WYSS ACADEMY FOR NATURE

WHERE GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY GOALS MEET REAL LANDSCAPES

How the Wyss Academy connects science, policy, and action for biodiversity



A woman in the rangelands of northern Kenya, where the Wyss Academy and partners support women-led enterprises linked to rangeland restoration.
© Sheila Funnell

Global biodiversity targets are agreed internationally, but their consequences are felt in real places, where conservation is inseparable from how people live, use land, make a living and govern natural resources. Ahead of CBD COP17, this brief explores how the Wyss Academy works with partners in these settings – and what this can tell us about implementing the Global Biodiversity Framework.

The Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) sets four long-term goals for 2050 and 23 targets for 2030. These range from reducing threats to biodiversity (Targets 1–8), to meeting people's needs through sustainable use and fair benefit sharing (Targets 9–12), to the tools and enabling conditions for implementation and mainstreaming (Targets 13–23). Together, the targets seek to embed biodiversity in decisions across society.

Those ambitions become more complex when they meet a real landscape. Conservation decisions can affect grazing, farming, water access, livelihoods, rights, and institutions. In turn, land-use practices, livelihood needs, and governance arrangements shape conservation outcomes and their durability. These interactions also extend beyond the landscape: pressure reduced in one place can partly shift elsewhere.

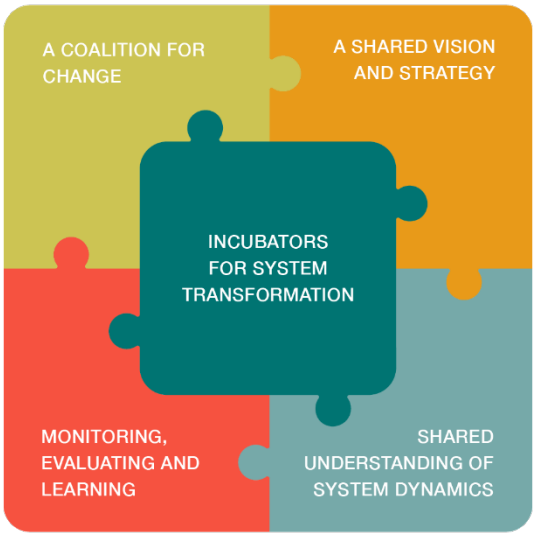
Our approach brings together science, policymaking, and concrete action to connect global goals with local realities. We work with partners in landscapes where ecological pressures, livelihoods, institutions, markets, and different interests intersect. Science-based evidence and practical experience help identify pathways for change toward lasting and equitable outcomes for both people and nature.

STARTING WITH THE LANDSCAPES AND THE PEOPLE WHO SHAPE THEM

Complex environmental challenges rarely fit within the boundaries of a single project, sector, or conservation area.

The Wyss Academy works through an approach called *Solutionscapes*. It focuses on addressing complex challenges that affect both nature and people within a landscape – biodiversity loss, environmental degradation, and growing competition over land and resources.

Rather than starting from sectors or administrative boundaries, the approach is organised around specific nature–people challenges and the systems that drive them.



The five interconnected elements of the Solutionscape approach.
© Wyss Academy for Nature

Across the landscapes where we work, partners build a collective understanding of the system, develop a shared direction, test responses in practice, and monitor and learn from what happens. Scientific evidence is part of this process, alongside local and practitioner knowledge and the experience of people who use, manage, and govern the landscape.

THIRTY PERCENT IS ABOUT MORE THAN AREA

Target 3 of the GBF aims to conserve at least 30% of terrestrial, inland-water, coastal, and marine areas by 2030. But the target is not only about area: effectiveness, connectivity, equitable governance, rights, and integration into wider landscapes are also part of what implementation needs to address.

Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures, or OECMs, broaden the ways in which sustained biodiversity conservation outside formally protected areas can be recognised. But recognition is not simply a matter of designating another area on a map. To be meaningful, OECM recognition must uphold the land rights of the communities who steward these areas, reflect their own priorities, and provide the long-term support needed to sustain conservation outcomes.

In May 2026, as part of its "Engaging with OECMs" project, the Wyss Academy convened a workshop in Nanyuki, Kenya, with IUCN, the Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association (KWCA) and the State Department for Environment. It brought local actors together with those involved in Kenya's national policy process. The workshop aimed to build a shared understanding of OECMs, the tools used to assess them, and the opportunities and challenges ahead. A simulation of an OECM assessment tool on example sites helped participants become familiar with the process and surfaced practical questions around boundaries, free, prior and informed consent, existing governance arrangements, and community leadership.

COMPANION BRIEF

Our companion brief, "Conserving 30%: Where, how and to what end?", looks more in depth at where and how the 30% target can be met, and who it affects. It draws on new research showing that area-based governance mechanisms differ in how well they reduce forest loss, and that different pathways to 30x30 would affect very different numbers of people, in very different circumstances. It also sets out the implementation barriers participants raised at the Nanyuki workshop – boundary disputes, siloed institutions and insufficient resourcing.

