

**ASISTENCIA A LOS PAÍSES ANDINOS EN LA REDUCCIÓN DE RIESGOS Y DESASTRES
EN EL SECTOR AGROPECUARIO**

POLICY BRIEF 9. TOP-DOWN AND BOTTOM-UP APPROACHES

Climate, Energy and Tenure Division
Natural Resources Management and Environment Department



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How can synergies be created between local policies and institutions with central government initiatives to strengthen rural communities sustainable development processes?

The notion of good governance is related to effective public government institutions. At the local level, this involves the development of partnerships between top-down government initiatives and bottom-up local institutions and policies. In the current rural Andean context, municipalities are frequently the framework within which local governance is nested. Empowering local citizens and community organizations in decision-making processes, not only increases efficiency, but also provides a real possibility to individuals or groups to transform their choices into desired actions and outcomes. The ultimate goal for adopting a synergetic approach is to strengthen the livelihood strategies of both households and local communities.

Top-down and bottom-up approaches for the sustainable management of natural resources

Governance institutions play a critical role in developing strategies to manage uncertainty and risk, and to build adaptive capacity from household to national level in the context of climate change.

In the tropical Andes mountainous regions, where most rural poor communities rely on agriculture as a key component of their livelihood strategies, local populations are particularly vulnerable to climate change through the climate-sensitive nature of their activities. The conditions which limit their adaptive capacity have to be addressed, demanding huge investments, access to new technologies and institutional reforms which are only possible by linking local governance institutions to nationwide public policies and processes.

One of the basic recommendations of the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) is that to simultaneously strengthen rural communities to manage risk and uncertainty and attain their local development goals, demands an approach combining both bottom-up and top-down processes.

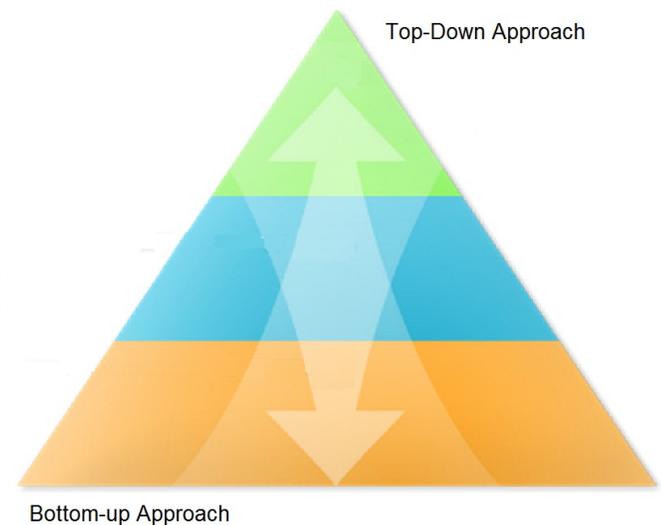
Decentralized nation-state institutions within the current Andean context

Following the neoliberal structural adjustment processes pursued by Andean countries during the 1990s, a new institutional framework emerged creating conditions from centralized government to decentralization, and thereby enabling some space for local NRM.

In most countries, decentralization and disengagement of the state resulted in severe gaps in the fulfilment of some former national-state functions and public service provisions. De-concentration of national-state responsibilities downwards, without devolving power to local governments, and without equipping the lower public administration levels with the needed financial and human resources resulted in severe gaps in the fulfilment of public functions.

At the local level, the need of enhanced local participation in decision-making in order to overcome ingrained structural rigidities is perhaps the most difficult challenge nowadays. Patron-client relationships are still engrained in most local governance structures. As a result, rural local communities frequently tend to react with passive resistance, which to external observers appear as inertia.

To unblock such local inertias, which reflect a lack of inclusiveness and equity, there is a need to implement projects at field level oriented to disseminating power within communities to enable the emergence of new leaderships. These leaderships should be built around the management of activities identified as priorities by the communities with a special focus on the management of natural resources with productive purposes. This will require that local governments invest in infrastructure for natural resources management around the construction of which local communal organizations may flourish. Investments should thus be channelled for construction of infrastructure but with a view to developing organizations around such construction projects. For funding such construction projects communities may tap resources under participatory budget schemes, and other local available financial instruments.



Clarifying bottom-up development strategies: the municipal chain concept

In the current rural Andean context, municipalities are frequently the framework within which local governance institutional arrangements are nested. The family household is still the basic cell of society, since most economic and social activities are carried out at the household level. The family being a small and cohesive unit can be the entry point to lay the bricks that build local institutions (producer organizations and formal municipal structures).

A layer up, the village or hamlet strengthens the bonds between families in their immediate vicinity, thus creating local organizations where they can pursue common aims. In most occasions, these groups are fairly small and homogeneous (economic and social background) or, by contrast, local elites may have a disproportionate share of power within them.

Then we find municipal entities. These frequently well consolidated structures are crucial to the local communities since they carry out a large number of activities, dispose of relatively large budgets, and form the most direct level of political representation. An important caveat, however, is the trend to channel most resources to the urban centres, where the municipalities are usually located. To avoid this risk, all rural villages and hamlets should be entitled to send local representatives who are empowered with voice to participate in all public decision-making decisions.



Intermunicipal associations and watershed management institutions

An interesting institutional innovation in several rural Andean territories is the emergence of intermunicipal association, frequently referred to as “*mancomunidades*”. Depending on particular contextual specificities, due to their size, population and resources, there are difficulties for municipalities to achieve economies of scale and/or power to design and implement projects with enough leverage to significantly alter local structural conditions which require organizing action across several communities.

