slides from the session are available on the CLLI webpage (under *Outcomes Sessions*): <https://www.tropenbos.org/projects/collaborative-landscape-learning-initiative/>.

Method

This policy brief features the output and findings from the meeting described above, based on the minutes and notes taken from the break-out sessions and plenary feedback. The primary source of information is derived from the participants dialogue, where they explored and identified similarities and differences on their respective approaches and discussed strengths and synergies in the underlying principles. PBL (author) and IIED (co-organiser) had a follow up discussion how to structure the dialogue output and how to present the findings. The first layer of analysis in this policy brief structures the reflections and arguments to compare how ILA and LLA are similar and how they differ, both on a conceptual level as well as in the methods and experience in practice (3.1). The second layer of the analysis is both exploratory and critical, with the aim to further structure practitioners' reflections and arguments in a way that help question underlying assumptions and point to gaps in one or both of the approaches. Specific topics of interest that surfaced were inclusion, dealing with power asymmetries, and decision-making processes. This resulted in the explicit formulation of identified reinforcing strengths and shared gaps (3.2), which has been enriched with supporting literature and available guidance documents.

Background on Practitioner Groups

The two practitioner groups working on LLA and ILA, respectively, operate separately from each other and have a different origin, constellation, and purpose, but share a mutual interest to jointly mobilise support for local action and advocate for changes in development policy and practice. Both groups are receiving support from The Netherlands Development Aid and Trade policy, through different constellations of partnerships and in (past and ongoing) programmes funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Collaborative Landscape Learning Initiative (CLLI) is an NGO-led network with 20 organisations implementing landscape initiatives on a global scale. Each organisation has its own global network of local partners, in which they directly connect with local realities and present different implementation strategies in practice. CLLI identifies as a Community of Practice with a shared

learning agenda centred around deepening knowledge and facilitating learning and exchange about landscape approaches. Participants organise joint learning sessions on issues around the implementation of landscape approaches facilitated by a supporting secretariat of Tropenbos International and PBL Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency.

The LLA Community of Practice is a network of over 130 organisations which have endorsed the Principles for Locally Led Adaptation. A smaller subset of these organisations endorsing the principles are actively involved in an ambitious new programme to mobilise policy and action on LLA and participated in the workshop with CLLI to discuss the intersection between LLA and ILA. Some organisations that have actively endorsed LLA principles and are members of the LLA Community of Practice, are also implementing landscape approaches, which shows that there is some interaction and alignment between these communities (for example, BothENDS has active connections in both groups and has been advocating for locally led initiatives, connecting and broadening across LLA and ILA).

Writing of policy brief

Based on the key takeaways from the workshop, PBL and IIED initiated the writing of this policy brief to capture the dialogue and to reach a wider audience, partially to inspire more in-depth reflection on the meaning of locally led approaches and partially to make visible what support and enabling conditions are required for local action. A draft version of the report was shared with all partner organisations involved with CLLI and GA-LLA, respectively, with the specific request to review and consider if: 1) the report captures and reflects the content of the session, 2) whether the framing of ILA and LLA is fair and correct, and 3) to provide additional recommendations. In total, ten people reviewed the report and all feedback was collected and discussed by the authors. Feedback was categorised to enable prioritisation and facilitate integration of all comments in the final text. Categories consisted of general comments, points for clarification, points of disagreement, additions based on practitioner experience, and suggestions for recommendations.

Integration of feedback

The authors strove to integrate all feedback while balancing the length of the text and to keep the focus on the reflections and insights that transpired from this specific workshop. It is evident that, depending on background, experience, and interest, terminology and concepts spark ongoing discussion. This merits ongoing exchange and nuance. The report reflects consensus of the group at the level of capturing the outcomes of the dialogue in the workshop. Content-wise, on the degree of overlap and points of connection between ILA and LLA, there remain different viewpoints based on respective strategic focus of organisations. This means that, for some, it was indeed new to connect the respective approaches, while for others there is a more natural overlap both conceptually as well as in practical implementation. BothENDS is an example which stands out, since they operate in both realms and play an important role as broker, explicitly broadening the frame on locally led approaches and actively connecting this to landscape level scope, also in specific policy forums such as UNCCD.

