



UrbanShift Costa Rica 1st National-Local Dialogue

Summarized by Pratibha Caleb

Topic of First National-Local Dialogue: Agro-landscapes for sustainable production in line with the transition to a green economy.

Level of Representation:

- National government representatives – Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, Ministry of Environment and Energy
- Local government representatives from nine cities– Curridabat, Desamparados, Paraíso, San Rafael, Alajuelita, Cartago, San José, Oreamuno, La Unión, Belén
- Other Representatives from UN agencies, research institutes and NGOs

Overview

The national local dialogue focused on sustainable urban and peri-urban land use, emphasizing environmental conservation, waste management, flood resilience, urban greening, and transitioning to a green economy.

1. **Agro-Landscape Management:** Emphasis was laid on sustainable land use, investment in environmental sustainability, decarbonization of the economy by reducing GHG emissions and utilizing renewable energy from agro-industrial waste
2. **Waste Management:** Need for sustainable waste management in urban and peri-urban areas, highlighting the role of local governments and the disparity of resources between regulatory and funding institutions
3. **Flood Resilience:** Tackling the multi-faceted causes of urban floods, including climate change, inadequate urban planning, and the need to improve infrastructure
4. **Greening Urban Areas:** Emphasis on biodiversity, ecosystem connectivity, and the importance of green infrastructure
5. **Green Economy:** Focus required on reducing environmental risks, creating green jobs, and fostering economic growth aligned with ecological sustainability

How the National-Local Dialogue Contributed to Existing Policy

National level

To address the Talanoa question "Where do we want to go?", the national-local dialogue provided a platform for discussing and setting goals for Costa Rica across various themes, with contributions aimed at enhancing existing policies.



Agro-Landscape Management: The dialogue proposed comprehensive state policies to measure ecological footprint and promote low-carbon and deforestation-free production. This aligns with Costa Rica's National Decarbonization Plan by promoting sustainable agricultural practices and integrating landscape management tools.

Waste Management: Participants emphasized strengthening policies, promoting a circular economy, and increasing recycling rates. These scenarios support Costa Rica's existing Solid Waste Management Plan by advocating for multisectoral collaboration and public education to enhance waste recovery and reduce environmental impact.

Urban Floods: The dialogue called for the design of resilient cities through integrated watershed planning and community engagement, complementing Costa Rica's National Risk Management Policy, which aims to mitigate disaster risks through sustainable urban planning.

Greening Urban Areas: Proposed scenarios included institutional cohesion, strengthening of biological corridors, and the promotion of urban green spaces. These initiatives enhance the objectives of the National Urban Development Plan of biodiversity conservation and improve urban livability through the increase of green infrastructure.

Green Economy: The dialogue fostered the development of legislation and incentives for sustainable industries, promoting green jobs and resilient infrastructure. These contributions align with Costa Rica's National Strategy for a Green Economy facilitating the transition to sustainable production and reducing environmental risks.

Local Level

At the local level, the national-local dialogue in Costa Rica significantly contributes to existing policies by promoting localized sustainable practices, enhancing community engagement, and facilitating the implementation of national strategies in a more context-specific manner. This collaborative approach ensures that local initiatives are aligned with national objectives, leading to more effective and comprehensive policy outcomes.



Localized Sustainable Practices: The dialogue emphasizes the importance of integrating sustainable practices tailored to local contexts. For instance, local governments are encouraged to adopt agro-ecological methods and waste management practices that suit their specific environmental and socio-economic conditions.

Community Engagement and Education: A key focus of the dialogue is increasing community involvement and awareness. By engaging local communities in discussions about sustainable development, the dialogue helps foster a sense of ownership and responsibility among residents. Educational programs and awareness campaigns are integral components, promoting sustainable practices and environmental stewardship at the grassroots level.

Implementation of National Strategies: The dialogue facilitates the implementation of national strategies by translating them into actionable plans at the local level. Local governments receive support in aligning their policies with national goals, such as decarbonization and waste reduction, ensuring coherent and synchronized efforts across all levels of governance.

Addressing Local Challenges: Through the dialogue, local governments were able to voice specific challenges they face, such as resource limitations and regulatory hurdles. This feedback loop allows for the adaptation of national policies to better suit local realities, ensuring more effective and practical solutions. Examples include improving waste management systems and enhancing flood resilience through community-specific measures.

