

STRENGTHENING SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND BIODIVERSITY ACROSS LANDSCAPES IN EASTERN & WESTERN GHATS OF INDIA (SABAL) (GEF ID –10204: 2022-2027)

SABAL INSIGHTS 1: ELEMENTS OF CONVERGENCE FOR SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT (SLN)

Understanding Convergence

Convergence is about bringing together different elements to create a synergistic effect that enhances the overall outcome. It's a dynamic process that involves the integration of thoughts, knowledge, people, themes, contexts, domains, times, spaces, and resources. Convergence aims to fulfill objectives by catalyzing desired changes within larger ecosystems. It can either increase or decrease the quality and quantity of outputs, outcomes, and impacts, offering well-defined solutions to problems. Essentially, convergence is the realization of multiple entities coming together to achieve sustainability.

Defining Convergence

Convergence in nature and society helps increase knowledge and coherence among various entities, building solutions from different perspectives. It involves integrating personnel, fields, domains, sectors, strategies, approaches, and systems to improve existing ones or create new ones. This process often begins with multi-disciplinary teams discussing, interacting, negotiating, and understanding issues holistically, guided by self-organizing principles. It requires continuous monitoring and analysis, understanding cause-effect relationships, and developing process-result equations.

Realizing Convergence

Convergence is realized through openness in learning, knowledge sharing, and

flexibility in planning, execution, and management. Key factors include:

- Openness to learning and sharing knowledge.
- Flexibility in planning and execution.
- Transparency in systems.
- Effective use of technology platforms.

These elements foster an enriching interface between people and nature, enabling multi-actor platforms to evolve and flourish.

Indicators of Convergence

In nature, convergence is a continuous process governed by natural laws and principles. It manifests as entities coming together to perform functions and fulfill common objectives. Realizing convergence involves optimizing resources, minimizing conflicts, pooling resources, and strengthening operational networks. An integrated plan, executed and managed through institutionalization, sustains the convergence process.

Integrated Landscape Planning & Management in SABAL: Elements of Convergence

SABAL promotes integrated farming systems and natural farming practices. The project emphasizes 'science as common sense' for better community understanding,

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conducting capacity-building events for community leaders and farmers.

In its two years of implementation, community-level institutions profiled timelines and conducted situation analyses through in-depth discussions. This helped communities and stakeholders understand development interventions' impacts, brainstorm solutions, and recognize the need for ownership and effective decision-making.



Integrated landscape planning exercises involved stakeholders from various organizations, government officials, and supporting agencies. Using remote sensing maps and secondary data, these exercises facilitated cross-learning, idea exchanges, and consensus-building. The resulting plans focused on agriculture, forest, and aquatic ecosystems, adopting an interdisciplinary approach to improve ecosystem services.

The plans, designed with flexibility for implementation, were refined through consultative meetings with scientific and extension experts. District-level convergence workshops with district administration, department heads, NGOs,

and private sector agencies further refined the approach, ensuring convergence across operations in all micro-landscape areas.

Challenges

1. **Realizing 'Science with a Human Face':** Integrating scientific temper and common sense requires stakeholders to observe and understand changes closely.
2. **Lifestyle For Environment (LiFE):** Promoting sustainability requires institutionalization and a systems approach.
3. **Simplifying Complex Situations:** Effective convergence depends on improving human capabilities, behaviors, and cultures to address goals.
4. **Time-Consuming Process:** Achieving attitudinal and behavioral changes involves a reversal process, de-learning, and culture building, which takes time.

By understanding and embracing these elements of convergence, the SABAL project illustrates how integrated efforts can contribute towards sustainable landscape management and community-driven development.