



# HARMONISING CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT PRIOTITIES IN GHANA

## The Landscape Approach in Practice

MARCH 2020

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), won a bid to implement a Stabilizing Land Use Project (PLUS) with a focus on Protected Area Categories V and VI as landscape mechanisms for enhancing biodiversity in agricultural land, ecological connectivity and REDD+ implementation. The project was implemented in the Wassa Amenfi Landscape (WAL) within the Western Region of Ghana's High Forest Zone and the Mole Ecological Landscape (MEL) located in parts of the Savannah, the Upper West, and North East Regions of Ghana's Savannah Zone.

The aim of the project was to enhance the biodiversity conservation potential of agricultural and forest lands in the project sites by enhancing and expanding the role of Protected Area Categories V and VI, and other conservation measures. Four expected outputs were anticipated for PLUS.

The expected outputs are; 1). Improved national and sub-national understanding, consensus and ownership of enhanced landscape governance frameworks; 2). Enhanced landscape-level governance frameworks identified with defined structures, mandates and rights holder/stakeholder roles and responsibilities; 3). Enhanced landscape-level governance frameworks and actions identified and, where possible, tested and reviewed in the target areas; and 4). Sub-national and national-level decision-making and policy formulation processes influenced by project success stories and lessons learned.

Implementation of the project was done in partnership with the Forestry Commission of Ghana (FC) and the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources (MLNR) at the national level. In the two (2) landscapes (the local level), Codesult Network and A Rocha Ghana were sub-contracted to support implementation of actions. The project benefitted from useful guidance and contributions of a 12-member National Steering Committee made up of representatives of key stakeholder institutions in the natural resources sub-sector.

The project has resulted in significant impacts at both landscape and national levels. It demonstrates unrelenting resolve of local community members to safeguard their natural resources if the right governance environment is set in place or strengthened. It also showcases the boldness of communities to confront the status-quo and contribute to positive change. It is clear therefore, that enlightened local communities cannot be easily taken for granted on matters pertaining to the plundering of their natural resources. It can be said that, the project has contributed to influencing positive attitudes and behaviours toward harmonising conservation and development priorities in the two landscapes in Ghana.

This brief is mainly a synthesis of key messages from a performance story report on the PLUS project implementation in Ghana. It highlights the contribution of the project at the landscape and national levels. It also presents key lessons learned, opportunities for the future, recommendations and conclusion.



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Woman Picking Shea in Murugu



© A Rocha Ghana (February 2020)  
Beekeeping Training in Yazori



© IUCN (April 2019) Md. Yaa Abiba of ASP CREMA at a Validation Workshop

### INTRODUCTION

The escalation of unsustainable exploitation of natural resources through diversified land uses such as urbanization, agricultural intensification, illegal logging and illegal mining or "galamsey", is destroying critical biodiversity, undermining conservation efforts and disrupting livelihoods in most African countries including Ghana. The situation in Ghana for instance, is characterised by poor land use planning and implementation or enforcement of measures.

Conservationists believe that, the situation can be addressed by reconciling conservation and development priorities. It calls for the forging of a balance between natural resources conservation and sustainable livelihoods. It further demands a facilitation of gender responsiveness, free, prior and informed consent of local communities, and prompting of proactive engagements of agricultural and forest communities toward forging a balance between natural resources conservation and sustainable livelihoods.



To contribute to addressing unsustainable exploitation of natural resources in Africa, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has been implementing a four-year Stabilising Land Use Project (PLUS) (2017-2020) in Ghana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania, and Uganda. The project is supported by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB) through the International Climate Initiative (IKI).

The PLUS project was designed to help address key challenges with sustainable management of landscapes. The project facilitated actions that strengthened governance and capacity of stakeholders towards effective and sustainable management of IUCN's two operational landscapes in Ghana (Figure 1) for ecological, economic and social benefits. They are Wassa Amenfi Landscape (WAL) located within the High Forest Zone in the Western Region and Mole Ecological Landscape (MEL) that falls within parts of the Savannah, Upper West, and North East Regions of Ghana's Savannah Zone.

To implement the project in Ghana, a Theory of Change (ToC) was developed to align Ghana's expected outputs with the four PLUS outputs at the global level. They are;

**Output 1:** Improved national and sub-national understanding, consensus and ownership of enhanced landscape governance frameworks;

**Output 2:** Enhanced landscape-level governance frameworks identified with defined structures, mandates and rights

holder/stakeholder roles and responsibilities;

**Output 3:** Enhanced landscape-level governance frameworks and actions identified and, where possible, tested and reviewed in the target areas; and

**Output 4:** Sub-national and national-level decision-making and policy formulation processes influenced by project success stories and lessons learned.

Ghana's ToC has six outputs and seven intermediate outcomes. The intermediate outcomes are linked to the four expected outputs of the PLUS project at the global level.

The Seven (7) Intermediate Outcomes are;

1. Enhanced understanding of prevailing rights associated with the use of natural resources;
2. Enhanced collaboration between governance structures and consensus built for improved governance and landscape management;
3. Improved understanding amongst stakeholders on the redress mechanisms for natural resource conflicts and grievances;
4. Enhanced capacity of women for leadership and participation in Natural Resource Management (NRM) actions and decision making at the landscape level;
5. Enhanced stakeholder participation and commitment to implementation of agreed strategies;
6. Sustainable livelihood opportunities enhanced within the landscape; and
7. PLUS outcomes integrated into NRM policies at both National and Landscape levels.

The overall expectation is to increase awareness among the target national and sub-national decision makers for effective governance and landscape management, reconcile conservation and development priorities, and help facilitate gender responsiveness.

