

REPORT OF CABES PARTICIPATION AT THE SIXTH MEETING OF THE IPBES CAPACITY-BUILDING FORUM



From left to right : Dr. Paul Kazaba, Ms. Angelina Serwaa, Prof. Mekuria Argaw and Andrew Orina

Held at

THE NATIONAL MUSEUMS OF NAIROBI, KENYA

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Knowledge foundation on biodiversity and nature's contributions to people (NCP) and the role of the science-policy interface in decision-making at all levels

Background

The IPBES Capacity Building Forum serves as a collaborative platform for institutions and organizations interested in supporting capacity building within IPBES. Since its inception in 2015, each meeting of the forum has focused on enhancing the capacity to engage with and utilize IPBES work plans and processes. The 6th meeting marks a significant shift towards prioritizing youth capacity development, recognizing their potential and the need for their active participation in addressing the biodiversity crisis. The 6th meeting of the IPBES Capacity Building Forum took place on May 12, 2023, at the National Museums of Kenya in Nairobi. The objective of this meeting was to explore considerations and efforts aimed at developing the capacities of youth in relation to IPBES assessments and their engagement at the science-policy interface on biodiversity and nature's contributions to people.

Forum Objectives

The primary objective of the 6th meeting was to highlight the importance of youth engagement in biodiversity conservation and policy-making. By bringing together representatives from youth organizations and networks, the Forum aimed to identify capacity-building needs specific to the youths. In addition, the meeting sought to explore how organizations and institutions could contribute to the development of these capacities at national, regional, and global levels.

Forum Discussions

The Forum began with an opening session featuring keynote addresses by eminent speakers who emphasized the importance of youth involvement in biodiversity conservation. Dr. Vinod Bihari Mathur provided an overview of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and its capacity-building mandate. He stressed the importance of openness and participation within the organization. In his remarks, he highlighted the significance of IPBES, its role in policy formulation, and the organization's unique capacity-building efforts. Dr. Mathur highlighted the following:



Figure 1 Dr. Mathur (foreground) keenly listening to proceedings of the 6th IPBES Capacity Building Forum. Picture Credit to the National Museums of Kenya

- **Relevance of IPBES:** IPBES plays a critical role in advancing the understanding and conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services. The organization focuses on pressing global issues such as food, water, climate change regulation, and biodiversity conservation, all of which are under threat and require immediate attention. IPBES is unique in bringing the

knowledge of scientists, science-based organizations and indigenous and local communities to guide biological diversity-related decision-making.

Through this collaboration, IPBES provides policy-relevant knowledge that contributes to the formulation of agendas without prescribing specific actions to individual sovereign nations.

- **Capacity Building within IPBES:** Capacity building is a fundamental aspect of IPBES, encompassing various activities ranging from assessments to policy advice. The organization acknowledges the need to enhance the skills of those involved in its processes. This sixth youth meeting of the IPBES capacity building forum, is an example of how IPBES actively engages youths to harness their potential and foster new collaborations for effective biodiversity conservation. IPBES's capacity-building efforts are all-encompassing, encompassing a wide range of areas and activities. Dr. Wanja Nyingi is the current head of the Capacity Building Taskforce. The Task Force engages actively with the IPBES fellows and the fellowship program, which consists of young people who are actively engaged in IPBES activities. Becoming a fellow of the IPBES is a notable accomplishment. Additionally, young people are encouraged to apply to become fellows or reviewers, as this demonstrates their readiness to contribute to IPBES assessments. The fellowship program integrates youths into IPBES processes and equips them with the necessary skills and knowledge.
- **Training Programs and National Focal Points:** IPBES organizes training programs that bring together youth from around the world, aiming to build their capacity and familiarize them with the organization's functions and roles. These programs provide invaluable opportunities for young people to understand the work of IPBES and their potential contributions. Moreover, IPBES encourages each participating country to appoint a national focal point responsible for representing IPBES. These focal points promote effective communication and coordination between the IPBES and the participating countries.
- **IPBES Reports and Assessments:** IPBES has produced [assessment reports](#)¹, and regional and global assessments that have proven to be valuable resources for policymakers. Governments now prioritize making decisions based on solid scientific evidence, as a result of the work of the organization. Notable accomplishments of IPBES include the conceptual framework and the compilation of nature's contributions to the world. It is important to recognize that global assessments rely on both primary and secondary data. While secondary data provide a starting point, all reports are subjected to a rigorous review process to ensure their accuracy and reliability. See the IPBES [guide on the production of assessments](#)² for details.
- **Engagement and Information Sharing:** IPBES is to transparency and encourages public engagement. Every assessment carried out by the organisation is publicly available on the IPBES website. Individuals are strongly encouraged to visit the website to become familiar with IPBES and its ongoing work. In addition, youth are encouraged to use their social media