Appendix II GA-LLA core partners

GA-LLA core partners

The core partners working together on the Generating Ambition for Locally Led Adaptation (GA-LLA) programme are listed below.

The GA-LLA partnership includes a range of organisations working across local, regional, national, and international levels, and working with a variety of different stakeholders in different geographical contexts, including Indigenous Peoples, grassroots women’s organisations, the urban poor, children, and youth.

Representatives from the partner organisations were present in the Hague in September 2024 during the exchange with the CLLI partnership, where similarities and differences between LLA and ILA were discussed and debated.

Acronym	Name	Geographical Focus	Description
CADPI	Centro para la autonomía y desarrollo de los pueblos indígenas	Central America	Institution working to advance the rights of Indigenous Peoples in Nicaragua and across Mesoamerica.
CANARI	Caribbean Natural Resources Institute	Caribbean	Regional, non-profit technical institute working to champion locally led approaches to using and managing natural resources across the countries and territories of the Caribbean region.
ENDA	ENDA Energie	Francophone Africa	NGO based in Senegal working on environment, development, and energy.
HC	Huairou Commission	Global	A women-led social movement of grassroots groups from poor urban, rural, and indigenous communities in 45+ countries.
ICCCAD	International Centre for Climate Change and Development	South Asia	Research and capacity building organisation working on climate change and development in Bangladesh.
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development	Global	Independent research organisation that delivers positive change on a global scale.
SDI	Slum Dwellers International	Global	AA global network of slum dwellers driving a collective, bottom-up change agenda for inclusive and resilient cities.
SSN	SouthSouthNorth	Anglophone Africa	Based in South Africa, SSN supports national and regional responses to climate change.
STC	Save the Children	Global	Global organisation working to protect and support children in crisis and poverty.

Appendix III CLLI members

Collaborative Landscape Learning Initiative members

The Collaborative Landscape Learning Initiative (CLLI) is a platform by and for NGO's and knowledge institutes based in The Netherlands to learn about landscape approaches. Participants organise joint learning sessions on issues around the implementation of landscape approaches facilitated by a supporting secretariat of Tropenbos International and the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL) ([link to website](#)).

Acronym	Name	Geographical Focus	Thematic Focus
TBI	Tropenbos International	Global	Forest frontiers
	Wetlands International	Global	Wetlands
	Commonland	Global	Landscape restoration
CIFOR-ICRAF	Centre for International Forestry and research	Global	Education and research on integrated landscape approach
	Both ENDS	Global	Support to civil society and local communities worldwide to achieve environmental justice and sustainable, inclusive development
IDH	International Trade Initiative	Global	Value chains and sustainable trade
IUCN-NL	International Union for Conservation of Nature	Global	Conservation
IIED Europe	International Institute for Environment and Development	Global	Thinktank for environment and development
KIT	Royal Tropical Institute	Global	Development
	Oxfam-Novib	Global	Development
PBL	Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency	Global	Knowledge institute
	Proforest	Global	Value chains and sustainable trade
	Rainforest Alliance	Global	Development
	Red Cross Netherlands	Global	Humanitarian relief
RVO	Netherlands Enterprise Agency	Global	Government Implementation Agency
	Solidaridad	Global	Sustainable agriculture and trade
SNV	SNV Netherlands Development Organisation	Global	Development
UvA	University of Amsterdam	Global	Research
WSER	Wageningen Social Economic Research	Global	Research
WWF-NL	World Wide Fund for Nature – The Netherlands	Global	Conservation

Appendix IV Principles in full text

Full text of both ILA and LLA principles are provided below.

These are the 10 principles of the landscape approach as copied from the original publication by Sayer (2013).

Principle 1: Continual learning and adaptive management. Landscape processes are dynamic. Despite the underlying uncertainties in causes and effects, changes in landscape attributes must inform decision making. Learning from outcomes can improve management. Nonlinear relationships, external shocks, and unforeseen interactions and threshold simply never ending potential for surprise. Each surprise is an opportunity for learning, leading to the development of new under-standings as a basis for revised strategies. This learning and revision requires continual adjustment in which new knowledge is derived from multiple sources. Adaptive management and, more recently, “adaptive collaborative management” have emerged as practical approaches to this process of continual learning.

