



Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)

Assessment Report on Biodiversity & Ecosystem Services in Africa: A Primer

The world's biodiversity is being lost and nature's contributions to people are being degraded, which undermines human wellbeing.

The success of humanity's efforts to reverse the current unsustainable use of our irreplaceable natural assets and heritage requires the best-available evidence, comprehensive relevant policy options and committed, well-informed decision makers. The IPBES assessment reports serve these ends, by providing the credible peer-reviewed information needed for informed decision-making.

- Forthcoming landmark assessment report on biodiversity & nature's contributions to people across Africa
- Best-available evidence for decision makers to make informed decisions balancing the needs of people & nature
- Prepared by more than 100 leading international experts from 31 countries over 3 years
- Draws on almost 2,500 scientific papers, Government reports, indigenous and local knowledge & other sources
- Improved by over 3,000 comments from more than 100 external reviewers, including Governments
- 1 of 5 major new science-policy assessment reports due to be launched in March 2018
- **Hot Topics:** Trade-offs in the water-energy-food nexus; How and why biodiversity & nature's contributions to people are changing in Africa; Options for effective governance; Future scenarios & implications for achieving Africa's targets

Africa's people rely heavily on the continent's rich biodiversity and ecosystem services but face serious challenges in protecting these vital assets in environments ranging from deserts to tropical rainforests.

Growing human-induced challenges and opportunities for people across the region are the focus of a major new scientific assessment report, one of five being prepared by inclusive teams of leading international experts working with the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).

These **evaluations of biodiversity and nature's contributions to people** cover four world regions — the Americas, Asia and the Pacific, Africa, and Europe and Central Asia. They are **scheduled to be launched in Medellín, Colombia at the 6th annual session of the IPBES Plenary (#IPBES6), in March 2018.**

A fifth IPBES assessment report, also due to be approved and launched at the same intergovernmental meeting, examines **land degradation and restoration**, both regionally and globally.

The findings of these reports will also be key inputs to a new comprehensive **IPBES global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services**, due for release in 2019, the first such evaluation since the authoritative 2005 Millennium Ecosystem Assessment.

In addition, the assessment reports will evaluate lessons learned and progress (or the lack thereof) on the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and its [Aichi Biodiversity Targets](#), the [Paris Agreement on climate](#)

[change](#), and the implications for the United Nations [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs), as well as other global environmental agreements. The reports will also provide vital information for setting biodiversity targets for the period after 2020.

Often described as the [IPCC](#) for biodiversity, **IPBES is the global science-policy platform tasked with providing the best-available evidence to inform better decisions affecting nature** - by Governments, businesses and even individual households.

Three years in development, at a total cost of about US\$5 million, the four IPBES regional assessment reports have involved over 550 experts from more than 100 countries, who have reviewed several thousand scientific papers, Government and other information sources, including indigenous and local knowledge. The aim is to arrive at conclusions about each region's land-based, freshwater and coastal biodiversity, as well as the state of ecosystem functioning and nature's contributions to people.

The assessment reports will **evaluate the status of biodiversity and nature's contributions to good quality of life** in each region and their respective subregions, describing **current status and trends**, as well as their **links to drivers of change and threats, identifying policy-relevant issues affecting them**. The analyses will start by looking back several decades and then **project likely interactions between people and nature for decades into the future**.

Each regional assessment report will address:

- How biodiversity, ecosystem functions and nature's contributions to people affect economies, livelihoods, food security and good quality of life. In other words: **why is biodiversity important?**
- The status, trends and potential future dynamics of biodiversity, ecosystem functions and nature's contributions to people, which affect their contributions to economies, livelihoods and human well-being. In other words: **are we making progress or are we still destroying biodiversity and undermining human wellbeing?**
- The pressures driving changes in biodiversity and nature's contributions to people. In other words: **what are the threats to biodiversity?**
- The actual and potential impacts of policies and actions on the contributions of nature to sustainable economies, livelihoods, food security and good quality of life. In other words: **what policies and governance structures can lead to a more sustainable future?**
- Priority gaps in knowledge.

'Hot Topics' in the IPBES Assessment Report for Africa include:

- Trade-offs in the **water-energy-food nexus**
- How and why **biodiversity and nature's contributions to people** are changing in Africa
- **Future scenarios** and their implications for achieving Africa's targets
- Options for **effective governance**

The assessment report looks at five subregions: **East Africa and adjacent islands**, as well as **Southern, Central, North and West Africa**.

With upwards of 1,500 language and cultural groups and a fast-growing population, Africa's biodiversity and ecosystem services play a critical role in sustaining and improving livelihoods. But this dependence has imposed a heavy stress on nature.

Structure of the five IPBES assessments

Each IPBES assessment report will begin with a concise summary for policymakers (SPM), highlighting the most important and policy-relevant (not prescriptive) findings and policy and governance options. The SPMs will be based on a set of six chapters (eight for the land degradation assessment), described below, providing all the technical support for the key messages of the SPMs:

1. **Policy-relevant questions & themes** per region and subregion as well as methods and approaches of the assessment
2. **Nature's contributions to people** and good quality of life
3. **Status, trends and near future dynamics** of biodiversity and ecosystems
4. **Direct and indirect drivers of change in nature** in the context of different perspectives on quality of life
5. Analysis of possible **interactions between the natural world and society** in the long term
6. **Options for governance, institutions and decision-making** – especially on the SDGs, Aichi Targets and Paris Agreement

To ensure the **highest-possible levels of credibility and policy-relevance**, the IPBES assessment reports have been reviewed extensively by **hundreds of external experts**, including Governments, scientists and decision makers, practitioners and the holders of indigenous and local knowledge.

The assessment reports will be **presented with the widest spectrum of decision makers in mind**, including Government and business leaders, civil society groups, indigenous peoples, women's groups and even individual households, with detailed information, including easy-to-understand infographics and maps.

TIMELINE	
<i>January 2015</i>	Scoping report established the parameters of the assessments.
<i>May - June 2016</i>	External experts and Governments reviewed first draft of the assessment chapters, with review comments incorporated into the subsequent drafts by IPBES experts.
<i>May - June 2017</i>	Governments and external experts reviewed the second drafts of the assessment chapters and the first drafts of the summaries for policymakers. These comments are being reviewed and will be incorporated into the final drafts by IPBES experts.
<i>March 2018</i>	Negotiation by member States at IPBES-6 Plenary session of final text of the summaries for policymakers of the five assessment reports in Medellín, Colombia, followed by their public launches.

Launch venue: IPBES-6, Intercontinental Hotel, Medellín, Colombia; March 17-24, 2018.

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About IPBES

With 127 member Governments, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) is the global body that assesses the state of biodiversity and nature's contributions to people, in response to requests from decision makers.

Chaired by Sir Robert Watson, the mission of IPBES is to strengthen policy and decisions through science, for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, long-term human wellbeing and sustainable development.

The IPBES secretariat, led by Executive Secretary Anne Larigauderie, is hosted by the German Government and located on the UN campus in Bonn. More than 1000 scientists worldwide contribute to the work of IPBES on a voluntary basis. They are nominated by their Governments or organisations, and selected by the IPBES Multidisciplinary Expert Panel.

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