

# TP4D

## Territorial approaches for sustainable development

White Paper for Policy Formulation  
and Project Implementation



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## Introduction

The Agenda 2030 with 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets was launched in 2015. However, more than halfway to 2030, most of the goals and targets are far from being achieved. In order to achieve the SDGs, the interlinkages between the SDGs should be acknowledged. They require a multi-level, multi-stakeholder, multi-sector, and whole-of-government approach to governance.

Against this background territorial approaches are highly relevant. They provide systemic, context-specific, spatially anchored, and inclusive efforts for sustainable development. Territorial approaches bring together multiple SDGs and provide a concrete methodological and operational pathway to overcome isolated approaches. COVID-19 highlighted how vulnerable groups and those living in remote regions can be marginalised in development, relief and mitigation actions. The rights-based and participatory nature of territorial approaches can support the development of more inclusive and equitable

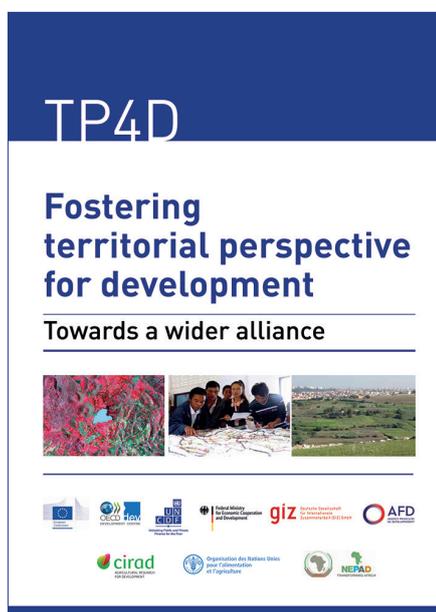
long-term solutions. Following a conference on “Living Territories”, hosted by CIRAD in 2018, a first White Paper was produced by the AFD, AUDA-NEPAD, BMZ, CIRAD, European Commission, FAO, GIZ, OECD, and UNCDF. It was titled “Fostering Territorial Perspective for Development, TP4D”. The paper identified common principles of territorial approaches and described their contributions to policy action, people-centred development, and coherent governance.

The four years between 2018 and 2022 saw parallel and overlapping developments that evaluated, deepened, and expanded the application of territorial approaches to governance in order to address power asymmetries, reduce inequalities between urban and rural areas, promote sustainable food systems, protect ecosystems and biodiversity, adapt to climate change and promote sustainable natural resources management and livelihoods. All this is geared especially towards women, youth, indigenous peoples, as well as small and medium sized enterprises, amongst others.

Among other processes, publications, and events it is worth mentioning the UN-Habitat Urban-Rural Linkages Guiding Principles (2019), FAO/BMZ/GIZ Territorial and Landscape Days (2020), OECD report (2020) on territorial approaches as pathways to localise the SDGs. Relevant are also the following: GIZ Stocktaking on Territorial Approaches (2021), the “ad hoc” working group on Territorial Governance and the International Coalition to Promote Territorial Food Systems Governance launched by the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries in the context of the UN Food Systems Summit (2021). Moreover, the G20 meeting hosted by Italy in 2021 and the UN desertification, biodiversity, and climate COPs in 2022 stressed the importance of systemic and integrated approaches.

This prompted an update to the TP4D White Paper of 2018, incorporating lessons learned. The new White Paper of 2023 is aimed at policymakers, donors, and practitioners by offering recommendations for policy formulation, project design, and governance.

## Key Features of Territorial Approaches



The TP4D White Paper of 2018 identified core principles for territorial approaches, which have since been refined and adapted. These include that they should be **place-based, people-centred, rights-based, cross-sectoral, multi-actor, and multi-level**. Shared principles can lead to a higher degree of policy coherence and integrated territorial governance. Both enable actions that are inclusive i.e., reach different levels, actors, and spaces to foster more sustainable development.

Territorial approaches adapted to specific places provide a solid framework for analysis and operations. They involve multiple sectors and

actors, including the often complex economic, ecological, and social transformation processes in each geographic space. Inclusive multi-sector assessments which often constitute a first phase in territorial approaches can identify entry points to catalyse collaborative action.

