

# Policy**brief**

## Toward a sustainable future: **Landscape approaches to REDD+, natural resources management and socio-economic development in Vietnam**

The success of REDD+, like many other natural resources management (NRM) schemes is challenged by complex realities, where multiple connections exist between deforestation and agriculture, deforestation and climate change, climate change and poverty, multiple policies, and different stakeholders that have multiple choices and aspirations.

Photo: ICRAF VN/Pham Huu Thuong

### Implications

- A landscape approach to REDD+ should seek balance between 'how it works' (theory of change) and 'where it works' (theory of place).
- The multifunctionality nature of landscapes requires cross-sectoral planning and coordination. In the context of REDD+, this will enable formulation of policies that address drivers of deforestation and provide long-term incentives to communities from adopting sustainable land use practices.
- To avoid the pitfalls of past conservation programs, any REDD+ program should be seen in a broader 'landscape of actions'.
- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is an umbrella where a landscape approach to REDD+ can be seen as a means to that end, as well as, an integral part of a broader policy and governance framework.

### Key messages

**1** Unlike conventional NRM projects, Landscape Approaches 'approach' the whole landscape by asking a loop of six 'landscape questions': Why? -> Who? -> How, what? -> Where, when? -> So what? -> Who cares? -> Why?

**2** With rich experience in forest management, REDD+ stakeholders appear to understand fairly well the contextual components of their landscapes compared to those promoting generic options of how to make changes in landscapes.

**3** Taking a landscape approach is challenging due to the sectoral division of public programming and policy-making.

**4** Choices of actions in the context of a landscape approach are limited by existing policy and institutional settings that do not offer flexibility. Lack of synergy between different sectors, programs, and stakeholders also remains a challenge.

# What is Landscape and Landscape approach?

**Landscape** is interpreted in various ways:

- Biophysical interpretations (natural components, ecology - patterns and processes, resilience)
- Anthropogenic interpretations (material products of human activities)
- Coupled socio-ecological interpretations (interfaces between above interpretations and basis for sustainability measures).

**Landscape approach** addresses issues in a holistic manner, taking account the dynamic and complex interactions between landscape components, and seeks to enhance the multifunctionality of landscapes. It brings multiple stakeholders together to protect and develop landscapes for multifunctionality and sustainability, and may use different or all of these entry points:

- Development priorities around a pressing problem
- Integrated Watershed Management - IWM
- Integrated Conservation and Development Projects - ICDPs
- Payments for Ecosystem Services - PES
- Climate Smart Agriculture - CSA
- Devolution of government - spatial planning
- REDD+

## *Do we need a landscape approach to REDD+? ----YES, because...*

- Despite advancement in the global climate change negotiations, it became clear that the implementation of activities on the ground has been challenging, as forests, in most cases, are homes to human communities or exposed to high pressures from various factors such as agriculture expansion and infrastructure development.
- From a natural resources management perspective, the 'forest-focus' of REDD+ will likely not be sustainable.
- Agricultural expansion towards forest frontiers is triggered by increases in human population and food demands, as well as infrastructure development and opening of new markets, threatening sustainable forest management that lead to unsuccessful REDD+, FCPF and PFES programmes.
- To prevent agriculture from being a threat to sustainable forest management, not only that incentives for sustainable practices are necessary, they should also be aligned with forest management incentives such as REDD+ or FCPF. Good agricultural practices can enhance ecological functions such as water regulation, and create wildlife habitat and forest connectivity.

For this to happen, stakeholders from forest, agriculture and relevant sectors need to work together, to ensure that forest management incentive does not create a disincentive to agricultural production, and vice versa. Stakeholders must act in a coordinated fashion so that multiple functions of the 'whole landscape' are secured and multiple needs are addressed simultaneously. An integrated landscape approach is thus, primordial. Such an approach takes account the flows of goods and services between forest and agricultural landscapes, and regards forest and agriculture as integral units of a whole landscape.