¹ <https://www.ipbes.net/assessing-knowledge>

² <https://www.ipbes.net/guide-production-assessments>

platforms to share information about IPBES assessments, thereby raising awareness and facilitating the dissemination of knowledge.

Remarks by the National Museums of Kenya (NMK) Representative:

Judy Kioko, on behalf of the NMK, delivered a speech at the event, highlighting the museum's rich history, its longstanding involvement with IPBES, and its dedication to multidisciplinary approaches to biodiversity conservation. Key highlights include:

Heritage and Expertise: As the largest heritage museum in East and Central Africa, the National Museums of Kenya are in a unique position to preserve and promote the region's rich cultural and natural heritage. The NMK's extensive experience and expertise make it a valuable partner in addressing biodiversity challenges.

Kenya's Participation in IPBES: She emphasized Kenya's participation in IPBES since 2012, underscoring the country's dedication to promoting sustainable biodiversity practices. Kenya's participation reflects its recognition of the critical role of IPBES in bridging science and policy to implement effective conservation measures.

Prof. Mary Kihanya's Pioneering Contribution: She also acknowledged the pioneering role of Prof. Mary Kihanya, a scientist from the National Museums of Kenya, who was the first NMK scientist to participate in an IPBES assessment, the Pollinators Assessment. This participation demonstrated the NMK's commitment to contributing scientific expertise to global biodiversity assessments.

Assessment of African Biodiversity: The NMK played a crucial role in the IPBES [African Biodiversity Assessment report](#)³, collaborating closely with IPBES to collect information on indigenous and local knowledge. This partnership illustrates the NMK's dedication to integrating diverse knowledge systems into biodiversity assessments.

Multidisciplinary and Student Engagement: She emphasized the NMK's multidisciplinary approach, which includes anthropology, archaeology, botany, and zoology, among others. Such diversity facilitates a holistic understanding of biodiversity and its conservation. In addition, she highlighted the educational opportunities offered by the NMK, where students can participate in internships and volunteer work, allowing them to actively participate in events such as the IPBES Capacity-Building Forum.

Capacity and Education Department: Finally, she praised the NMK's Capacity and Education Department, which plays a crucial role in the development and implementation of capacity building initiatives. This department ensures that youth and other stakeholders have access to the knowledge and skills they need to participate actively in biodiversity conservation efforts. In her concluding remarks, she emphasized that the National Museums of Kenya's attendance at the IPBES capacity-building forum demonstrated its dedication to advancing capacity-building initiatives and strengthening the science-policy interface. By actively engaging in IPBES assessments, collaborating

³ <https://www.ipbes.net/assessment-reports/africa>

on the African Biodiversity Assessment, and promoting multidisciplinary, the NMK has become an important institution in the region's conservation landscape. Its dedication to education and youth engagement further reinforces the NMK's role in nurturing the next generation of biodiversity champions. In the future, it is important to continue to support institutions such as the National Museums of Kenya, recognizing their contributions to IPBES and their crucial role in fostering the development of capacities for effective biodiversity conservation. The NMK is an example of how heritage institutions can actively engage in the science-policy interface to contribute to the conservation of biodiversity and nature's gifts to humanity.

