



## **ETHIOPIA'S MOVE TO A NATIONAL INTEGRATED LAND USE POLICY AND LAND USE PLAN**

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# Responsible Land Governance: Towards an Evidence Based Approach

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## Abstract

Studies show that except in urban centers with master plans and zoning in effect, people in Ethiopia have been using land, for far too long, in unplanned and uncontrolled fashion without due regard to the land's best potential use and without due consideration for conservation of natural resources and safeguarding the environment. The rate of expansion of urban centers, industries, agriculture, agro-industries and hotels/lodges in the study areas has been large and very fast. This accelerated change is occurring without due consideration to the potential of the land and without land use plans. Consequently, important wetland ecosystems, high potential arable lands, grasslands and forest areas have been converted to urban centers and industrial sites with undesirable environmental and social consequences.

Informed by the conclusions and recommendations of studies, the Government of Ethiopia gave the green light for formulating a national land use policy and for preparing a national integrated land use plan. USAID provided technical and financial assistance to develop a land use policy and prepare a road map on the preparation and implementation of a national integrated land use plan. This plan will have multifaceted benefits. It will facilitate coordination of allocation of land to avoid or minimize sectoral competition and conflict on land use and create a system that regulates land use in the country. It will align national, sectoral and regional demand for land and thereby protect biodiversity and environmental hot spots. The Ethiopian Government plans to make the national land use plan an integral part of the country's Third Growth and Transformation plan to be implemented in 2020-2024.

This paper provides historical background on the country's land use planning efforts in the past, highlights recent findings of studies on the importance of land use policy and planning, shows the Government of Ethiopia's commitment in initiating a national integrated land use planning program, assesses progress being made and examines the way forward.

**Key Words:** Land use policy, land use planning, conservation of natural resources, safeguarding the environment



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## **1. Introduction**

Ethiopia has a federal form of government with nine regional states and two autonomous cities. The country is endowed with diverse agro-ecology and natural resources. With about 100 million inhabitants, Ethiopia is the second most populous nation in Africa. Its economy is mainly agrarian with 80 percent of the population living in rural areas. Most of the highlands are overpopulated, leading to rapid conversion of forests and shrub land into crop fields and cultivation of steep slopes resulting in severe soil erosion. The vast area covered by the lowlands (about 60% of the total land area of the country) is overgrazed and degraded. Highly invasive weed species, including *prosopis juliflora* that suppresses grass growth is widely spread in the Ethiopian rangelands, posing a serious threat to the production of livestock.

Under a constitutional provision, there are federal and regional land proclamations providing legal framework on the administration and use of land. The proclamations, however, are predominated by land administration articles offering little direction on the use of specific land features. Although some regions made efforts to implement land use planning at various scales and approaches, the implementation faced a lot of challenges including absence of binding guiding policy and regulatory instruments. Furthermore, studies show that the country's natural resources are severely degrading and that a national land use policy is imperative to guide the allocation of use of resources to their best use potential and in a manner that promotes their conservation and sustainable use.

This paper highlights progress made to formulate and enact a national land use policy and prepare a national integrated land use plan for Ethiopia. Although the country achieved double digit economic growth in the last decade, absence of a comprehensive national land use policy and national land use plan affected allocation of land to its best use. Considering the challenges this could result in sustaining development gains, the Government of Ethiopia decided to put in place a policy and an integrated plan to determine and regulate land use in the whole country.



Studies conducted under the USAID supported Land Administration to Nurture Development (LAND) Project<sup>2</sup> show that except in urban centers with master plans and zoning in effect, people in Ethiopia have been using land, for far too long, in unplanned and uncontrolled fashion without due regard to the land's best potential use and without due consideration for conservation of natural resources.

Land is being used in Ethiopia without taking into consideration its social and economic suitability and safeguarding of natural resources and without being guided by prudent planning and coordination among the various sectors of the economy such as agriculture, forest, livestock, water resources, energy and mining, and wildlife and tourism, causing severe degradation of natural resources and the environment and worsening food insecurity. The above studies show that if the current situation of unguided and unbridled land use continues, the nation's natural resources will be destroyed beyond repair with untold social and economic consequences.

Informed by the conclusions and recommendations of the above studies and review of a workshop on 'Land Use Policy in Ethiopia' conducted under the USAID/Land Administration to Nurture Development (LAND) Project in October 2015, the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources brought the imperative and urgent need for formulating a comprehensive national land use policy and developing and implementing a sectorally integrated national land use plan to the attention of the Prime Minister's office. As a happy coincidence, this has been in the mind of the Advisor to the Prime Minister on Environment and Basin Development, who has been tasked to play a coordination role. Recognizing the gravity and urgency of the situation, the Prime Minister's office gave the green light for formulating a national land use policy and for preparing a national land use plan by establishing an 11-member ministerial committee to guide and oversee this task which has begun in earnest.