Understanding the stakeholders as well as their interests and priorities is crucial for comprehending the territory since it encompasses a multitude of interdependent human interactions. People, organisations, and institutions in a territory have different and – to some extent – conflicting needs and interests. Furthermore, territorial actors have different

capacities to pursue their interests; territories are characterised by power relations that can be asymmetric between stakeholders. To establish a shared development strategy for a territory which contributes to sustainable development, territorial approaches must unfold power asymmetries and identify common ground. Complex challenges may

have a single-sector entry point but can be more effectively addressed through territorial approaches that use coordinated, integrated solutions. Entry points for the rich variety of territorial approaches are local economic development, better food and nutrition systems, restored biodiversity and ecosystems, integrated landscape and sustainable

natural resources management. Also important are: inclusive access to public and private services, inclusive mobility and transport, community-led strategies for strengthening rights of territorial actors, responses to environmental and economic shocks, and challenges arising from protracted crises, including civil or armed conflicts.

## Facilitating Successful Implementation of Territorial Approaches

The challenges encountered on territorial levels may vary according to environmental geography, demographics, political, financial, and economic conditions, and social capacities. To overcome them and operationalise the core principles of territorial approaches (listed above), the TP4D group has identified the following components to successfully implement them:

### Institutionalise the use of territorial diagnostics

Designing multi-stakeholder processes to deliver context-specific territorial assessments creates a shared understanding of the territory, builds trust, and underpins evidence-based strategies for action. Working with complexity entails acknowledging territorial assets from the beginning of the project or program design. These assets include **(1) territorial resources** (human, material, economic, financial, social, natural, and cultural), **(2) territorial governance** (legal / customary rules and practices, power relations), and **(3) territorial intelligence** (networks and actors' capacity to interact, generate data and operative norms, build from local and indigenous knowledge and traditional practices, etc.). Indeed, fostering and nurturing long-term territorial intelligence relates to deep-scaling initiatives, grounding territorial approaches beyond the scope and timeframe of individual projects.

### Invest in strengthening the capacity of relevant authorities and in empowering stakeholders

Inclusivity is a central precondition to ensuring all communities of interest can take their roles in a long-term process of interlinking actions. It entails connecting local authorities (in municipal or regional governments) with relevant civil society and private sector actors. It also means making certain that processes are inclusive, participatory and empowering for all. Those most often left behind need to be enabled to access policymaking, such as small-scale farmers, women, youth, indigenous peoples, slum dwellers, unemployed, micro- and smaller enterprises, and other vulnerable groups that frequently do not have a voice.

### Address social dynamics and power imbalances

To conceive and implement territorial approaches, it is important to acknowledge and address the question of power relations, access to resources, infrastructure, services and their impacts on policy processes and projects. Territorial approaches bring together actors with diverse and even contrasting interests and views. This diversity can help address the multidimensional needs of rural and urban actors in an integrated manner, including the interlinkages of SDGs.

The networks of social relationships at the heart of territorial approaches must acknowledge politically, socially, and economically marginalised actors. This is a critical point for the financial side as addressing power imbalances from a rights-based perspective requires time, sensitive facilitation, and agreements among participating actors.

### Design inclusive institutional frameworks

Challenges in formulating coherent cross-sector objectives in complex and multi-dimensional development issues are better resolved by identifying trade-offs, burdens and benefits, and negotiating priorities across multiple sectors. Moreover, challenges related to social inclusion and public-private partnerships are better resolved by involving all relevant actors in the process. Therefore, multi-sectorial and multi-actor provisional platforms are often necessary to address power imbalances, dialogue, planning and action, and uptake of decisions and collaboration. They can help integrating territorial approaches into sectoral policies as well as in budgeting, financing, monitoring, and evaluation of programs. Thus, they can foster policy coherence, new and lasting governance arrangements and contribute to new forms of integration, including unique patterns of collaboration between units of government and non-governmental actors.

### Go beyond administrative boundaries

Multi-level coordination means vertical integration across local, regional, and national levels of government and horizontal integration of policies and programs between jurisdictions and rural and urban areas. Processes of peer-to-peer dialogue and coordination across borders can help break down barriers between sectors and generate synergies at the territorial level. Coordination is essential, including territorial planning across sectors, the inclusion of local actors, capacity development, strategic planning, and mechanisms for implementing territorial actions. The results of these processes can mobilise actors to better participate in multi-level governance arrangements – both vertically and horizontally.

### Ensure adequate financing and unlock territorial opportunities

This is fundamental for the success of territorial approaches, especially in developing countries, and for vulnerable or marginalised actors and communities in all countries. The functional and spatial complexity of territorial approaches requires

adequate financing through already existing or new mechanisms. It is important to identify local and territorial development opportunities and estimate the burdens and benefits of existing sectorial interventions or initiatives. That holds true not only for the necessary extra sector investments on the ground but also for financing continuous cross-sectoral collaboration, inclusive dialogues, integrated planning, community inclusion, and capacity building.