But area-based conservation is only one part of the picture. Biodiversity goals also have to work in landscapes where conservation, production, and livelihoods already coexist.

WHEN CONSERVATION AND LIVELIHOODS SHARE THE SAME LANDSCAPE

In Tambopata province, in Peru's Madre de Dios region in the Amazon, globally important forests sit alongside farming, tourism, forest-based livelihoods, Indigenous territories, mining, and a growing regional economy. Conservation therefore cannot be separated from the question of how people use the land and make a living.

The Wyss Academy and its partners are testing and refining approaches including agroforestry, sustainable forest products, and conservation-based enterprise. The aim is to understand which land-use and livelihood options can remain viable for local people while maintaining forests and the biodiversity they support.

Rather than prescribing a model, the work seeks to understand which approaches can work in the realities of a productive landscape.

KEEPING BIODIVERSITY CONNECTED ACROSS THE WIDER SYSTEM

The GBF recognises that biodiversity conservation cannot be confined to individual sites. Its targets call for biodiversity-inclusive spatial planning, ecosystem restoration, ecological connectivity, and conservation that is integrated into wider landscapes and equitably governed.

Our work in northern Kenya's semiarid rangelands shows how these elements come together in practice. The landscape is used by pastoral communities and wildlife alike. Degraded grazing land, changing land use, settlement, and fragmented habitat affect both ecological recovery and the movement of people and animals across the same space.

Restoration work is therefore paired with monitoring. At semicircular bund sites in Laikipia County, in central Kenya, the Wyss Academy and its partners are comparing intervention and control areas and tracking changes in soil moisture, vegetation, biomass, biodiversity, and human wellbeing. The aim is not only to document recovery, but to inform decisions about grazing, when land needs to rest, and where further restoration may be useful.



An adult elephant walking in a dry grassland in Kenya.
© James Ndirangu

Connectivity is another part of the same picture. Near Oldonyiro, a small town in Isiolo County, local communities had long recognised routes used by both wildlife and livestock. Community verification, ecological and spatial information, and collaboration with planners and public authorities helped bring three of these corridors into the 2024–2034 land-use plan, creating a pathway toward stronger protection of routes important for habitat connectivity and pastoral mobility.

> Biodiversity outcomes depend on more than restoring individual sites. It also depends on whether land-use decisions and governance can keep the wider landscape connected.

Conserving biodiversity also requires looking beyond the boundaries of individual conservation areas. Conservation can reduce pressure in one place while shifting it elsewhere, and its wider consequences are shaped by governance, the distribution of costs and benefits, and connections between local action and institutions at other scales.

COMPANION BRIEF

Our companion brief, "Beyond conservation boundaries: Cross-scale governance, equity and spillovers", explores these wider dynamics. It draws on new modelling of how expanding conservation to 30% could push farming pressure elsewhere, including through trade; on research linking colonial history to today's mismatch between where biodiversity is and where conservation investment goes; and on an analysis of biodiversity pledges showing how weakly local action connects to national and global processes.

WHAT MAKES IMPLEMENTATION WORK

Across the examples in this brief and its companions, implementation depends on more than targets and indicators. It rests on decisions informed by evidence and local realities, and on meaningful participation by the people affected. It also requires institutions and resources that can support action over time, as well as stronger connections between what is learned in landscapes and decisions made at national and global levels.

At COP17 and beyond, the Wyss Academy welcomes collaboration with partners working on these same implementation challenges – to exchange evidence, connect policy and practice, and strengthen links between landscape experience and wider decision-making.

ABOUT THE WYSS ACADEMY FOR NATURE

The Wyss Academy for Nature at the University of Bern develops and catalyses solutions to complex challenges at the intersection of nature and people. It brings together science, policymaking, and concrete action and works with partners across East Africa, Southeast Asia, South America, and Switzerland. Its approach combines work in real-world landscapes with research, learning, and engagement in wider policy and governance processes.

READ MORE

Explore the COP17 briefs and related research on our COP17 landing page: *go.wyssacademy.org/cbd-cop17*

Authors: Predrag Tripkovic, Van Thi Hai Nguyen, Michael Victor, Carla Koch, Richard Kiaka and Julie Gwendolin Zaehringer

Contact: *info@wyssacademy.org*

Suggested citation: Tripkovic, P., Nguyen, V.T.H., Victor, M., Koch, C., Kiaka, R. & Zaehringer, J.G. (2026). Where global biodiversity goals meet real landscapes. Wyss Academy Policy Brief. Bern: Wyss Academy for Nature.

Wyss Academy for Nature at the University of Bern · Kochergasse 4 · 3011 Bern · Switzerland · *wyssacademy.org*