Outlook for the Second National-Local Dialogue

The second National-Local Dialogue, scheduled for 2025 will evaluate the progress made since the first dialogue and in which the roadmap developed by ICLEI, Secretariat for Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean will be an essential tool. This dialogue aims to provide the necessary tools and knowledge to plan, finance and implement effective strategies to deal with urban flooding, as well as to leverage CHAMP to present sub-national participation plans and local actions to update the NDCs in Costa Rica.

Reflections on National-Local Dialogue: Key Challenges and Opportunities

The national-local dialogue in Costa Rica provided a vital platform for discussing the myriad challenges and opportunities in achieving sustainable development and environmental conservation.

Challenges

- **Resource Constraints:** Local governments often face significant resource limitations, both financial and human, which impede the effective implementation of environmental policies. The lack of funding for environmental controls and regulations was highlighted as a critical barrier.



- **Waste Management:** Effective waste management remains a persistent challenge, particularly in terms of infrastructure and public awareness. The dialogue emphasized the need for updated information and sustainable management practices for urban and peri-urban land.
- **Urban Flooding:** The increasing frequency and severity of urban flooding due to climate change and inadequate urban planning were identified as major issues. The lack of investment in stormwater infrastructure exacerbates the problem.
- **Public Awareness and Engagement:** Engaging the community and raising awareness about sustainable practices and environmental stewardship is challenging. The dialogue stressed the need for better communication and educational programs to foster a culture of sustainability.
- **Policy and Regulatory Alignment:** Ensuring coherence between national policies and local implementation can be difficult. The dialogue underscored the need for policies that are flexible enough to be adapted to local contexts while maintaining alignment with national goals.

Opportunities

- **Sustainable Practices:** The promotion of agro-ecological methods and waste management practices tailored to local contexts presents significant opportunities for improving sustainability at the local level. Successful case studies, such as the San Luis Natural Farm and the ECOPARK project, serve as models for replication.
- **Community Engagement:** Increasing community involvement through education and awareness campaigns can lead to greater public participation in sustainable initiatives. This engagement can drive local actions and create a sense of ownership among residents.
- **Technological Innovations:** Methods such as Monitoring Land Use and Land Cover Change in Productive Landscapes (MOCUPP) for monitoring land use and cover changes offer opportunities for better data-driven decision-making. These technologies can help protect crop areas from deforestation and improve land management practices.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Leveraging public-private partnerships can enhance resource mobilization and implementation of sustainable practices. Collaboration between government, businesses, and civil society can lead to innovative solutions and shared responsibilities.
- **Policy Integration:** Integrating national strategies with local actions ensures coherent and synchronized efforts across all levels of governance. This alignment can enhance the effectiveness of policies and lead to more comprehensive environmental management.



Next Steps

1. **Resource Mobilization:** Identify and secure funding sources for local governments to support environmental controls and regulations. This includes exploring public-private partnerships and international funding opportunities.
2. **Enhanced Waste Management:** Develop and implement comprehensive waste management plans that include infrastructure improvements, public awareness campaigns, and regulatory frameworks to encourage responsible consumption and recycling.
3. **Flood Mitigation Strategies:** Invest in stormwater infrastructure and adopt nature-based solutions to manage urban flooding. Implement planning approaches that consider watershed management and community involvement.
4. **Community Engagement Programs:** Launch educational programs and awareness campaigns to foster a culture of sustainability. Encourage community participation in local environmental initiatives and decision-making processes.
5. **Policy Coherence and Flexibility:** Ensure that national policies are adaptable to local contexts and that local actions align with national goals. Facilitate regular dialogue between national and local governments to address challenges and share best practices.
6. **Technological Adoption:** Promote the use of monitoring tools and technologies to improve land management and decision-making. Provide training and support for local governments to effectively utilize these tools.

In conclusion, the national-local dialogue has highlighted critical challenges and opportunities in Costa Rica's journey towards sustainable development. By addressing resource constraints, improving waste management, mitigating urban flooding, engaging communities, and ensuring policy coherence, Costa Rica can advance its environmental and sustainability goals. The next steps outlined will help translate the dialogue's outcomes into actionable plans, driving progress at both national and local levels.