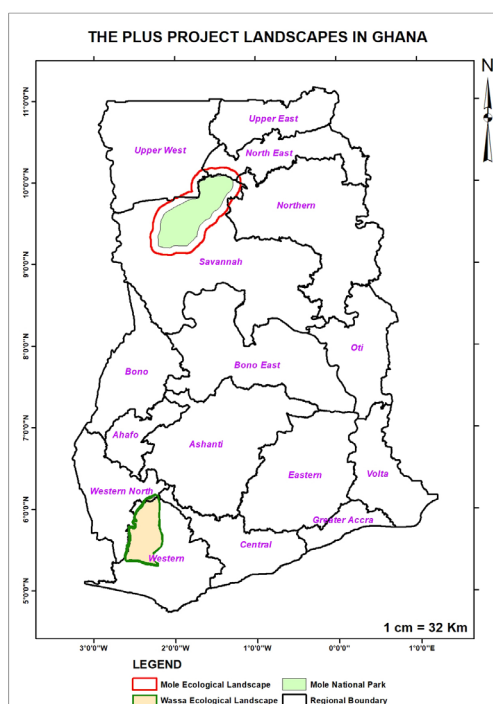


Figure 1: Plus Project Landscapes in Ghana

## OBJECTIVE OF THE STABILISING LAND USE PROJECT (PLUS)

The PLUS project set out to enhance and expand the role of Categories V and VI Protected Areas as landscape mechanisms for enhancing biodiversity in agricultural land, ecological connectivity and Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+)

## Definitions of Categories V and VI Protected Areas

- Category V Protected Areas are where the interaction of people and nature over time, produced an area of distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value. Safeguarding the integrity of this interaction is vital to protecting and sustaining the area and its associated nature conservation and other values.
- Category VI Protected Areas are for conserving ecosystems and habitats, together with associated cultural values and traditional natural resource management systems. They are generally large, with most of the area in a natural condition, and a proportion under sustainable natural resource management. Additionally, they are areas where low-level non-industrial use of natural resources that are compatible with nature conservation, is seen as one of the main aims of the area.

## PLUS CONTRIBUTION AT THE LANDSCAPE AND NATIONAL LEVELS

### Landscape level

1. Strengthened governance structures particularly, Community Resource Management Areas (CREMAs) and Protected Area Management Advisory Units (PAMAUs) as entry points for natural resources management. In MEL, PLUS has supported processes towards establishment of an umbrella governance body to be known as Protected Area Management Advisory Board (PAMAB).
2. Strengthened collective action and unity among many natural resources management actors.
3. Enhanced participation of women in Natural Resources Governance through sensitisation and affirmative action.
4. Enhanced capacity and increased economic prospects of PLUS beneficiaries.
5. Reduced natural resource conflicts/improved resolution.
6. Influenced implementation of Natural Resource Management Actions by the Local Governments in WAL and MEL through collaborative development of Landscape Management Strategies for the Municipal and District Assemblies.

### National level

1. Contributed and helped to increase understanding of REDD+ Safeguards issues at national and local levels, through collaborative trainings and capacity building programmes with the National REDD+ Secretariat of the Forestry Commission.
2. Collaborated with the National REDD+ Secretariat towards analysis of landscape governance structures and arrangements for implementation of the Ghana Cocoa Forest REDD+ Programme (GCFRP). The WAL GWG has been recognised and recommended as a useful platform for implementation of the GCFRP at the landscape level.
3. Contributed to the development and strengthening of the CREMA mechanism in Ghana through organisation of maiden National CREMA dialogue and IUCN's participation as a member of the national CREMA Technical Working Group.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE FUTURE

### Piloting/Testing of Actions in the Landscape Management Plans

Opportunity exists for any future interventions by IUCN to provide technical and logistical support to District Assemblies. Such support can go into testing or implementing actions in the landscape management strategies, and the green charcoal model and sustainable grazing plans developed under PLUS.

### Collaboration

An up-scaling of PLUS can benefit from the on-going Connect Project being handled by the National Biosafety Authority (NBA). The Connect Project focuses on achieving sustainable development by bringing actionable biodiversity information into government decision making agenda.



## Continuous engagement

Opportunity exists for continuous engagement and collaboration with the Governance Working Groups towards testing or implementing follow-up actions, that can be developed based on the outcomes of PLUS.

## Expressed interest

Two natural resources-based companies – Winrock International and Samartex Timber and Plywood Company Ltd have offered to support reclamation of degraded lands and mined out areas within the WAL.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- Given the right conscientization and enabling conditions, local communities can contribute meaningfully towards the sustainable management and conservation of their social-cultural and natural resources heritage.
- Indigenous knowledge application, women's participation and their uptake of leading roles is of paramount importance in participatory management of degraded landscapes and natural resources conservation.
- Local communities can take their destinies into their own hands in the governance and management of their natural resources within the requisite policy and legal framework.
- Collective natural resources conservation can support sustainable local livelihoods and improve household economies and wellbeing.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 In the future, where a project is to be implemented at a scale that covers a number of local governance jurisdictions, conscious effort should be made to ensure that all the Districts and Municipalities benefit equitably from the project.
- 2 Project proposals for a possible second phase of PLUS should among other interests, be aligned toward implementation of the Landscape Management Strategies and the Action Plans. Transparency and accountability frameworks should be developed to mediate the relations between the project and the implementation partners.

## CONCLUSION

PLUS demonstrates unrelenting resolve of local community members to safeguard their natural resources if the right governance environment is set in place or strengthened. It also showcases the boldness of communities to confront the status-quo and contribute to positive change. It is clear therefore, that enlightened local communities cannot be easily taken for granted on matters pertaining to the plundering of their natural resources. It can be said that, the project has contributed to influencing positive attitudes and behaviours toward harmonising conservation and development priorities in the two landscapes in Ghana.

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