



**Guideline Note:
The Ecosystem Approach for
African Regional
Development Planning**

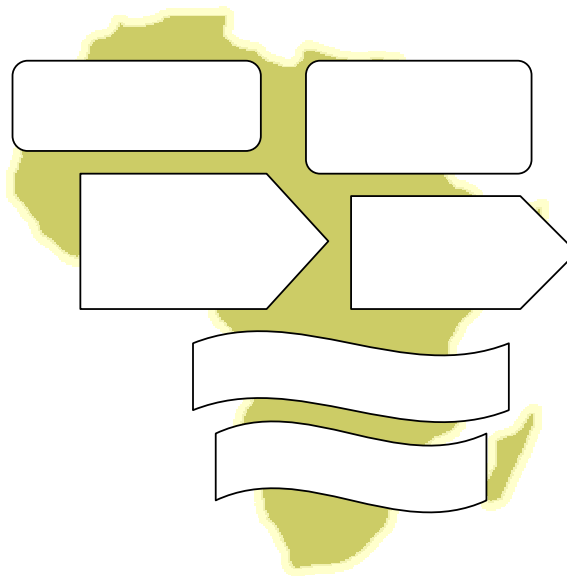
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What is the Ecosystem Approach?

Taking the Ecosystem Approach in development planning requires the following guiding principles:

Both societal and ecological concerns are of integral importance	
Societal	Ecological
	
<i>management</i> objectives are a matter of societal choice;	ecosystems should be <i>managed</i> within the limits of their functioning;
therefore management should be decentralised to the lowest appropriate level;	therefore the ecosystem approach should be undertaken at the appropriate scale.

The African Challenge



- (iii) Many people are directly dependant on biodiversity as a resource base (rural poor),
- (iv) A multitude of arbitrary administrative boundaries segmenting larger ecological and social units,
- (v) Indigenous and cultural knowledge and systems that value biodiversity,
- (vi) Poverty and underdevelopment that require an options generating sustainable strategy for dealing with vulnerability at multiple levels.
- (vii) Need for an approach that will have knock on effects by determining which element of the system are creating vulnerability, and targeting appropriate policies, knowledge development and action at this level.

Relevance Ecosystem Approach for African Regional Development planning

The Convention on Biological Diversity and the Ecosystem Approach is important because Africa has:

- (i) A rich natural heritage, and an international responsibility to conserve this,
- (ii) People in need of development that could benefit from this rich natural wealth,

Important considerations when undertaking regional development in Africa are:

- Economic development to ensure poverty eradication and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs),
- Promote human well-being and land potential through maintenance of ecosystem resilience as per the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment.

Ecosystem Principles and African Regional Development Planning

The Five points proposed as operational guidance in the application of the ecosystem approach include:

1. Focus on the functional¹ relationships and processes of the ecological, social and economic components within ecosystems.
2. Enhanced benefit-sharing
3. Use adaptive management practices
4. Carry out management actions at the scale appropriate for the issue being addressed, with decentralization to lowest level, as appropriate
5. Ensure intersectoral cooperation

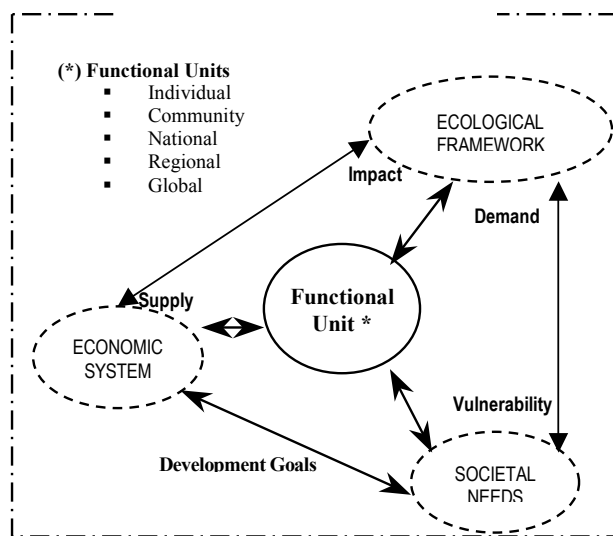
These principles can be used to:

- Promote the assessment of the sustainability of past initiatives and projects within regional natural resource management frameworks.
- Guide the identification and development of regional economic integration initiatives and projects valuing the functional levels of impact

¹ These functional relationships and processes relate the social, economic and biophysical aspects of the system creating the structure, explanation and agency of the system.

and supply, demand and vulnerability on the three tiers.

Functional Levels of Consideration



Concluding Remarks

1. An ecological or ecosystem scale is the appropriate scale to use when planning and evaluating economic and social development projects in Africa.
2. The Regional Natural Resource Frameworks can be developed a theoretical “blueprint”, to be jointly negotiated by administrator and stakeholders, that can explicitly

identify, and combine, multiple development goals, ecological objectives, and the necessary actions needed to manage the three facets of the system towards an agreed end-point.

3. The vision of African Regional Development can be met by making use of existing structures and institutions, whilst using/creating new and innovative ways in which these organizations and individuals can interact effectively.

The ultimate aim should be:

Taking a holistic view of ecosystems that has a concern for nature society relationships. To ensure that political and scientific discourses, and development initiatives in Africa complement, influence and support each other in the drive to create economic wealth, improve peoples quality of life and well being, and protect Africa’s environmental and ecosystem functioning and resilience.

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