

UNDERSTANDING SUSTAINABLE LAND USE PLANS

Preliminary Insights



Key Messages

- Government and civil society can encourage SLUPs by using land use planning to address specific, local natural resource management challenges.
- Intentionally including women and youth in sustainable land use planning processes can strengthen their capacity and meaningful participation in natural resource management.
- SLUPs can be a viable mechanism to solidify community commitment to sustainable natural resource management, including addressing land degradation.
- There is a critical need for documentation, monitoring, and evaluation of SLUPs' implementation and outcomes to better design and apply SLUPs for environmental and social benefits.

Local-level land and resource planning is a common exercise that may present an opportunity to help communities plan for climate change response and sustainable management, especially as governments work to achieve climate targets. Despite frequent creation of local land use and natural resource management plans, practitioners, governments, and communities have limited understanding of how and whether the plans in fact promote environmentally sustainable land and resource management.

This brief presents a preview of initial findings from an ongoing study to understand how sustainable land use plans (SLUPs) are made and to gauge their potential to create environmental and social benefits. The study examines motivations for developing SLUPs, processes to develop them, and their implementation outcomes. The study focuses on local-level (e.g. villages or districts) SLUPs and frames SLUPs broadly to better capture the variety of instruments that are not officially denoted as land use plans but still guide how communities use land and resources. SLUPs can include a variety of instruments, such as village land use plans, village by-laws, community life plans, or community forest management plans.

Preliminary insights build upon a prior evidence scan of land use and natural resource management plans¹ and experiences from projects spanning approximately 25 communities in East, West, and Central Africa and South America² where SLUP is a focal component of the project. Analysis entailed reviewing documents (land use plans, project evaluations, donor reports, and other secondary materials) and conducting interviews with individuals knowledgeable of the projects. Additional data collection, full analysis, and study report are forthcoming.

1 The evidence scan highlighted limited available evidence on implementation and outcomes of the plans, sustainable or otherwise.

2 More regions have not been included thus far due to data limitations.

A sustainable land use plan (SLUP) designates intended uses, rules, or practices for land or natural resources with an intention to protect the health of the environment and considers future threats or pressures, including climate change; and balancing tradeoffs between local livelihoods and the environment.



Landesa is an international non-governmental organization that fights poverty and provides opportunity and security for women, men, and communities through the power of land rights. Landesa advances gender-equitable and inclusive land rights as a foundation for addressing environmental degradation, climate change action, and sustainable land management. Given the frequent application of land use planning by government, communities, the private sector, and other stakeholders, Landesa seeks to understand how it could both secure rural people's tenure and promote land and resource management for environmental health, socioeconomic resilience, and prosperity. Landesa collaborates with global partners and donors across the project lifecycle from implementation to rigorous research, monitoring, evaluation, and learning. Founded in 1981, Landesa has worked in more than 65 countries on strengthening land rights for more than 720 million people.

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Motivations for SLUPs: Governments and civil society use land use planning as a tool to address specific local, natural resource management challenges.

National and district governments and nongovernmental organizations used SLUPs to create clarity on rules for using land, forests, and water and to strengthen the community's role in conservation and resource management. Integrated with the goal of sustainable resource management, governments and civil society also used SLUPs to preserve livelihoods over time, enhance tenure and resource rights, and reduce conflict. Examples include:

- An initiative on village land use planning for pasture area management in Mufindi District, Tanzania, was motivated by a combination of district government, civil society, and community interests to reduce conflicts over land and natural resource use between farmers and pastoralists, promote community behavior change in support of sustainable land use, and address a district need for water resource conservation.
- A sustainable rangelands management project worked on joint village land use planning in Kiteto District, Tanzania, due to government, civil society, and community interests in promoting sustainable pastoral livelihoods through better planning and management of shared grazing lands.



GESI: Intentional steps to engage women and youth in planning can strengthen their capacity for and meaningful participation in sustainable land and natural resource management.

The most common approach to ensure that women's and youth's voices and priorities were part of the planning process was to form separate groups for women, youth, and community leaders during trainings and participatory appraisal activities. Less commonly, planning processes trained local duty-bearers and communities on gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) in land use planning at the start. Although limited evidence is available about how GESI approaches affected the final plans, a project in Liberia notes that village land use plans address women's concerns related to food security, family subsistence, and economic well-being due to their inclusion in the planning process.

Notable outcomes from GESI approaches include:

- In Liberia, women who participated in village-level planning for sustainable forest conservation gained new knowledge about sustainable cultivation practices for crops of interest to them.
- In Mufindi District, Tanzania, the GESI training prompted the community to form a village land use planning committee with representation for women, youth, and people with disabilities.

Outcomes: SLUPs can strengthen community-level agency and help address degradation through sustainable natural resource management.

Several examples suggest that SLUPs and their participatory processes can strengthen community-derived rules, restrictions, and commitments that address degradation and enhance conservation, management of natural resources, and provisioning of ecosystem services. Unfortunately, despite these examples, available evidence on outcomes from SLUPs is sparse. Some projects noted that limited resources prevent full implementation, monitoring, and impact assessment of SLUPs, at both community and landscape levels. Examples of outcomes include:

- In Mufindi District, Tanzania, the district government and local civil society organizations note that villagers are implementing restrictions on farming and grazing on riverbanks, in alignment with by-laws and detailed grazing area plans developed as part of village land use planning.
- In the Alto Mayo landscape, Peru, civil society actors note that Indigenous communities formulated rules to address ecosystem degradation through better land rental regulation, in alignment with Life Plans developed; Conservation Agreements developed between the communities and external stakeholders also reinforce commitments articulated in the Life Plans, including prohibitions on forest leasing and support for conservation and restoration.