Initial discussions among those involved in this task show that there is misperception over the concepts of 'land policy' and 'land use policy'. At times, one observes the terms being used interchangeably leading to the notion of why one needs land use policy when the country already

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<sup>2</sup> This study refers to the five papers presented and discussed at a national workshop on Land Use Policy in Ethiopia at Adama town on October 20-21, 2015.



has a land policy. Under a constitutional provision, there is a federal land proclamation providing legal framework on the administration and use of land. The proclamation, however, is predominated by land administration articles and left to offer few directions on the use of specific land features. Regions enacted respective land administration and use proclamations based on the national framework premises. Although some regions put efforts to implement land use planning at various scales and approaches, the implementation faced a lot of challenges including absence of a binding guiding policy and regulatory instruments.

After better understanding was developed on the importance of land use policy, experts were tasked to put together issue papers helping to prepare a policy document and pass onto the legislative body. In parallel, a road map was developed for guiding preparation of a national integrated land use plan at national, regional and lower level planning units. The road map preparation went through extensive stakeholders' consultation processes, including high level policy and decision makers of the federal and regional governments. Once the road map is approved by the inter –ministerial committee a coordination office will be established under the auspices of the Prime Minister Office to spearhead formulation of the national land use policy and preparation of the national integrated land use plan. It will also prepare all the modalities, including the legislation to establish the national institution that will coordinate implementation and monitoring and evaluation of the national land use policy and land use plan.

## **2. Ethiopia's Experience in Land Use Planning and Existing Legal Frameworks**

There were different attempts made to prepare land use plans at macro and micro river basin levels in the last six decades. Following growing concerns on the deteriorating natural resources base, different governments tried to conduct studies and formulate land use plans. According to an inventory made for the road map preparation, the following were among the many initiatives launched by different governments.

1. The FAO/UNDP Assistance to Land Use Planning Project of the Land Use Planning and Regulatory Department of the Ministry of Agriculture (1979 - 1990)



2. The Woody Biomass Inventory and Strategic Planning Project of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (1989 – 2005)
3. The Integrated Resource Development Master Plans of the major River Basins of the country developed by the Ministry of Water and Energy (1996 - 2010)
4. Semi-detailed Integrated Land Use Planning projects at sub-basin level in a number of National Regional States (2010 - 2012)
5. The REDD+ forest development plan, which is close to finalization
6. Land use plans that are started in Oromia and Amhara regional states
7. The integrated land use and development plan of Gambella Regional state, which is mid-way in its preparation
8. Integrated land use and development plans, which are planned at sub-basin level by Oromia regional state (Dawa sub-basin in December 2010), by the national regional state of Afar (middle Awash Sub-basin in December 2012), Western Danakil Sub basin Integrated land use plan of the Afar National Regional State (ANRS) conducted in February 2014.

Despite efforts to formulate land use planning and natural resources management projects, the implementation faced lack of enforcement and regulatory mechanisms. The road map identifies bottlenecks, which hindered the implementation and successfulness of the past land use planning initiatives, as insufficient awareness and sensitization among decision makers, lack of involvement of the major stakeholders (beneficiaries), absence of coordination between different government agencies, lack of legal framework and limited implementation capacity. It seems that, above all, lack of a national institution to coordinate, lead and follow-up implementation of the land use plans was a major gap.

Past land use planning initiatives had sector and area specific objectives such as river basin development, forest restoration and management, regional land use planning. Lack of integration



among these different initiatives remained a challenge in terms of having a common goal and effort to develop and implement a comprehensive land use plan. The Oromia and Amhara regional states launched land use planning exercises within their administrative boundaries. Both regions followed watershed based land use plans and focused on region specific considerations.

Based on constitutional provisions, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Rural Land Administration and Land Use Proclamation (No. 456/2005) was enacted to provide a legal framework on the administration and use of rural land. A majority of the articles of the proclamation deal with terms of land use rights and obligations. Although Part III of the Proclamation, under subtitle *“land use planning and proper use of sloppy, gully and wetlands”*, addresses some elements of land use planning and management, it does not provide sufficient details and guidance on how to embark upon a comprehensive and integrated land use planning and how to regulate the utilization of different lands for various purposes. The Proclamation calls for the development of a master land use plan based on a watershed approach, but it remained narrowly focused with limited options for implementation.

The land administration and use proclamation is supposed to provide a legal framework based on which regions enact their own land laws. Because the Federal Proclamation gives little emphasis to land use plans, regions were not directed to have expanded and detailed laws on land use planning. As a result, regional laws also provide very few provisions on guiding and regulating land use.

