

POLICY BRIEF

Globally Responsible, Locally Responsive



Call for Improved Actor Collaboration in Natural Resource Governance: The coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic and climate change have exacerbated conditions of uncertainty, misinformation and mistrust, which may lead to conflicts and unsustainable management of natural resources. We call for collaborative governance and the development of inclusive platforms to improve information exchange and trust.

In 2020 and 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change not only exposed but also worsened the inherent uncertainty characteristic of our social, environmental and economic systems. The pandemic has also made us more aware of the inter-dependencies between society and nature. The profound effects of the pandemic around the globe will require extraordinary efforts to ensure long-term inclusive natural resources governance.

Uncertainty leads to misunderstandings which can generate conflicts among actors. This may threaten the livelihoods of the most resource-dependent populations, diminish state revenues, and *ultimately lead to unsustainable use of natural resources.*

Improved collaboration among state, citizens and NGOs in natural resource governance aims at reducing uncertainties and conflicts. We call for development of inclusive platforms, where actors engage in long-term dialogue that improves information exchange and trust. **Based on research findings, we highlight the importance of three aspects in natural resources governance, namely:**

- 1. Collaborative processes that support meaningful involvement of diverse actors** (i.e. citizens and representatives from different sectors, organizations and jurisdiction) to reduce uncertainty. The actors collaboratively design governance processes jointly with decision-makers.

Conveners and funding organizations in various collaborative processes need to recognise that the roles, responsibilities and rights of various actors must be clearly defined and mutually accepted in order to avoid top-down responsabilization.

- 2. Dialogue among actors based on free, prior and informed consent (FPIC)** allows transparent access to information and knowledge sharing in public media and on official sites as well as through innovative, open digital platforms. Meaningful dialogue, e.g. joint proposing of policy options, reduces misinformation and clarifies resource-use objectives while also strengthening relationships and building trust among the actors in the long run. *Government authorities and policy makers should recognize that use of inclusive dialogue digital and non-digital platforms leads to better-informed decision-making processes.*
- 3. Strengthening public participation and the role of local citizens and communities** is paramount in dialogue and collaborative processes. Cooperation between different levels of government authorities is essential to respond to local needs. Various institutions, NGOs and research organizations may act as conveners and facilitators in such collaborative processes. *It is important to recognize that meaningful dialogue and collaborative actions always require time and commitment from all actors.*

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Since 2012, our research on natural resource governance in Finland, Russia, Mozambique, Tanzania, Mexico and Indonesia has paid particular attention to relationships between multi-level actors, public participation, and natural resource governance strategies and interventions.

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