

# Public Policy – A Sustainable Development Policy Program

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## **Brief Synopsis**

This application presents a program direction for LEAD Pakistan to work on public policy in Pakistan. The program is aimed at positioning LEAD Pakistan to build on its strengths and raise resources for policy-oriented sustainable development interventions and projects. It draws upon the strength of the LEAD family and its network members (individuals and institutions) to develop a striving and thriving 'Policy Community'. The public policy will be initiated on areas pursued by LEAD Pakistan including Climate Change, Environmental Governance and Public Health.

A key focus of such policy engagement will be to develop the institution itself as a strong and credible member of the policy community around any issue, thus creating a moral stake in the evolution of that issue. In order to enhance credibility and authenticity, this policy community needs to include informed leaders and a critical mass of civil society alongside LEAD.<sup>i</sup>

## **Overall Goal**

LEAD has been engaged in its core services of capacity-building for over a decade in Pakistan. The organization has successfully delivered on numerous commitments. However, experience has shown that the outputs from these individual capacity-building efforts and projects do not immediately lead to positive outcomes. Rather, the move toward greater outcome relies on external, enabling conditions that utilize the capacity-building efforts. These same enabling conditions tend to significantly affect macro conditions for environment and sustainable development in the country, for instance law-making, international negotiations, and implementation failure.

At the national level as the quantum of development assistance to Pakistan continues to increase, along with the number of civic recipients, the nature of aid has also grown more complex. Financing agencies are increasingly looking to multi-capacity civic organizations who can not only work with communities, but can also put pressure on the state to use the huge volumes of development assistance more effectively, efficiently and equitably. Thus, Government agencies are receiving more and more assistance to "supply" services for poverty alleviation, while civic organizations are being engaged to "demand" better use of that assistance.<sup>ii</sup>

In view of the above, it is proposed that LEAD Pakistan initiate a **Sustainable Development Policy Program** as a core feature of its operations. The proposed Policy Program is not intended to be a separate stream within LEAD, rather, it is proposed by and large as a conceptual umbrella under which LEAD projects and initiatives may be oriented toward policy outcomes, and specific policy-oriented projects can be developed in close integration with LEAD Pakistan themes.

The main goal is to help sustain outputs, and develop LEAD as an institutional source of national policy input. The proposed program would work within the overall goal of LEAD Pakistan – to influence national environment<sup>iii</sup>, sustainable development and the larger poverty alleviation agenda and widen the gamut of involvement and responsibility to this end.

## **Specific objectives, outcomes or deliverables**

The Policy Program would contribute to this mission with a purpose to inform public policy to sustain impact of development interventions. The two inter-related objectives of

this purpose are:

1. informing policies and decisions in sustainable development on the basis of evidence-based knowledge, sound analyses and stakeholder representation; and
2. Creating, developing, sustaining and integrating a policy community for sustainable development into decision-making.

The first aspect of the objective relates to actual policy input, while the second relates to institutionalization of democratic norms in public policy making. The second must include multi-stakeholder dialogues, but also needs to be extended to practical action, for instance specific projects, leadership training, e-lists, etc.

In terms of outcomes or deliverables, the program will:

1. Adopt the program approach, more akin to a “think tank” than the typical confrontation “advocacy” by NGOs in Pakistan. This recommendation is based on the key features of LEAD as well as a glaring gap.
2. Work toward LEAD’s felt gap of macro-level *outcomes*, over and above specific project-based outputs.
3. Ensure that the policy focus is closely *integrated* with existing work outputs rather than a separate initiative.
4. Build on and strengthen LEAD’s emphasis on *multi-stakeholder dialogue*. LEAD will remain issue-focused, and forge new alliances as per strategic demands.
5. Ensure that the engagement, in keeping with best practice internationally, be *evidence-based*. LEAD has already emerged as a source of non-partisan information, and any engagement must build on and strengthen this feature.
6. To the extent possible – be aligned with development “*market*” *realities*. That is, one key test (albeit not the only test) of LEAD’s policy success will be its ability to attract financing.

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<sup>i</sup> A number of such policy institutions – which have mushroomed in the West since the internet explosion – were reviewed for this concept paper. For just a few of the leading policy institutions that follow this track of work, see Rand Corporation ([www.rand.org](http://www.rand.org)), Cato Institute ([www.cato.org](http://www.cato.org)), Mackinac Institute of Public Policy in Michigan ([www.mackinac.org](http://www.mackinac.org)), Carter Center ([www.cartercenter.org](http://www.cartercenter.org)), Water Policy Program of the Brenn School of Environmental Science & Management at the University of California at Santa Barbara ([www.brenn.ucsb.org/academics/waterpolicyprogram.org](http://www.brenn.ucsb.org/academics/waterpolicyprogram.org)), Cultural Policy Center at the University of Chicago ([www.culturalpolicy.uchicago.edu](http://www.culturalpolicy.uchicago.edu)), Oregon Center for Public Policy ([www.ocpp.org](http://www.ocpp.org)), Flint Hills Center for Public Policy ([www.flinthills.org](http://www.flinthills.org)), Chatham House – Royal Institute of International Affairs ([www.chathamhouse.org.uk](http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk)), The Fabian Society ([www.thefabians.org.uk](http://www.thefabians.org.uk)), Catalyst ([www.editiondesign/catalyst/](http://www.editiondesign/catalyst/)), and The Corner House ([www.thecornerhouse.org.uk](http://www.thecornerhouse.org.uk)).

<sup>ii</sup> A policy report entitled “Aid Allocation Criteria” by the Oxford Policy Management Group for a senior level OECD forum on development aid in fragile states (January 2005) notes that, “Channeling a limited amount of aid funds to and through non-governmental agencies, including the private sector and especially local and international NGOs particularly in instances where recipient government commitment to development or corruption are identified as key impediments to aid delivery and impact.” The DFID White Paper and DFID Pakistan Country Assistance Plan reinforce this view of civic organizations as being primarily useful for making governments more “responsive, participatory, transparent and accountable”.

<sup>iii</sup> National sustainable development agenda to cover such important issues of Environmental Governance as Environmental Impact Assessments, Protection of National Parks and Ecosystems, etc.