Principle 2: Common concern entry point. Solutions to problems need to be built on shared negotiation processes based on trust. Trust emerges when objectives and values are shared. However, stakeholders have different values, beliefs, and objectives. Totally aligned objectives are unlikely, costly to establish, or devoid of immediate significance. Identifying immediate ways forward through addressing simpler short term objectives can begin to build trust. Each stakeholder will only join the process if they judge it to be in their interest. Initially achieving consensus on overarching objectives may be difficult. Launching the process by focusing on easy-to-reach intermediate targets may provide a basis for stakeholders to begin to work together. In working toward this first goal, there will be opportunities for shared learning. The process will build the confidence and the trust needed to address further issues.

Principle 3: Multiple scales. Numerous system influences and feedbacks affect management outcomes, but these impacts unfold under the influence of a diverse range of external influences and constraints. Outcomes at any scale are shaped by processes operating at other scales. Influences include feedback, synergies, flows, interactions, and time lags, as well as external drivers and demands. An awareness of these higher and lower level processes can improve local interventions, inform higher level policy and governance, and help coordinate administrative entities.

Principle 4: Multifunctionality. Landscapes and their components have multiple uses and purposes, each of which is valued in different ways by different stakeholders. Trade-offs exist among the differing landscape uses and need to be reconciled. Many landscapes provide a diverse range of values, goods, and services. The landscape approach acknowledges the various trade-offs among these goods and services. It addresses them in a spatially explicit and ecosystem-driven manner that reconciles stakeholders’ multiple needs, preferences, and aspirations.

Principle 5: Multiple stakeholders. Multiple stakeholders frame and express objectives in different ways (principle 2). Failure to engage stakeholders in an equitable manner in decision-making processes will lead to sub-optimal, and sometimes unethical, outcomes. All stakeholders should be recognised, even though efficient pursuit of negotiated solutions may involve only a subset of

stakeholders. Solutions should encompass a fair distribution of benefits and incentives. Developing a landscape approach requires a patient iterative process of identifying stakeholders and recognizing their concerns and aspirations. Progress requires communication, which needs to be developed and nurtured, and mutual respect of values is essential. There is often a need to address conflicts, and issues of trust and power. Stakeholders and their concerns are not static but will change. Although many management agencies aspire to involving all stakeholder groups in decision making, the transaction costs of doing this comprehensively can be prohibitive and total agreement can be elusive.

Principle 6: Negotiated and transparent change logic. Trust among stakeholders is a basis for good management and is needed to avoid or resolve conflicts. Transparency is the basis of trust (principle 2). Transparency is achieved through a mutually understood and negotiated process of change and is helped by good governance. The need to coordinate activities by diverse actors requires that a shared vision can be agreed upon. This requires a broad consensus on general goals, challenges, and concerns, as well as on options and opportunities. All stakeholders need to understand and accept the general logic, legitimacy, and justification for a course of action, and to be aware of the risks and uncertainties. Building and maintaining such a consensus is a fundamental goal of a landscape approach (principle 2). Numerous attempts to secure consensus around major tropical land conversion projects and the widespread use of the principle of free, prior, and informed consent illustrate the potential and the difficulties of reaching broad agreement on such issues.

Principle 7: Clarification of rights and responsibilities.

Rules on resource access and land use shape social and conservation outcomes and need to be clear as a basis for good management. Access to a fair justice system allows for conflict resolution and recourse. The rights and responsibilities of different actors need to be clear to, and accepted by, all stakeholders. Clarification of conflicting claims will require changes, ideally negotiated, that may be legal or informal. When conflict arises, there needs to be an accepted legitimate system for arbitration, justice, and reconciliation. Recent decades have seen major changes in the mandates and management cultures of natural resource management agencies. Clarifying rights is now replacing the command-and-control approach. Facilitation and negotiation are emerging as the core business of resource management agencies.