Considerations by Youth and Youth's Role in the Science-Policy Interface

Ms. Judy Kipkenda and Ms. Angelina Serwaa were given the opportunity to speak in this segment on the importance of youth involvement in policy making and the interface between science and policy. The importance of including young people as key stakeholders was underlined, recognizing their distinctive perspectives, creative solutions, and potential contributions to addressing global concerns and shaping a sustainable future. The key points of Judy and Angelina's remarks are presented below:

Judy Kipkenda - African Focal Point for the Global Indigenous Youth Caucus (GIYC): The speech highlights the lack of youth participation in policy making and emphasizes their potential to make significant contributions. She advocated for the inclusion of science in policy making and the promotion of indigenous knowledge. Increasing complexity poses a threat to the conventional policymaking process. Youth participation is crucial because they offer unique perspectives and innovative solutions, especially on issues that directly affect them. Recognizing youths as significant stakeholders encourages their participation and helps them develop a sense of autonomy. Youth engagement improves inclusiveness, democracy, and the well-being of society as a whole. In her statement, she urges governments and policy institutions to foster an environment that is conducive to youth participation in politics. **Key points from her speech:**

- Policy formulation requires the continuous participation of all stakeholders, including youths: all stakeholders, especially youth, need to participate in policymaking to achieve justice.
- Promoting youth participation enhances policy inclusiveness and democracy. It also facilitates the personal development of young people, helping them to develop a sense of autonomy and identity.
- Despite their potential, indigenous youth are underrepresented in policy discussions. Their insights improve policy.

The focus of the message was on the need for an inclusive policy-making environment. The emphasis was on the need for governments and policy institutions to create inclusive and participatory environments that actively engage youth at the global level. By including young people as integral contributors to policy, we enable their meaningful input, leading to the development of effective and inclusive policies.

Angelina Serwaa - SPIBES MSc Candidate - Capacity Building for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (CABES) project: In this speech, she discusses the considerations and role of youth engagement in the science-policy interface. She highlights the significant potential of youth and emphasizes their crucial role in shaping the future of the world. **Key points include:**

- **Recognizing the Youth's Influence:** She acknowledges the growing recognition of the youth's crucial role in driving transformative change across multiple sectors. Their voices, insights, and actions are essential in bridging the gap between science and policy, as youth make up a significant proportion of the global population.
- **Youth and a Sustainable Future:** It was stressed that youth must be actively involved in addressing key challenges such as climate change adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity conservation, and understanding ecosystem services. Their participation will ensure a prosperous future for all.
- **Enhancing Youth Participation:** The amplification of marginalized youth voices, platforms to express concerns and ideas, science communication skills, interdisciplinary collaboration, and youth leadership were suggested to increase youth participation in the science-policy interface.
- **Importance of Training Programs:** The value of initiatives such as the SPIBES Master's program within the CABES project was emphasized and its continuation encouraged. These programs not only produce competent experts but also empower youths to participate in IPBES processes.
- **Youth Empowerment in IPBES:** Involving young fellows in the work programs of the IPBES has proven to be effective in empowering youth to take international positions and become policy-making leaders. It was suggested that these programs should be expanded to include more youth.
- **Prioritizing Youth Leadership:** It was emphasized that young people should be given the opportunity to hold leadership positions, serve as representatives, and direct activities that promote biodiversity conservation and sustainable development. Their innovative ideas and solutions are essential at the interface between science and policy.