### **3. Differentiating between Land Policy and Land Use Policy**

One of the reasons that suppressed development of a national land use policy in Ethiopia was its confusion with land policy among policy and decision makers, who used the two concepts interchangeably. This led to the conclusion that the country did not need a land use policy when it already has a land policy and legislation to implement it. The fact of the matter is that the two concepts are not one and the same.



According to Mwangi (2002), land policy is a much broader concept than land use policy, as land policy covers all tenure, ownership and laws on the use of land, whereas land use policy is all about dealing with the use and management of land resources. West (1986), quoted in Hermunen (2004), mentioned that land policy includes land use policy as a component and does have environmental, spatial and tenure dimensions.

*“Land policy provides overall guidance on land tenure: the allocation of rights in land; the delimitation and recording of boundaries of parcels for which the rights are allocated; registration of land rights; the transfer of land rights from one party to another through sale, lease, loan, gift or inheritance; the adjudication of disputes regarding land rights and parcel boundaries; adjudication of land use conflicts; land valuation and taxation; the adjudication of land valuation and taxation disputes; and maintaining and updating the land cadaster and disseminating information about the ownership, value and use of land”* (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2002)

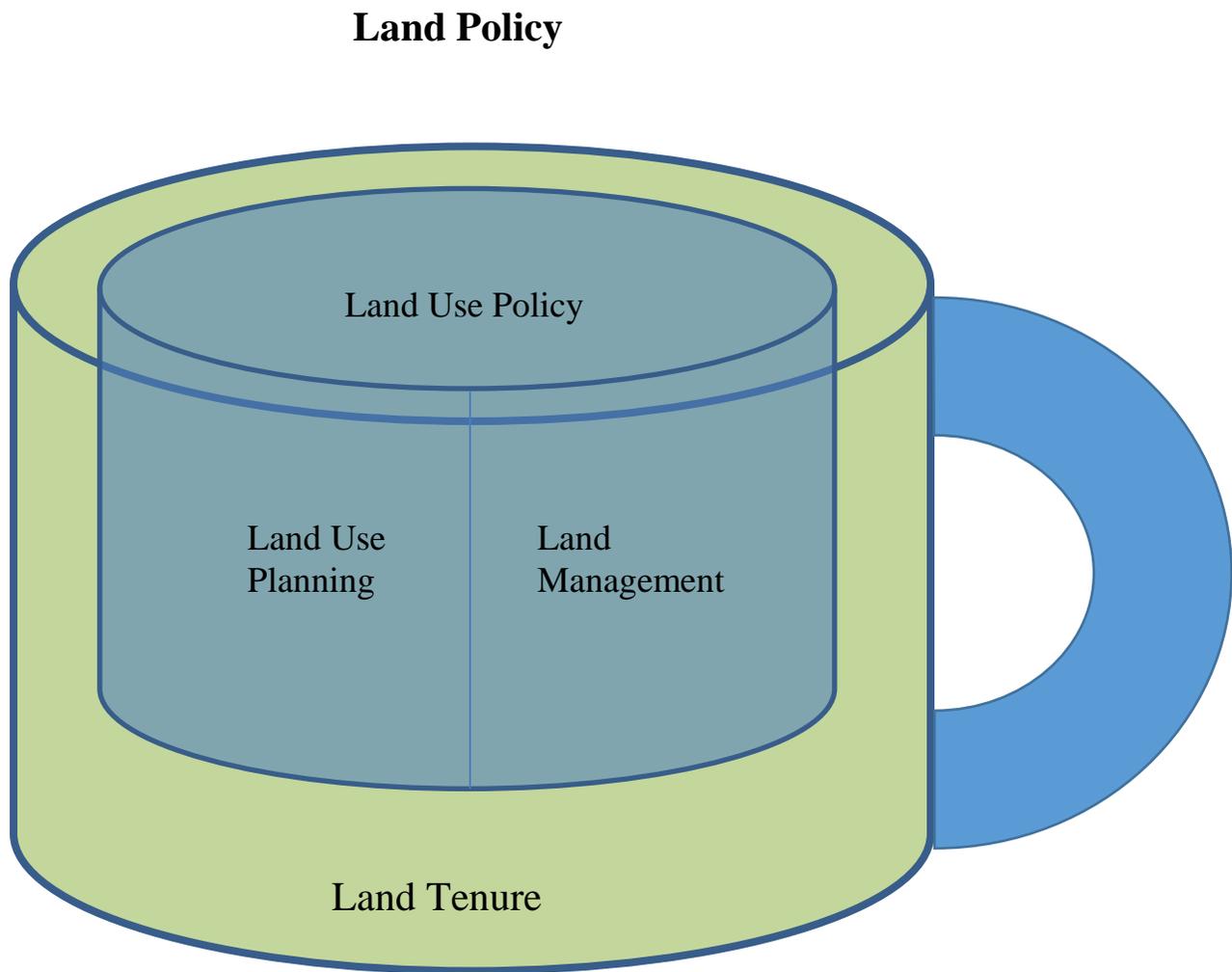
The Food and Agricultural Organization (2002) elaborates that “Land policy aims to achieve certain objectives relating to the security and distribution of land rights, land use and land management, and access to land, including the forms of tenure under which it is held. A land-use policy is essentially an expression of the government's perception of the direction to be taken on major issues related to land use and the proposed allocation of the national land resources over a fixed period of time. It has a production and a conservation component. A sound national land-use policy is effectively part of the enabling environment and should cover all uses of land. To achieve the policy objective of sustainable production and conservation of natural resources, governments should pursue strategies which actively promote forms of land use which are both attractive to the people and sustainable in terms of their impacts on land resources.”