Principle 8: Participatory and user-friendly monitoring. Information can be derived from multiple sources. To facilitate shared learning, information needs to be widely accessible. Systems that integrate different kinds of information need to be developed. When stakeholders have agreed on desirable actions and outcomes, they will share an interest in assessing progress. In a landscape approach, no single stakeholder has a unique claim to relevant information, and the validity of different knowledge systems must be recognised. All stakeholders should be able to generate, gather, and integrate the information they require to interpret activities, progress, and threats (principle 1). The gathering and interpretation of information is a vital part of developing and updating the 'theories of change' on which the landscape approach is based (principle 6).

Principle 9: Resilience. Wholesale unplanned system changes are usually detrimental and undesirable. System level resilience can be increased through an active recognition of threats and vulnerabilities. Actions need to be promoted that address threats and that allow recovery after perturbation through improving capacity to resist and respond. Perturbations impinge on all landscapes and their social and ecological structures. Maintaining and bolstering resilience, which is

the capacity to avoid or deflect such threats and to absorb and recover from their manifestations, is vital to sustain processes and benefits in the longer term. Factors that contribute to system resilience are diverse and reflect ecological, social, and institutional attributes. Resilience may not be well understood in every situation, but can be improved through local learning and through drawing lessons from elsewhere (principles 1 and 10). The challenge in agricultural landscapes is often to bring about transformational change while maintaining the attributes of the landscape that provide resilience to undesirable changes.








Principle 10: Strengthened stakeholder capacity. People require the ability to participate effectively and to accept various roles and responsibilities. Such participation presupposes certain skills and abilities (social, cultural, financial). Effective participation makes demands of stakeholders. The complex and changing nature of landscape processes requires competent and effective representation and institutions that are able to engage with all the issues raised by the process. The learning process of the landscape approach is one means by which stakeholders can improve their capacity to judge and respond. It also provides a platform to share experiences within and among sites. The proliferation of local nongovernmental organisations addressing rural issues is a reflection of this and is recognised by the increasing willingness of development assistance agencies to support local civil society groups.

Principles for locally led adaptation (LLA)

The full text for the 8 LLA principles can be found in the poster below and on IIED's webpage here: [Principles for locally led adaptation | International Institute for Environment and Development](#)

Principles for locally led adaptation

to help ensure that local communities are empowered to lead sustainable and effective adaptation to climate change at the local level.

<p>1. Devolving decision making to the lowest appropriate level</p> <p>Giving local institutions and communities more direct access to finance and decision-making power over how adaptation actions are defined, prioritised, designed and implemented; how progress is monitored; and how success is evaluated.</p>		<p>2. Addressing structural inequalities faced by women, youth, children, people with disabilities and displaced people, Indigenous Peoples and marginalised ethnic groups</p> <p>Integrating gender-based, economic and political inequalities that are root causes of vulnerability into the core of adaptation action, and encouraging vulnerable and marginalised individuals to meaningfully participate in and lead adaptation decisions.</p>	
<p>3. Providing patient and predictable funding that can be accessed more easily</p> <p>Supporting long-term development of local governance processes, capacity and institutions through simpler access modalities, and longer term and more predictable funding horizons, to ensure that communities can effectively implement adaptation actions.</p>		<p>4. Investing in local capabilities to leave an institutional legacy</p> <p>Improving the capabilities of local institutions to ensure they can understand climate risks and uncertainties, generate solutions, and facilitate and manage adaptation initiatives over the long term without being dependent on project-based donor funding.</p>	
<p>5. Building a robust understanding of climate risk and uncertainty</p> <p>Informing adaptation decisions through a combination of local, Indigenous and scientific knowledge that can enable resilience under a range of future climate scenarios.</p>		<p>6. Flexible programming and learning</p> <p>Enabling adaptive management to address the inherent uncertainty in adaptation, especially through robust monitoring and learning systems, and flexible finance and programming.</p>	
<p>7. Ensuring transparency and accountability</p> <p>Making processes of financing, designing and delivering programmes more transparent and accountable downward to local stakeholders.</p>		<p>8. Collaborative action and investment</p> <p>Collaboration across sectors, initiatives and levels to ensure that different initiatives and different sources of funding (humanitarian assistance, development, disaster risk reduction, green recovery funds and so on) support one another and their activities avoid duplication, to enhance efficiencies and good practice.</p>	