Figure 2. Ms. Angelina CABES scholar delivering a speech at the IPBES 6th Meeting. Photo credit: Dr. Kouadio Kouakou

The Nature Futures Framework (NFF) by Ghassen Halouani (IPBES Fellow)

The IPBES [Nature Futures Framework \(NFF\)](https://www.ipbes.net/scenarios-models)⁴ is a tool designed to develop scenarios and models for desirable futures that prioritize the well-being of people, nature, and the Earth. It overcomes the limitations of existing scenario approaches by offering a more comprehensive and participatory approach that focuses on positive outcomes. Existing scenario approaches have limitations in assessing

⁴ <https://www.ipbes.net/scenarios-models>

biodiversity and ecosystem services. They lack a participatory element and often only assess the impact of drivers without considering positive futures. The NFF addresses these limitations by engaging society globally in actions and lifestyle changes to reverse biodiversity declines.

The NFF is based on three value perspectives on the relationship between humans and nature: Nature for Nature (intrinsic values), Nature as Culture (relational values), and Nature for Society (instrumental values). These perspectives form a triangular continuum, allowing for a holistic analysis of human-nature relationships. Nature for Nature emphasizes the intrinsic value of nature and its autonomy. Nature as Culture recognizes the interconnectedness of societies, cultures, traditions, and faiths with nature. Nature for Society highlights the practical benefits and services that nature provides to people. By integrating these three perspectives, the NFF enables a multi-dimensional analysis of human-



Figure 3 Ghassen Halouani taking participants through the NFF. Photo Credits Orina Andrew

nature relationships and facilitates the development of diverse scenarios for desirable futures. It addresses the limitations of existing approaches and encourages global participation in actions to reverse biodiversity declines.

Panel Discussion - Developing Youth Capacities: Organizations' Role and Youth Perspectives

Participants from various regions engaged in a fruitful dialogue, sharing inspiring stories and discussing strategies to communicate and collaborate with youth in their engagement with biodiversity conservation via the IPBES work plans and the science-policy interface. **Key points from the panel discussion:**

Stories of Hope and Resilience: Participants highlighted stories of hope that showcased the remarkable resilience and determination of youth, even in the face of adversity. For instance, the panel acknowledged the strength and resilience of girls affected by disasters such as Tropical Storm Freddy in Malawi. Despite the challenges, these young individuals demonstrated their ability to adapt and contribute to community recovery efforts.

Sharing Expertise with Local and Indigenous Communities: The panel emphasized the importance of collaboration and knowledge exchanges between youth and local or indigenous communities. Participants shared examples of youth-led initiatives that successfully combined scientific expertise with traditional knowledge, resulting in effective and sustainable conservation practices. Such collaborations not only foster intergenerational learning but also promote the conservation of cultural heritage.

Nostalgia for Past Environmental Glory: Participants expressed a longing to return to a time when environmental protection was prioritized, drawing inspiration from past achievements. They

emphasized the need to rekindle the spirit of previous generations who fought for environmental protection, and to incorporate their wisdom and experience into current conservation efforts. This nostalgia served as a powerful motivation for participants to drive positive change and reclaim environmental glory.

Organizational Support and Capacity Development: The discussion centered on the role of organizations in nurturing and developing youth capacities. Participants recognized the importance of mentorship programs, training opportunities, and platforms for youth to showcase their talents and ideas. Organizations were encouraged to provide resources, guidance, and networking opportunities that empower youth to actively engage at the science-policy interface and contribute to biodiversity conservation efforts.

Policy Advocacy and Youth Representation: The panel emphasized the need for organizations to advocate for policies that promote youth involvement in decision-making processes. Participants emphasized the importance of including youth representatives in IPBES working groups, expert panels, and other relevant platforms. This representation ensures that youth perspectives are considered and incorporated into policies and actions addressing biodiversity conservation.

Supporting Youth-Led Science Policy Networks: Participants advocated for fostering partnerships between youth and science policy experts, creating networks that enable knowledge sharing and collaboration. These networks would empower youth to actively contribute to science-policy discussions, ensuring their voices are heard and their perspectives are incorporated into decision-making processes.