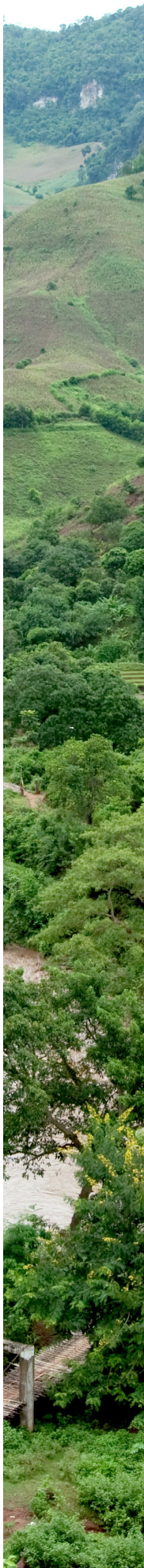
## Landscape approach to understanding a 'landscape'

There is a solid understanding on each of **the landscape components** in Vietnam. Knowledge of farming systems, land use rights, forest cover changes, stakeholders, value chains, profitability are already out there. Such questions as *Who? How, what? and Where, when?* have been well investigated in different parts of the country.

However, **system dynamics** is less understood, i.e. how the components interact, how the complex landscape system behaves over time, and why changes happen in the landscape. The questions *So what? Who cares? and Why?* are important if we are to address *drivers, trade-off<sup>1</sup>, leverage<sup>2</sup>* and provide options in target landscapes.

### How far do we know about drivers of deforestation?

In 1999, Angelsen and Kaimowitz synthesized results of more than 140 economic models analyzing the causes of tropical deforestation and published their work with The World Bank Research Observer. The results, they said *'raises significant doubts about many conventional hypotheses in the debate about deforestation. More roads, higher agricultural prices, lower wages, and a shortage of off-farm employment generally lead to more deforestation. How technical change, agricultural input prices, household income levels, and tenure security affect deforestation - if at all - is unknown. The role of macroeconomic factors such as population growth, poverty reduction, national income, economic growth, and foreign debt is also ambiguous'*. To date, these are still big questions in most tropical forests. Particularly, the widespread assumption that better livelihoods will lead to lesser deforestation is yet to be confirmed.

