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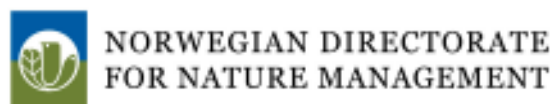
**Plenary meeting to determine modalities and institutional
arrangements for an intergovernmental science-policy
platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services
Second session
Panama City, 16–21 April 2012**

Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (BES) - Net

Note by the secretariat

The annex to the present note contains a proposal for developing a capacity-building network that responds to the needs of developing countries entitled “Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (BES) – Net: A capacity building network for the interface between science, policy and implementation”. The annex is presented as received from the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre and the Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management and has not been formally edited.

Annex



Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (BES) -Net

A capacity building network for the interface between science, policy and implementation

Since 2008 there have been repeated calls from developing countries for a commitment of resources to ensure that the emerging Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) has a strong focus on capacity building. The Busan Outcome, agreed by Governments in 2010, resolved to prioritize key capacity-building needs, provide and call for financial and other support for the highest-priority needs related directly to the Platform's activities, as decided by the plenary, and establish a forum to catalyse financing for such capacity building activities.

In parallel with and feeding into the formal processes of IPBES, this concept note sets out a proposal by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC) and the Norwegian Government, for developing a capacity building network which responds to needs of developing countries. Norway has offered to establish a secretariat and technical support function for capacity building in support of IPBES and an interim secretariat has been established by the Directorate for Nature Management in Trondheim. The intention is that BES-Net would build capacity in the science-policy interface in support of the delivery of the IPBES work programme and the implementation of the three Rio Conventions and other multilateral agreements relating to biodiversity and ecosystem services.

The aim of this concept note is to outline the proposed capacity building network in order to generate discussion, and as a basis for seeking support from other potential partners in establishing such a network under IPBES.

Objectives

The proposed objectives for the BES-Net capacity building network are set out below. Drawing on the Busan Outcome, and consistent with the work programme for discussion at the Panama plenary (UNEP/IPBES.MI/2/2), these objectives identify capacity building as a cross-cutting activity, supporting assessment and knowledge generation, and underpinning the formulation and implementation of policy.

1. To enable sharing of learning and best practice between and within the science, policy and implementation communities, in order to build capacity in the interface of science, policy and implementation of the three Rio Conventions and other multilateral agreements relating to biodiversity and ecosystem services.
2. To build developing country capacity to identify and prioritize key scientific information and diverse knowledge needed to support policy formulation and implementation, and the capacity to catalyse its generation.
3. To promote and support national and regional assessments, and to build developing country capacity to contribute to global and thematic assessments, thereby promoting more geographically balanced contributions.
4. To build capacity to develop and use policy support tools and methodologies, and to improve access to data, information, scientific literature and knowledge relevant to assessment, policy support and knowledge generation.

The linkages between these objectives are fully recognized, and the proposed capacity building network would be designed as an interactive tool for addressing the objectives in an integrated manner. In this way the proposed BES-Net would: support effective implementation of the IPBES work programme; build on existing processes where appropriate; facilitate and promote national activities, particularly in developing countries; and demonstrate relevance to ongoing national, regional and global priorities and processes. It is anticipated that BES-Net would operate in two interconnected ways—through a web portal and through activities carried out by an informal capacity building network (or network of networks), facilitated by centres of excellence (acknowledging interest expressed by several national delegations at previous meetings).

Web Portal

The core of the proposed network would comprise a cutting edge web portal hosted by UNDP's Biodiversity Global Programme, facilitating "live" information and knowledge exchange between the three key IPBES communities of scientists, policy-makers and those involved in implementation of biodiversity and ecosystem services work on the ground. Efforts would be made to position the portal as an integral part of work streams under IPBES. Full-time moderation would facilitate interaction between participants and ensure effective management of the web portal, which would take the form of a website linked to multiple other sites, and a mobile phone site designed to accommodate a range of degrees of access to technology.

It is expected that the BES-Net web portal would work to develop and encourage a community of practice in the following types of ways:

1. **Facilitating links between implementers** on local-scale biodiversity/ecosystem management, laying the groundwork for peer-to-peer learning. An online space could be provided for users to share information, documents, photographs, video and audio. Basic information could be made available on a range of key topics, and options for cost-effective translation explored.
2. **Linking implementers to policy-makers** at national and international levels by capturing their experience of what works on the ground, drawing on diverse knowledge systems including traditional knowledge, in community policy briefs developed through the capacity building network on emerging IPBES priority themes. The network could also develop and post online accessible summaries of key legislation and policy documents on these themes.
3. **Linking implementers to scientists**, channelling questions and applied research needs from those involved in implementation to researchers, and making the peer-reviewed, published research findings of IPBES assessments and the broader scientific community available by increasing access to relevant journal articles and abstracts. Briefs could also be developed, providing summaries of key scientific developments, particularly on IPBES priority themes, in order to influence resource management practices, project design and implementation.
4. **Linking scientists and policy-makers**, providing online space for sharing of best practice around the translation of scientific findings into policy-relevant messages and the process through which policy formulation has been successfully influenced. The capacity building network could write up best practice examples and post these online. Policy-makers could also benefit from an archive of articles, abstracts and documents, and briefs providing summaries of key scientific developments.
5. **Linking all three communities**, in way which fosters collaboration and increased understanding. This might include facilitating access to regularly updated policy-related information, and increasing access to policy-relevant tools and methodologies and opportunities to share experience on their development and use. This could also include links to online training courses and e-learning modules, and other means of sharing learning and experience between the communities.

