Recommendations for advancing natural infrastructure

In 2015, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) launched the Natural Infrastructure for Business (NI4Biz) platform, outlining the business case for investing in Natural Infrastructure (NI).

To increase implementation of NI and contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we assessed incentives and barriers for implementing NI projects in six regions around the world.

This study investigates how business and the wider community can further advance implementation of NI.

Our recommendations focus on:

1. Collaborating with local authorities about permitting for NI
2. Engaging with the finance community to increase financing of NI
3. Promoting policies and risk reduction benefits of NI
Recommendations for advancing natural infrastructure incentives

1. Collaborating with local authorities about permitting for NI

Recommendations for the business community:
- **Raise awareness with local permitting agencies about NI as a viable solution:** Work with permitting agencies to introduce NI solutions, raise awareness about NI’s effectiveness and simplify the permitting process.
- **Co-develop technical and regulatory guidance on NI implementation with local authorities:** Draw from business experience in implementing NI to co-develop guidance on designing, building, managing and monitoring NI projects.
- **Promote and request streamlined permitting processes with local governments:** Engage with local agencies and NGOs to reduce multiple steps and complex challenges associated with obtaining NI permits.
- **Leverage existing policy frameworks to facilitate NI implementation:** Demonstrate that NI’s performance, cost-effectiveness and co-benefits help achieve governmental goals outlined in policy directives or frameworks.

Recommendations for business, government and NGOs:
- **Share experiences regarding permitting challenges for NI within different countries:** Utilize networks such as WBCSD’s NI4Biz platform to exchange lessons learned in different locations.
Engaging with the finance community to increase NI financing

2 Recommendations for governments and business, including the finance sector:

- Test and evaluate the benefits and effectiveness of new models/partnerships for financing NI: Coordinate financing and piloting of new models to sustainably fund NI. This can help lay the foundation for developing new finance/insurance products that support NI (i.e. Debt for Adaptation Models, Storm Water Retention Trading Credits and Payments for Ecosystem Services). The benefits include risk reduction and cost-savings for business and governments.

Recommendations for governments, multi-lateral agencies, donors and NGOs working with business:

- Convene key NI stakeholders to identify and address knowledge gaps: Bring different groups together from research, business and finance to collaborate in fulfilling information needs.

- Engage a range of investors to overcome challenges to scale up: Foster collaboration between NI proponents and investors to identify ways to overcome NI financing challenges through public-private partnerships, concessionary funding, bundling/aggregating multiple projects, and/or creating regional level projects that benefit multiple stakeholders.

- Connect sustainable finance networks to advance NI financing: Coordinate work across networks such as the Conservation Finance Alliance, Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BioFin) and Natural Capital Finance Alliance (formerly the Natural Capital Declaration) to overcome challenges of scaling NI projects. Doing so will help attract mainstream investors and secure additional revenue streams for NI.
Recommendations for business and national business/industry organizations:

- Promote policy frameworks that encourage consideration of NI: Support national and sub-national policy frameworks that drive implementation of NI (e.g. Maryland Living Shoreline Protection Act in the United States, the National Coastal Greenbelt Action Plan in the Philippines).

- Quantify the business benefits of NI for climate change adaptation and risk reduction: Use tools such as ecosystem service valuation and return on investment analyses to quantify the cost-effectiveness and risk profiles of NI related to implementation, performance and maintenance.

- Convey local business support for NI solutions related to risk reduction for local governments and international agencies: Communicate with local governments or international organizations to raise awareness about the performance of and business case for NI. Focus on organizations (e.g. World Bank) who can influence financing and permitting in specific countries.

This will boost investor confidence in NI solutions and increase financing options.

Recommendations to NGOs and business:

- Demonstrate how NI helps governments achieve policy, development and risk reduction goals: Communicate examples of how NI supports national policy directives and commitments to sustainable development, including commitments to the SDGs.

NI permitting and financing are critical to advance implementation of NI solutions. Business has a key role to play in demonstrating the effectiveness of NI solutions and engaging with those stakeholders who can influence financing and permitting.
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World Business Council
for Sustainable Development
Maison de la Paix
Chemin Eugène-Rigot 2B
CP 2075, 1211 Geneva 1
Switzerland