Validating the Contributions of Youth: The importance of involving youth in scientific research, policy-making, and IPBES assessments was highlighted. Participants stressed the need for

recognition and validation of youth contributions, emphasizing their unique insights and lived experiences. By involving youth in these processes, their perspectives can enrich decision-making and lead to more effective conservation strategies.

Addressing Long-Sought Priorities: The discussion also identified specific priority areas where youth, women, and Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) should receive support. These priorities included rights-based approaches to conservation, land rights and tenure, meaningful youth engagement, and intergenerational equity. Participants urged IPBES to consider these priorities when designing assessments and developing capacity-building initiatives. In conclusion, the panel discussion provided a platform for participants from diverse backgrounds to share stories of hope,



Figure 4 Members of the panel discussion giving their views on communication and collaboration with each other and IPBES. Photo Credits National Museums of Kenya

resilience, and inspiration. The exchange of ideas and experiences highlighted the potential of youth to drive positive change and their vital role in biodiversity conservation. Organizations were recognized for their crucial role in supporting youth development through mentorship, training, and policy advocacy. By investing in youth capacities, organizations contribute to the creation of a sustainable future, where the voices and contributions of young individuals are valued and integrated into decision-making processes. As we move forward, it is essential to translate the discussions and insights from the panel into tangible actions. By fostering collaborations, providing resources, and creating opportunities for youth engagement, organizations can help unlock the full potential of the youth population in addressing the urgent challenges faced by our planet. The panel discussion served as a catalyst for innovation, inspiring participants to explore new approaches, bridge intergenerational gaps, and work collectively towards a harmonious coexistence between humans and nature.

World Café Event: Showcasing Organizations and the CABES Project

The World Café was an opportunity for different organizations to showcase their work and initiatives related to biodiversity conservation and youth capacity-building. Participants who visited the CABES booth were able to learn about the work of the initiative. The CABES Project showcased a range of activities and initiatives, including:

- **Training and Capacity-Building Workshops:** The project conducts training programs and workshops that focus on building technical and practical skills in environmental sciences. The SPIBES Master’s program served as a good example and so too is the CABES Capacity Development Program that will be launched later in the year.
- **Collaboration, Science-policy dialogues and Networking:** The project actively promotes collaboration among youth, researchers, and policymakers. By facilitating networking opportunities, the CABES Project enables young individuals to connect with experts in the field, fostering mentorship and knowledge exchange. CABES actively engages IPBES national focal points in Africa in preparation of the IPBES plenary and IPBES assessments.



Figure 5 Participants Joining the CABES stand during the World Café section. Credit: Andrew Orina

Take Home message

The World Café event provided a platform for organizations such as the CABES Project to exhibit their work in youth capacity-building for biodiversity conservation. The project's focus on environmental education, research, and applied skills enables young individuals to actively participate in biodiversity assessments and policy discussions. By equipping youths with the necessary tools, knowledge, and opportunities, the CABES Project plays a significant role in nurturing the next

generation of environmental leaders and fostering a sustainable future for biodiversity and nature. Participants were encouraged to apply for the next SPIBES Masters call and any other opportunities on social media.

Familiarization with IPBES Assessments and Participant Engagement

The IPBES Fellows conducted a section dedicated to providing participants with an overview of upcoming assessments, including [Transformative Change](https://www.ipbes.net/transformative-change)⁵, [Nexus assessment](https://www.ipbes.net/nexus)⁶, and [Invasive Alien Species](https://www.ipbes.net/ias)⁷. Participants had the opportunity to attend two sections, gaining familiarity with these assessments and engaging in discussions about their desired future outcomes related to transformative change. The session aimed to encourage participants to share their perspectives on all chapters of the assessments from both local and expert viewpoints, fostering inclusivity and valuing diverse inputs.

The presentation introduced the various lead fellows responsible for writing the five chapters of the Transformative Change assessment. These chapters covered topics such as defining transformative change, envisioning a sustainable world, understanding how transformative change occurs, overcoming challenges, and outlining strategies for realizing a sustainable world for nature and people. A brief description of the assessments was provided, outlining the key themes and objectives. The thematic nexus assessment focused on exploring the interconnectedness between different aspects of the natural environment, such as biodiversity, food, health, and water.