Moreover, there are issues where the competence of a municipality is particularly limited due to its reduced territorial boundaries, which require organizing action across several jurisdictional territories. This is particularly the case when water basins across the limits of several municipalities, and where common action is required to protect their natural resource base. Scaling-up to a next governance institutional structure may be, therefore, a plausible NRM and development strategy.

The necessary management of transboundary water flows illustrates well the cross-scale nature of NRM. Water availability varies over time, depending on rainfall patterns (temporal scale). It links upstream and downstream communities (spatial scale). Rivers cross different informal and administrative boundaries, challenging various administrative bodies (jurisdictional scale).



Local governance and bottom-up NRM and development strategies

The notion of good governance is related to effective public government institutions. At the municipal level this involves local government and civic society organizations partnerships, which in turn involve the incorporation of different local stakeholders in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating policy decision-making processes. Thus, improving local governance in particular means empowering poor and formerly excluded farmer households and local communities.

Empowerment has been defined as the process of enhancing the real possibility that an individual or a group can make and express choices, and transform their choices into desired actions and outcomes. Local communities formerly excluded from the policy decision-making processes need both the opportunities and the capabilities to effectively participate in NRM and local development.

Participatory management of the NR: the case of watershed management

Usually natural resources are managed either individually or collectively by a variety of stakeholders. They can be powerful or marginalized, rich or poor. Consequently, only institutions which strive for full stakeholder awareness and inclusion contribute to credible, accepted rules that identify and assign the corresponding responsibilities appropriately.

Clarifying property rights is often an important aspect of NR governance. Whether an ecosystem service is a private, public, club or common good may make a substantial difference to practices. Pre-existing private property rights may hinder efforts to manage for services at scales larger than individual holdings and require other coordination mechanisms. Some hydrological services, for instance drinking water supplies from springs or streams, are frequently managed as club goods. Others are effectively managed with common property systems. Besides, many such institutions are highly local being restricted to a village or even a group of neighbouring households. Rules for community forests, for example, typically specify amounts or seasons during which valued but scarce forest resources can be collected.

Thus, dealing with hydrological services such as flood protection or dry season water flows typically requires coordination at larger scale increasing the political complexity as sets of users and uses expand. Moreover, when profitable opportunities emerge (for instance related to ecotourism or logging concessions), ambiguities in land tenure tend to become even more problematic. Responsibilities for management may include co-management arrangements with state agencies, firms and other stakeholders.

Watershed management is a good case in point. The key to success of any watershed project and its sustainability basically depends on participation by all stakeholders.



The pros and cons of bottom-up approaches

The ultimate goal of bottom-up approaches is strengthening the livelihood strategies of both households and local communities. Regardless of cultural and socio-economic differences, bottom-up approaches have to surmount some common challenges, the most prominent being that of building consensus around the measures needed to enhance the service delivery capacities of public administration institutions.

Depending on local conditions, particularly community size and stakeholder heterogeneity, consensus building for creating the conditions for effective participation is expensive and time consuming. Yet, engaging local citizens and community organizations in decision-making processes, not only increases efficiency but also provides a higher chance for the project's sustainability, due to the development of the community sense of ownership of the programmes.

An additional caveat is required. Direct community support and local government approaches share a mutual emphasis on participatory, decentralized, and multi-sectoral planning, management, and governance. Community contributions, such as matching funds and co-production arrangements, enhance beneficiary ownership and help ensure that investments are demand driven.

While different approaches to organizing governance and service delivery at the local level offer specific strengths, each approach is also limited by its entry point and methods, so that no one approach is sufficient to meet all the challenges at the local level. Linking different approaches can, therefore, capitalize on the comparative advantages of each, complementing their specific contributions.

How can national governments promote local development?

Local development and natural resource management require an institutional environment favourable to local initiatives. An enabling national environment is a pre-requisite for successful implementation and long-term sustainability of local projects. The policy and institutional environment for local development includes formal institutions such as laws, government policies, and organizational systems, as well as values, norms, and social practices that influence rural stakeholder decisions and behaviour.

Therefore, local service provision depends on a variety of non-local factors:

- providing financial and human capital resources for local development;
- a supporting national legal mandate;
- technical support provided by external agencies, coupled with local technical capabilities;
- financial support from either the general or local development funds as part of their annual investment plans, and
- an institutional infrastructure with technically qualified staff supported by annual budget allocations.



The appropriate mix of top-down and bottom-up and the subsidiarity principle

The notion of subsidiarity is the guiding principle for successful NRM and local governance institution building. The subsidiarity principle was first introduced in the European Union's 1991 Maastricht Treaty, ascertaining "decision-making to be performed at the lowest possible effective administrative level" in the European multigovernance system.

Watershed management in Quijos river

Ecuador's Quijos river watershed management is a good example of why and how sustainable NR management and local development require an institutional environment favourable to local initiatives. In Ecuador, both the national legal framework and the policy environment are favourable for the promotion of compensation for environmental service (CES) schemes. The missing elements of the equation, however, are the processes which connect civic society organizations with these institutions. Yet, a thorough enabling environment should involve decision-making rules which are not governed by the short- and medium-term horizon of electoral processes at both the national and local levels.



Co Authors:

Luis Llambi

Consultant TCP/RLA/3217
luis.llambi@gmail.com

Tomás Lindemann

Institutions and Climate Change Officer
tomas.lindemann@fao.org

Editing:

Daniela Morra

Consultant TCP/RLA/3217
daniela.morra@fao.org

More information:

TCP/RLA/3217 "Asistencia a los países Andinos en la reducción de riesgos y desastres en el sector agropecuario"

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Natural Resources Management and Environment Department (NRC)

Photos:

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