### Incentivise cross-sectoral investments on the ground

Required sector investments on the ground (e.g. infrastructure, services, land, housing, agriculture, environment, etc.) need to be incentivised by national and local governments. These investments help to lay the foundation for economic development in line with the priorities agreed upon by territorial stakeholders. This can also mobilise additional means from public and private sources.

### Evaluate impact and intensify research

Improving impact evaluation is urgent. Yet, it implies further research on tools and instruments since there is not yet a robust and integrated conceptual

framework for the monitoring and evaluation of territorial approaches across sectors and actors. Decision makers, for example, need to adapt existing or adopt new indicators and develop qualitative and quantitative metrics that help assess their impact on territorial development. At the territorial level, all qualitative or quantitative data need to be context specific and built upon negotiations around local challenges and needs.

### Nurture evidence-based-policy interfaces

Impact monitoring, including traditional, indigenous, and local knowledge and scientific information (containing also citizen science) is necessary for projects and programs. This is needed to benchmark, capture, and showcase the results to a wider range of stakeholders, to report to partners and donors as well as provide strategic inputs and feedback for future projects and policy change. Policymakers in the field need evidence-based information that supports them in creating awareness of possible changes, trade-offs, and potential impacts during policy design, implementation, review, and adjustments of multi-sectoral territorial projects and programs.

## National Policy Needed to Support Territorial Approaches

Experiences from around the world have shown that national policy fosters the implementation of territorial approaches, depending on a country's historical context, institutional capacities, and political economy.

In most cases, national governments can provide leadership to create or sustain the enabling environment for territorial development.

Key areas for support are the promotion of **effective governance mechanisms and coordination between**

**different levels of governance** in partnership with civil society organisations, the private sector, and development partners.

**Experiences demonstrate that:**

### Decentralisation policies can help to enhance territorial development.

Policies for the decentralisation of governing authorities and institutionalising processes for cross-sector, cross-border and rural-urban linkages can be fostered by territorial approaches. At the same time a certain degree of decentralisa-

tion is a prerequisite for bottom-up approaches on sub-national and territorial levels.

### Policy-mandated incentives for territorial approaches are needed

on a national level to broaden the focus from single-sectoral interests. They also help to adopt a territorial perspective across sectors and actors. Incentives can include resources to support cross-sector and cross-spatial (rural-urban) mechanisms, policies, and programs.

**National policy frameworks can strengthen rights** to land, land use, natural resources, and access to adequate food for vulnerable groups. This is important not least because they are also stewards of healthy ecosystems. Conducive policies on national level can provide guid-

ance for the management of natural resource rights on territorial level and thus lead to better economic, social and environmental outcomes.

**National support is needed to underpin capacity building for territorial development** accessible

to stakeholders at different levels. Inadequate resources and capacity to conduct and manage ongoing territorial policies, planning, program management, and evaluation is a challenge to be addressed by policy interventions that include equity, diversity, and inclusion.

## From Good Practice to Mainstreaming

**T**erritorial approaches can be an effective means for measuring progress and helping to achieve the SDGs. They can bring together international, national, and local actors to learn from available experience, influence relevant policy agendas, support implementation, and review and develop guidelines, assessments, and training materials. Organisations supporting territorial development can build on existing opportunities to enrich and learn from knowledge management and planning. This can include building

and supporting networks for coordinated learning and stimulating action across coalitions of countries and territorial initiatives.

The organisations forming the group called Territorial Perspective for Development (TP4D) acknowledge the importance of lessons learned when implementing territorial approaches. These organisations share the belief that territorial approaches should be adopted whenever feasible and of additional value in a given local context. Furthermore,

representatives of governments, municipalities, public authorities, civil society organisations, private businesses, research institutions, and local communities are encouraged to consider territorial approaches for their programmes, projects, and initiatives, given their potential for contributing to poverty reduction, food security, and the SDGs. Against this background, TP4D partners strive to further enhance implementation of territorial approaches and underscore the need to mainstream them for sustainable development.

*The statements and conclusions in this white paper have been elaborated in a consultation process with various stakeholders of the TP4D Group. They reflect the experiences and opinions of contributing authors. The statements do not necessarily reflect the policies and views of supporting organizations of the TP4D Group.*