Land use policy is an instrument for government to determine the use of land and control land use implementation (Virtanen, 1995, quoted in Hermunen, 2004). FAO (2002) describes ‘land use policy’ as a much narrower concept, limited to providing guidance on determining the use, and proper management of land. However, narrower in a sense is in contrast to the broader land policy concept. Land use policy by itself embraces many detail activities related to the use and



management of land. “The aim of a National Land Use Policy is to provide general guidance on optimal and sustainable utilization of land, and is based on the analysis of soil types, topographic features, and agro-ecological considerations, as well as social and demographic factors.” (Republic of Uganda Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development, 2006)

Figure 1: The relationship between land policy and land use policy



Source: Authors



As shown above, the literature on the two policies indicates that land policy embraces land tenure and adjudication and administration of land rights and land valuation issues; whereas land use policy tends to be more specific and deals with determination of how land is used and managed sustainably while conserving the natural resource base of a given country. However, it is important to note that the two policies are interdependent. Unless tenure aspects are defined with ownership and use rights to land and its natural resources, issuing land use policy and preparing land use plans alone and designing management instruments cannot be sufficient for their effective implementation. Similarly, providing direction on ownership and use rights through land policy alone cannot guarantee that land is put to its best use and managed well without a proper land use policy and land use planning.

In summary, both land policy and land use policy are different in terms of scope and depth, but they complement each other. Land Policy defines tenure aspects with associated rights and obligations and provides the umbrella framework for the use and management of land, but it does not provide detail land use and management guidance as land use policy does.

#### **4. Experience of Other Countries in Land Use Policy**

There might be a question on why one needs a land use policy if land policy serves as an umbrella guiding document. There may also be thinking that land use plan can be implemented without a land use policy. Given that formulating a comprehensive land use policy is a new endeavor and a new exercise for Ethiopia, assessing experiences of other countries provides useful clues to illustrate its importance. Kenya has had a land policy for many decades without formulating land use policy, which led to the country experiencing immense problems in managing the different land use practices and providing appropriate policy response to address these problems. According to the Kenya's Ministry of Lands and Physical Planning (2016), rapid unguided urbanization, unplanned industrialization and agricultural uses of land, poor environmental protection and harmful cultural land management have been increasingly prevailing in the country. The Ministry recently prepared a national land use policy to guide the land use and management of natural resources. (ibid.)



In Uganda, in addition to the land policy it had, the government needed to issue a land use policy in order to achieve the country's goal of poverty eradication and development. Although there were some provisions in the National Environment Statute (1995) to develop a land use plan, it was not well integrated to address all sectors and guide the land use plan in the right direction. The country was unable to identify and allocate land for different purposes based on suitability, productivity, potential and sustainability. The existing unguided use of land resulted in fragmentation of land and degradation of natural resources. A comprehensive national land use policy had to be formulated to address this problem (Republic of Uganda Ministry of Lands, Housing and Urban Development, 2006).

In Namibia, a study conducted to prepare and implement land use planning revealed that lack of a land use policy was a major constraint. The study indicated that although Namibia has a sound legal framework providing authority to local communities to manage natural resources, lack of an approved land use policy resulted in allocation of the same land for different purposes (Jones, 2009).