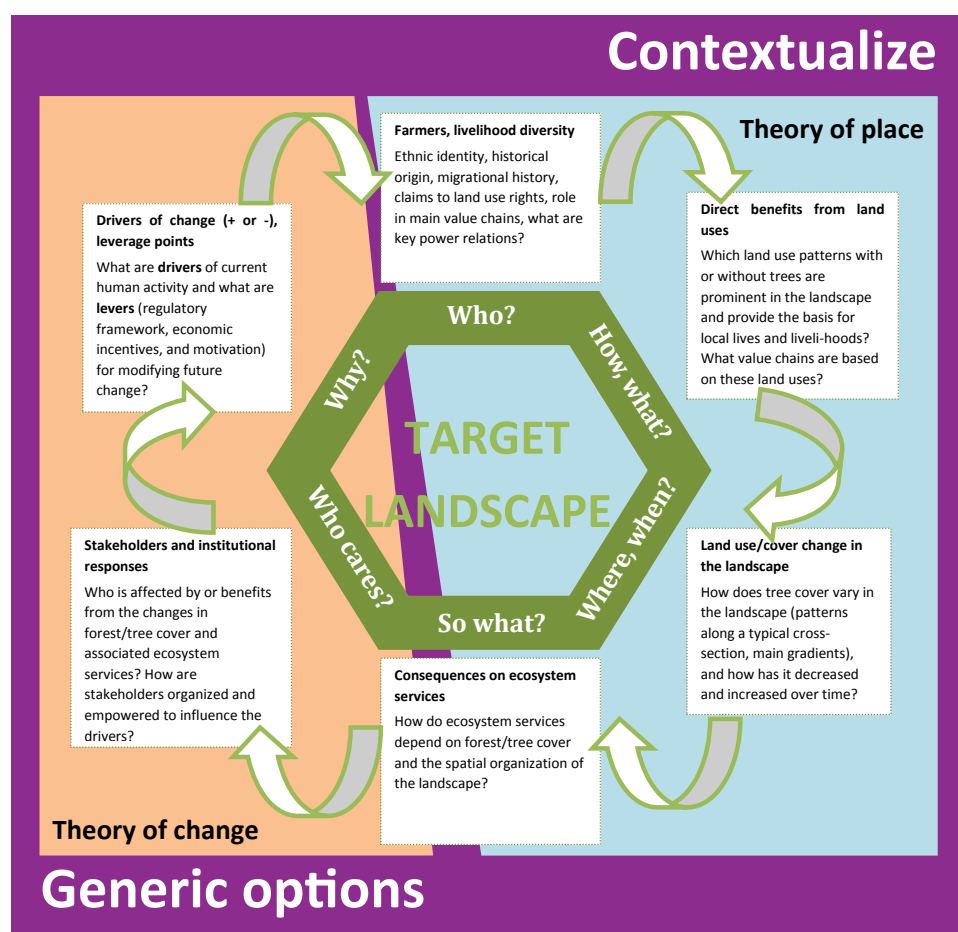


<sup>1</sup>Trade-off: A balance achieved between two desirable but incompatible features; a compromise

<sup>2</sup>Leveraging will entail targeting leverage points in the complex system (a cooperation, an economy, a living body, a city, an ecosystem) where a small shift in one thing can produce big changes in everything (Meadows, 1999)



A landscape approach requires deeper understanding of component interactions and system dynamics by generating and analyzing information from the six basic questions (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Landscape analysis framework. Six questions are important to understand landscape dynamics (Adapted from van Noordwijk et al., 2015)

## Operationalizing a Landscape approach in the context of Vietnam's REDD+ programme

On 11th November 2014, 55 REDD+ stakeholders, including policy makers, practitioners and researchers gathered in Buon Ma Thuot City, Dak Lak province, Vietnam, to consolidate existing knowledge on landscape approaches, and discuss ways to operationalize a landscape approach in Vietnam, in the context of overlapping development, climate change and conservation efforts. The workshop was co-organized by Vietnam's Administration of Forestry (VNFORD) and The World Agroforestry Centre in Vietnam. Funding was provided by the project 'Support for REDD+ Readiness Preparation in Vietnam'.

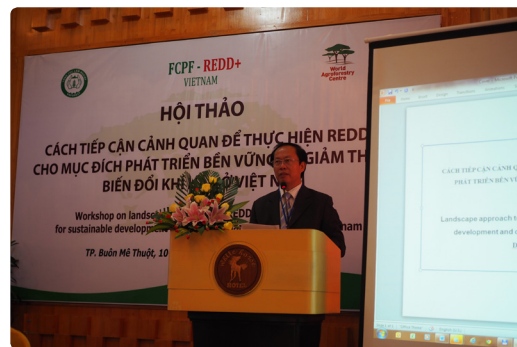
**Proposed elements of a landscape approach to REDD+ implementation in Vietnam:**

- Capacity enhancement
- Institutional arrangements/governance
- Planning and Monitoring.

**Specific activities:**

- Enhance the capacity of relevant stakeholders on the concept and practice of landscape approaches;
- Review current institutional structures of relevant sectors, and propose modifications to facilitate application of the landscape approach;
- Identify key actors of deforestation and degradation;
- Use the landscape analysis framework when developing REDD+ action plans for REDD+ provinces; This will enable stakeholders to gain a comprehensive understanding of landscape system dynamics, and will allow identification of a broader set of actions on the ground;
- Mainstream REDD+ goals and activities in socio-economic development plans at all levels; and
- Develop guidelines and manuals for applying a landscape approach to REDD+ implementation.





### Thinking ahead: Synergy Between Sustainable Development Goals and Landscape Approach

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were formulated as a post-2015 development agenda. The Goals were agreed by member States as an outcome of the Rio+20 Conference in Brazil. Unlike the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that are practically targets for poor countries to achieve, the SDGs are expected to be the goals that all countries have to work for. At a very high level, the SDGs will soon become international standards of development, in all sectors.

The landscape approach is consistent, and compatible with the SDGs. Early adoption of landscape approaches to REDD+, natural resources management and economic development planning and implementation, will place Vietnam in the best position to achieve the SDGs.

The proposed 17 post-Rio+20 SDGs are:

- Goal 1 End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- Goal 2 End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- Goal 3 Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- Goal 4 Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- Goal 5 Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- Goal 6 Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
- Goal 7 Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- Goal 8 Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
- Goal 9 Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- Goal 10 Reduce inequality within and among countries
- Goal 11 Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- Goal 12 Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- Goal 13 Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
- Goal 14 Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
- Goal 15 Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
- Goal 16 Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels
- Goal 17 Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

#### References and further readings

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