Participants were actively encouraged to provide comments and insights on the assessments, drawing on their local perspectives and expertise. This participatory approach facilitated a multidimensional analysis of the assessments, bringing in different viewpoints and enriching the discussions. The goal was to gather a wide range of inputs and opinions to enhance the comprehensiveness and relevance of the assessments.



Figure 6. CABES scholar Ms. Angelina expressing her opinion to enhance the relevance of the IPBES Transformative Change Assessment. Credit: Abdala

Conclusion and Recommendations

The 6th IPBES capacity building forum was a succeeded in bring a youthful voice in the IPBES discourse. The participants made it clear that battles are won with the energy of the young and the wisdom of the elderly, and that this be can bridged through the Science-policy interface. The CABES initiative stands to benefit from having pioneered and demonstrated its capabilities at this interface. The following recommendations can be considered by the CABES team or other initiatives:

⁵ <https://www.ipbes.net/transformative-change>

⁶ <https://www.ipbes.net/nexus>

⁷ <https://www.ipbes.net/ias>

- a. **Invest in Youth Capacity:** Recognize the importance of developing and investing in the capacities of youth, particularly in the context of biodiversity conservation and the science-policy interface. This includes providing training opportunities, mentorship programs, and access to resources that empower young individuals to actively participate in decision-making processes.
- b. **Foster Multidisciplinary Approaches:** Encourage multidisciplinary approaches to biodiversity conservation by integrating scientific knowledge with traditional and indigenous knowledge systems. This collaboration promotes holistic understanding, innovation, and effective solutions for addressing environmental challenges.
- c. **Strengthen Collaboration and Partnerships:** Encourage collaboration and partnerships among organizations, youth networks, local communities, and relevant stakeholders. Foster platforms for knowledge-sharing, resource pooling, and joint initiatives to maximize impact and promote synergy in youth capacity development.
- d. **Incorporating Youth Perspectives in Decision-Making:** Ensure that youth perspectives are actively included in policy and decision-making processes related to biodiversity conservation. Advocate for the inclusion of youth representatives in relevant forums, working groups, and expert panels, allowing their voices to be heard and their contributions to be considered. To this, the forum did suggest maybe it was time IPBES had a youth focal point.
- e. **Promote Policy Advocacy:** Encourage organizations to advocate for policies that support youth engagement and empowerment in biodiversity conservation. This includes advocating for increased funding for youth capacity-building programs, integrating youth perspectives into national and international policies, and fostering an enabling environment for youth-led initiatives.
- f. **Emphasize Resilience and Adaptability:** Recognize and celebrate the resilience and adaptability of youth in the face of environmental challenges. Share success stories and experiences that inspire and motivate young individuals to continue their efforts in biodiversity conservation and sustainability.
- g. **Support Knowledge Exchange and Learning:** Facilitate knowledge exchange and learning opportunities for youth, including internships, volunteering, and participation in capacity-building programs. Encourage organizations to provide platforms for youth to share their ideas, experiences, and innovative solutions.
- h. **Prioritize Environmental Education:** Promote environmental education at all levels, with a focus on raising awareness, fostering a sense of responsibility, and nurturing a deep connection with nature. Incorporate environmental education into school curricula and develop educational materials that engage and empower youth.
- i. **Strengthen international cooperation:** Enhance international cooperation and collaboration in youth capacity development for biodiversity conservation. Share best practices, lessons

learned, and successful initiatives across borders to foster global understanding and collaboration among youth.

- j. **Monitor and Evaluate Progress:** Regularly monitor and evaluate the progress of youth capacity-building initiatives to assess their effectiveness and make necessary adjustments. Collect data and feedback to measure the impact of these initiatives in terms of youth engagement, policy influence, and positive conservation outcomes.