This mirrors the suggestion in the "possible scenario for an IPBES work programme" prepared for the Panama plenary meeting (UNEP/IPBES.MI/2/INF/3) to develop and maintain a web portal and online modular working space. The BES-Net web portal could help address a number of potential

activities outlined in the draft work programme for IPBES(UNEP/IPBES.MI/2/2), particularly activities 11, 13 and 15 concerning access to policy relevant tools and methodologies, identifying and prioritizing capacity building needs, and increasing access to data, information and knowledge. Relating to activities 13 and 14 concerning funding for priority capacity building activities, there is also the potential of including a module on accessing technical and financial support to national IPBES activities.

It is anticipated that all of the activities outlined in the preceding paragraphs on the web portal would draw on and contribute to face-to-face activities to be carried out through the capacity building network. For example, development of community briefs to policy-makers, summaries of policy documents and policy-relevant scientific research findings would draw on IPBES-related events and network activities including, for example, dialogue sessions on key themes prioritized by IPBES. Similarly, access to policy support tools through the web portal could be facilitated through collaboration amongst the communities of practice working on and using the tools.

Face-to-face Networking Activities

In order to promote capacity building that is meaningful and sustainable, based on demand from developing countries, with outcomes that can be measured, it is necessary for the BES-Net network to have a strong face-to-face element, integrated with the web portal. Capacity building interventions can be carried out by UNDP, UNEP-WCMC, the Trondheim interim secretariat and others in line with the IPBES priorities, integrated with the web portal, and tackling capacity building at the levels of individual, institutions and society as a whole.

The recognition of a network of centres of excellence around the world could facilitate geographic, thematic and functional contributions by potential partners. Such a network could be of an informal nature, or it could be formalised by IPBES acknowledging the role and responsibilities of specific centres, or even by IPBES entering into time- and output-specific memoranda of understanding with such centres. In such a model there may be no need for the establishment of formal regional secretariat hubs for IPBES.

In implementing this concept, the organizations proposing it could contribute the following types of network activities:

1. **Global workshops on stakeholder capacity building needs** could be facilitated by partners in the network. The Trondheim interim secretariat has expressed an interest in convening a wider consultative meeting on the development and funding of BES-Net by building on the experiences from the May 2011 workshop on IPBES and capacity building hosted by the Governments of Brazil and Norway, and the Trondheim Conferences on Biodiversity held since 1993.
2. **Peer-to-peer exchange visits** could be facilitated by the Equator Initiative in UNDP's Biodiversity Global Programme, which links local communities, indigenous peoples and other local stakeholders, with scientists and policy makers. UNDP's Capacity Development Group could also play a role, using UNDP's network of regional and country offices together with other interested partners. Inter-community and international learning exchange visits would be designed to maximize experiential learning around biodiversity and ecosystems, enabling participants to observe activities on the ground and to share experiences, analyse reasons for success or failure, and draw out lessons for best practice and follow-up steps.
3. **Regional science-policy-practice dialogue events** on priority themes for IPBES could be facilitated by UNDP's Biodiversity Global Programme, in partnership with centres of excellence. With its substantial project portfolio supporting developing countries on biodiversity and ecosystem management, and its connections to local practitioners protecting biodiversity on the ground, national governments designing policies to manage biodiversity, and the biodiversity science community evaluating data on the state, drivers, trends, and outlooks of the interactions between biodiversity and human wellbeing, UNDP is well positioned to host these events and disseminate results (including through the web portal).

4. **National and sub-national training workshops** on use of tools and methodologies and to support specific IPBES assessments could be facilitated by UNEP-WCMC, working in partnership with centres of excellence. UNEP-WCMC provides the secretariats for a number of relevant initiatives including the Biodiversity Indicators Partnership, and the Sub-Global Assessment Network, which shares experiences and builds capacity for ecosystem assessments at local-regional scales. Working with these initiatives and other partners, UNEP-WCMC is well placed to provide face-to-face capacity building in relation to the use of policy-relevant methodologies including sub-global assessments. These activities could be linked to training and mentoring of scientists from developing countries participating in assessments.

This mirrors the suggestion in the “possible scenario for an IPBES work programme” (UNEP/IPBES.MI/2/INF/3) to build a network (or network of networks) of individuals and organizations that can contribute substantively to delivery of the IPBES work programme at all levels, including support for assessments, capacity building, increasing availability of data, information and knowledge, and supporting development and use of policy support tools and methodologies. The interventions suggested here also tie in with several of the potential activities listed in the draft work programme (UNEP/IPBES.MI/2/2) being presented at the Panama plenary meeting, particularly potential activities 10, 13, 14, 15 and 16 concerning policy relevant tools and methodologies, identifying and prioritizing capacity building needs, catalyzing funding to address capacity building needs, increasing access to data, information and knowledge, and ensuring balanced participation in the platform’s future work programme.

Next Steps

This is not a finished concept, but one that will develop and evolve in response to IPBES priorities, and the needs and aspirations of developing countries in particular. In this regard feedback on the concept is actively encouraged, particularly from national governments and MEA representatives. In addition, the lead organizations would welcome the engagement of other organizations and institutions who would potentially be in a position to support implementation of the future BES-Net, though support for particular activities (often building on existing work), direct donations to support core management functions, or by offering strategic advice and political support.

The lead organizations will hold a briefing and consultation session with interested stakeholders and potential collaborators during the meeting in Panama from 16-21 April 2012, and also discuss the concept in the margins of the meeting. Following the meeting in Panama, a detailed modular concept will be developed in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders focusing not only on the deliverables and intended results, but also on the financial needs and funding options. The Trondheim interim secretariat is exploring interest for convening a wider consultative meeting on the development and funding of BES-Net in September 2012.

Contacts

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