In India, the Constitution devolves land administration and use regulation responsibilities to regional states like in Ethiopia. Nevertheless, the existing land, agricultural and environmental laws barely addressed land use planning issues. Recognizing land use problems such as competing and conflicting land uses, a standalone Land Utilization Policy was prepared in 2013 to address such issues. The draft Land Utilization Policy of India states that *"The policy seeks to order and regulate land use in an efficient and rational way, thus taking care of the needs of the community while safeguarding natural resources and minimizing land use conflicts."* (The Ministry of Rural Development of Government of India, 2013)

Germany introduced a Federal Special Planning Act in 1965. The Act provided guiding frameworks to states and sectors so that states can develop their own special planning law (Japan Government Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, 2016). Nevertheless, there was a law on land prior to the 1965 Act. According to Magel (2003), "land law in the Advisory Opinion of the German Federal Constitutional Court (1954) is defined as the sum of the rules which regulate those matters, which arising from the interests of society, require regulation in



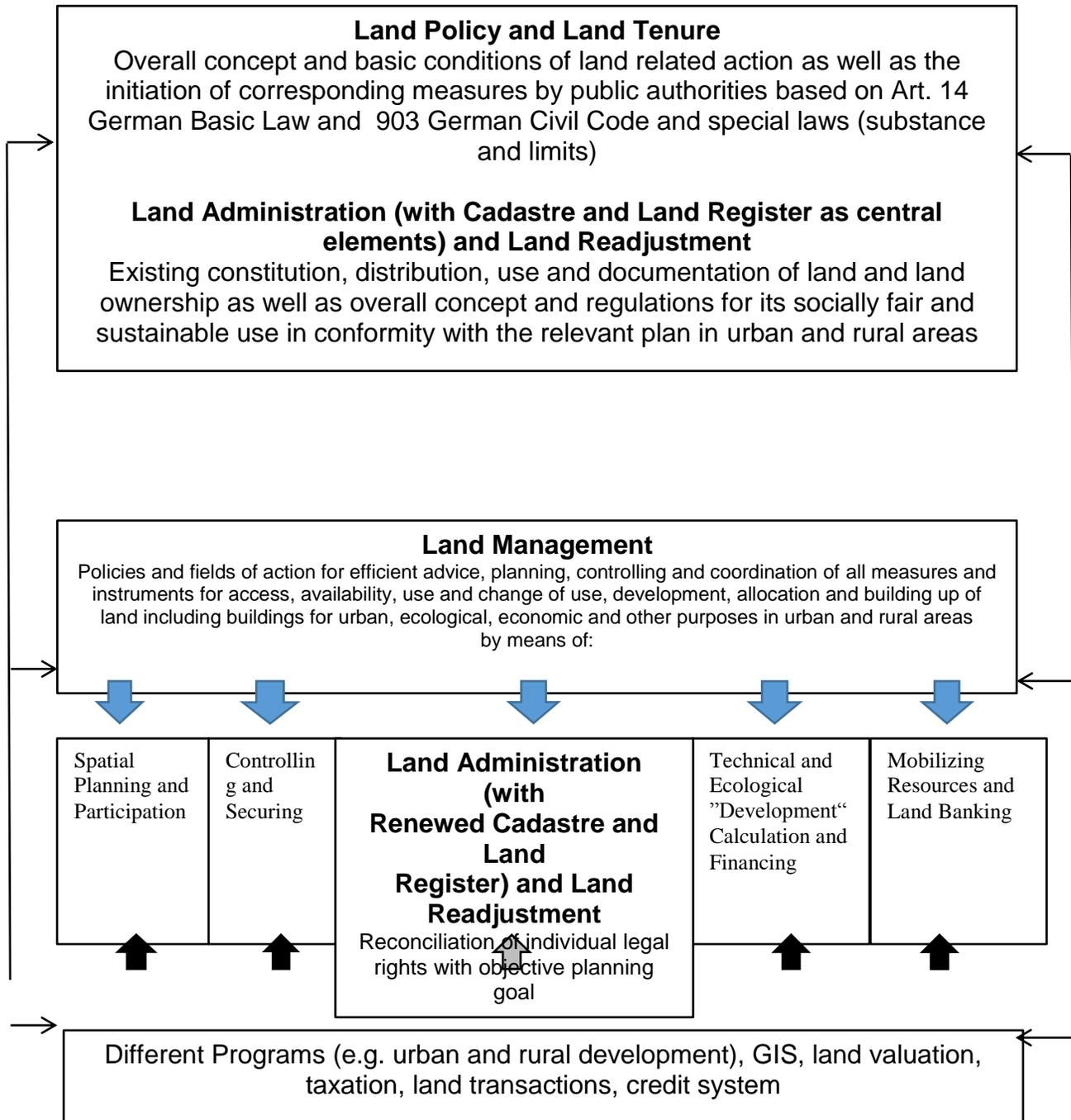
relation to land transactions, parcels of land, property relations and kinds of use”. Magel also indicates that the land law has a two-fold purpose. The first component deals with static or tenure aspects. The second contains dynamic aspects such as spatial planning and the resolution of conflicts between public and private interests. Tenure aspects are considered static because it is unlikely to have a changing land tenure system where a certain land ownership system (private or state ownership) has been adopted for centuries. However, the use of land can change based on arising interests.

In the Federal political system of Germany, spatial planning was developed through time based on certain principles giving mandates for different level of administrative levels (Pahl-Weber and Henckel, 2008). The 1998 Spatial Planning Act gave the Federation important enforcement tool on special planning and development at national level. The principle of the spatial planning rests on recognition of independent planning tiers in the planning system and achieving sustainable spatial planning addressing social, economic and ecological aspects in a stable and balanced way.

Magel (2003) mentioned that with the development of the importance of land for different purposes, the concept of “land management” was introduced in Germany with multiple objectives. The idea of land management included advising, planning, constructing and re-adjustment of land. As can be seen in Fig 2, the broader land policy and land tenure law provided a legal framework for distribution, use and documentation of land and land ownership. Based on this framework, Germany later developed policies and guidelines for efficient planning, controlling and coordination of development, allocation, use, change of use land for ecological, economic and other purposes in urban and rural areas.



Figure 2: Relationships between Land Policy, Land Tenure and Land Management in Germany



Source: H. Magel, based on model by Professor Theo Kötter, Hanover University at the 3rd Munich Congress of Land Readjustment and Land Development 2001



In the United States of America, many scholars urged formulation of a national land use policy after they observed miss-guided land use when different agencies of the Federal Government proposed different projects on the same land: *“One of [the federal agencies] was preserving the area as a park, the other altering the landscape for flood control, the third funding airport construction”* (Green, 1998). Academics and scientists also argued that local governments may not be in a position to see the bigger impact at national level while dealing with large projects because they have capacity issues and short term needs. A national level land use policy is essential for planning large projects and guiding their implementation.

Nolon (ND) explains how the United States of America (USA) passed a number of land use related laws as the time and situation called for. Although USA had different land laws enacted for centuries, land use laws evolved through time. Following specialization of activities and disagreements among different manufacturing groups, the nation’s first comprehensive zoning ordinance was adopted by New York City in 1916. As this concept spread quickly, over 500 local governments had adopted the land use law by the mid-1920s. The U.S. Department of Commerce propagated the model of zoning for a rapid adoption in the 1920’s by opening up a room to providing funding to support the efforts of states to protect environmental resources in critical areas. *“States and the federal government have created only a few regional land use agencies that dictate land use standards or policies to local regulators.”* (ibid.)

The experiences of these different countries from Africa, Asia, Europe and North America give sound lessons on the importance of a comprehensive and integrated national land use policy. Although different sector laws touched on land use aspects, these countries did not have a well-integrated land use plan that avoids competing and conflicting interests on the same land and provides environmental safeguards. Their experience shows that an integrated and a standalone national land use policy is crucial for guiding a country’s judicious use of land and natural resources with proper consideration of the best social and economic use of different lands and safeguarding natural resources.



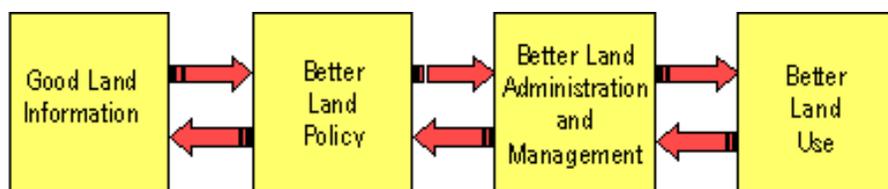
## 5. The Importance of a National Land Use Policy to guide an Integrated Land Use Planning in Ethiopia

The need to have an integrated land use plan should be seen in relation to the goal of achieving sustainable development (FIG, 1990). The integration of environment and development concerns can occur if a land use plan is put in place with an objective of determining the use of land for different purposes and controlling its implementation. As experiences of other countries show, in order to have an integrated land use plan, there should be a land use policy document directing the planning process and goal.

As can be seen in Fig 3, well informed land policy leads to better land administration and land management, which eventually results in better land use. Land policy, land administration, land use policy, land use plans and land management are not static. They feed each other and remain dynamic to suit changing needs and conditions.

In Ethiopia, the dichotomy of land administration and land use regulation into rural and urban areas remained a challenge to develop an integrate land use planning and implementation. If the two areas continue to have separate land use development plans, there is a high possibility of creating conflicting activities. The proposed land use policy would help alleviate such conflicting planning and develop an integrated land use plan benefiting urban and rural areas. The land use policy also provides a comprehensive framework for considering and harmonizing sectoral interests at all levels.

Figure 3: Sustainable development is not attainable without sound land administration and management



Source: International Federation of Surveyors (FIG), 1999



With the plan to implement an integrated national land use plan, Ethiopia needs to have in place a comprehensive national land use policy that can be cascaded to the regions so that they can issue their own policies. As mentioned above, those countries following federal government structure such as Germany and USA enacted federal policies and laws that encouraged states to develop local policies and laws. The policy would provide guiding principles, define the purpose of allocating land for its best social, economic and sustainable use, and ensure integration of land use planning at all levels. One of the important considerations would be the institutional set up required for ensuring the national land use policy is complied with and for coordinating implementation of the sectorally integrated national land use plan. With land use policy in place and land use plan crafted, an independent institution overseeing and supporting the implementation is crucial.

Experiences of both developed and developing countries provide tangible lessons that it is important to enact a national land use policy and a legal framework that allows the development of spatial or land use planning. Many of the countries did not embark upon a land use planning exercise before putting in place a policy or legal framework providing the framework to guide and regulate implementation of such a plan.

## **6. Government's Decision to Develop a National Land Use Policy and Plan**

Studies conducted over the years showed the level of problems the country has been experiencing in terms of allocation of land for different activities without prior studies on suitability and the extent of damage that ensued. With the growing economy of the country and interest to sustain growth through expansion of agricultural activities, realization of transformation to industrialization and improving the infrastructure base, land allocation for various activities led to unguided and uncontrolled land use. This resulted in using prime agriculture land for industry, construction and human settlement and wet lands and reserve areas for agriculture.

The situation alerted government officials to look into the matter and to have better understanding on the importance of land use planning. The Ministry of Agriculture and Natural



Resources reviewed recent studies and brought the issue to the attention of the Prime Minister's Office. Considering the seriousness of the problem, the Prime Minister took a prompt action and called for a symposium which brought together cabinet members, regional officials and heads of different institutions to discuss the imperative of formulating a national land use policy and preparing a national integrated land use plan. Out of the recently conducted studies, the ones assessing existing land use patterns, legal frameworks of different sectors and experiences from Rwanda were presented. Participants of the symposium were impressed with the findings of the studies and expressed their concerns as well. Finally, the Prime Minister gave a directive to move to the next step to formulate a national land use policy and a road map for preparing a national integrated land use plan for implementation in the third Growth and Transformation Plan.

The Prime Minister Office took an historical and very crucial step in making national land use policy and land use planning a top priority among the nation's development agenda. Coordination of this initiative was kept under the Prime Minister's Office because land use policy and land use planning involve different ministries and different federal and regional government agencies. A Steering Committee of eight ministries using and regulating land use was setup to follow up the progress and provide guidance on the planning and implementation of the initiative. A Technical Committee composed of the same ministries was also established to support the technical aspects of the initiative.

## **7. Road Map for Preparing a National Integrated Land Use Plan**

Following the directive from the Prime Minister Office, preparation of the road map commenced by hiring a consultant and arranging a review body composed of relevant offices. Preparing the road map was deemed to be important to guide the planning process in a predetermined plan of action and to identify human and financial resources needed to conduct the land use planning exercise.

Preparing the road map passed through several iterations and consultation processes. The terms of reference and concept note of the road map were reviewed at different stages and forums. The



concept paper was presented to professionals composed of relevant line departments of government, development partners and land related projects. Based on the feedback received from consultation meetings on the concept note and the terms of reference, the first draft of the roadmap was produced and presented to stakeholders in September 2016, including representatives of regional governments, federal sector offices, development partners, researchers and consulting firms. The important comments participants gave were used as inputs to enrich the road map.

The road map was further developed to embrace many aspects and to provide details on certain procedural matters. A core working group continued reviewing revised drafts of the road map by identifying areas requiring substantial changes and editorial works. The final draft of the road map was reviewed by a second round of stakeholders on January 24, 2017 under the leadership of the Prime Minister Office. This review brought together all relevant institutions from federal and regional government line departments, development partners, land administration projects, research institutions and consulting firms. After over six months of preparation, the road map was launched to guide the whole process of the land use planning.

The road map covers different aspects that guide the planning process. It reviewed international and national experiences regarding land use planning approaches and results. This part of the road map provides evidence on the importance of land use planning and expected benefits and challenges. The national experience particularly is helpful to advise planners to take into consideration efforts made so far and use as an input some of the basin and watershed based land use plans that were prepared in the past. The road map also states problems being observed because of lack of an integrated national land use plan and common objectives to be met.

The stakeholder analysis part of the road map is instrumental in identifying relevant institutions and communities to be involved in different stages of the planning processes. The road map particularly laid out the role of federal, regional, zonal and woreda land use planning offices and the data communication protocols among them. As the planning approach is people and livelihood centered, there will be huge community consultation processes in data collection. Communities will be organized in their production and livelihood systems so that they can



explain the type of land use they are practicing and would like to maintain. Various bio-physical experts will work with communities to match communities' needs with soil and other bio-physical characteristics of the area.

The road map clarifies the type of institutional set up and number of staff needed to conduct the planning. In addition to proposing the type of coordination offices needed at different administrative structures, the document indicates the type and number of experts to be hired and trained to handle different activities in the land use planning process. It specifies the type of expertise needed at all planning unit levels.

The major part of the road map puts core activities to be accomplished under preparatory, planning and implementation stages. Given urban and rural areas have distinct characteristics and features, the document categorizes planning activities into urban and rural. This part of the document is expected to give good guidance on where to start and what to follow in the land use planning process. Nevertheless, the road map is a living document which will be modified and reshaped based on experiences on the ground. Accordingly, laid out procedures in the road map can be changed or redefined if the planning coordination office and planning units think that this is required.

The road map indicates the amount of budget and materials needed to conduct the land use planning in three years. It has roughly estimated that close to \$60 million should be allocated from government treasury, loan and grants from development partners. It also provides breakdown of budget per regions taking into consideration different factors such as size, topography, demography, livelihood diversity.

## **8. The Way Forward**

Given the determination of the Ethiopian Government to issue a national land use policy and support the preparation of an integrated land use plan for the country, it is possible to remain optimistic that Ethiopia will have the necessary legal frameworks and well defined land uses in the near future. The establishment of a coordination office under the Prime Minister Office indicates the level of concern the Government has on land use issues. This also helps to facilitate



coordination of different sectoral departments which usually function independently to achieve sector specific goals.

Government expressed its determination to allocate resources for this initiative. However, there is a need for involvement of development partners to support the initiative both financially and technically. There is a plan to familiarize development partners with the objective and scope of the initiative. Given the concern of development partners with degradation of natural resources as a result of unguided and uncontrolled land use in the country and the difficulty of sustaining development gains under such circumstances, they are expected to support the initiative. If development partners put part of the proposed resources either in grant and/or loan, Government will be able to recruit the needed technical staff and procure resources to implement this important and historic initiative. .

Although some regions and basin development projects attempted to develop land use plans for specific areas, this initiative is unique in terms of scope and approach. Covering the nation with a land use plan in three years is a huge task. With limited experience in land use planning, there could be challenges facing the preparation process. There should be a consensus among stakeholders including regional governments and communities to move forward with the planning process. As some regions and communities are new to this kind of activity, it may not be easy to move things forward in accordance with the road map. The Coordination Office, thus, may need to spend time to familiarize officials and communities with the land use planning objective and processes.

The road map proposed different teams of professionals to prepare the land use plan. Universities in the country are not in a position to train professionals in some of the fields required for the activity. The Coordination Office may have to work with the Ministry of Education and specific universities to get technical people trained. This may take another chunk of the time allocated for the land use planning.

The land use policy seems to be enacted and passed by the legislative body per the plan. This is one step forward to develop derivative laws and guide the land use planning process. As the



Government of Ethiopia would like the land use plan to be ready for implementation in its third Growth and Transformation Plan for the period 2020-2025, there would be much pressure on the Coordination Office to get this accomplished in three years. Activities with high pressure and short deadlines are more likely to compromise quality. The Coordination Office needs to take this into consideration ahead of time and put contingency plans. The road map proposes starting the land use planning in different regions in a phased approach. The coordination office may take this as a good opportunity to prioritize regions according to their suitability, complexity, capacity, topography and awareness of communities and officials and prepare the land use plan systematically.

## **9. Conclusion**

The Government of Ethiopia took a major and historic step to issue a national land use policy and develop a national integrated land use policy. Although studies indicated a lot of natural resources degradation has already occurred due to the absence of a national land use policy and a national integrated land use plan, the decision made to recognize the problem experienced and the need to rectify the situation is very encouraging.

At the beginning, like in so many countries, there was a tendency to believe that land policy would be sufficient to address all land related issues. Nevertheless, countries learnt from their experience that there is a need to develop a separate land use policy in order to guide and address land use and land management activities in a meaningful and sustainable way. The effort being made in Ethiopia to enact a land use policy is also instrumental to put in place a legal framework to monitor implementation of the national land use policy and plan and to regulate land use.

The road map for preparing a national integrated land use plan is expected to guide the planning process in a coordinated and tailored way. With documentation of experiences within and out of the country, analysis of stakeholders, defining of institutional set up, the road map provides a working framework. Above all, the procedures and steps laid out in the road map help planning experts to follow uniform and standard approaches in the collection, analysis and mapping of data to produce an acceptable land use plans.



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The land use planning process is not expected to go smoothly and without challenges. Given the newness of the activity, there can be challenges in putting all stakeholders on the same page. Lack of skilled manpower, resource limitation and cultural and social factors will continue to affect the process. In addition to these challenges, the time allocated to complete the planning seems tight, but the government's strong determination to carry out the task is expected to outweigh these challenges.



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