



POLICY BRIEF NO. 2

December 2022



Fostering the Engagement of Central African Stakeholders in IPBES

CABES Central Africa stakeholder workshop, online, September 2022

Central Africa: critical geographic and ecological context

The Central Africa subregion occupies a position of global significance concerning biodiversity and ecological balances. It is home to several vital biodiversity hotspots and notably contains the Congo Basin Forest, which functions as the second largest tropical massif and the world's primary tropical carbon sink. Despite this crucial ecological role in global climate and biodiversity negotiations, the participation of experts from Central Africa in the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) processes is currently weak.

Although the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) provides essential assessments and policy recommendations, the weak participation of African stakeholders in its processes remains a notable concern. Barriers to participation, include, lack of cross-sectoral collaboration and limited knowledge regarding the relevance of biodiversity and ecosystem services (BES) for human well-being.

This brief summarises the outcomes and recommendations resulting from the first CABES Central Africa stakeholder workshop. The event held online on September 8, 2022, included 29 participants from 11 countries.

Key recommendations

- Prioritise the establishment of national biodiversity platforms,
- Support the development of sustained subregional network of biodiversity and ecosystem services experts to ensure regular knowledge sharing on IPBES matters and biodiversity,
- Enhance awareness and capacity throughout Central Africa to empower policymakers, practitioners, and Indigenous communities to improve representation and inform national political processes and decisions.



CABES: An example of a regional Science-Policy-Practice Interface (SPPI)

Capacity Development for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (CABES) program offers a strategic mechanism to overcome these barriers through the establishment of Science-Policy-Practice Interfaces (SPPIs). By fostering these interfaces, the program aims to narrow the disciplinary divide and enhance capacity building across Central Africa.

In Central Africa, CABES program actively supports capacity building in eight core Central African countries: Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, and São Tomé & Príncipe (Figure 1). Furthermore, the scope of the Central Africa subregion within the programme is expanded to include Angola, Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Specifically, CABES is supporting the establishment or enhancement of National multi-stakeholder BES platforms in two selected countries: the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Gabon.

A. The structural barriers to effective engagement in IPBES: weak participation in IPBES processes

A key barrier is the noted weak participation of Central Africa stakeholders in IPBES processes. This underrepresentation is compounded by the fact that three or two among the nine countries (including Angola) of the subregion are still not members of IPBES.



Figure 1: Map of Africa showing CABES focused Central African countries

Central African nations face barriers such as limited financial resources, capacity constraints, and accessibility challenges, which restrict meaningful participation in IPBES processes. Consequently, hindering the inclusion of the region's biodiversity issues in global decision-making.

Lack of cross-sectoral collaboration: While there is often widespread expertise and political will to mainstream biodiversity conservation into domestic policies in Africa, concrete steps toward adoption and implementation are often constrained by a lack of cross-sectoral collaboration.

Limited awareness of biodiversity benefits: There is often limited knowledge and understanding of the relevance of biodiversity and ecosystem services (BES) for human well-being among key actors. This is particularly salient given that a significant proportion of the African population depends on the direct provision of ecosystem services for their sustenance and livelihoods.

To address the constraints, there is a clear need for the exploration of a subregional science-policy-practice interface (SPPI) to narrow the disciplinary divide and foster cross-sectoral collaboration.

About IPBES

The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) bridges science and policy to address biodiversity challenges. Its key assessments, including Sustainable use of wild species (2022), and The Global Assessment (2019), provide critical insights into Central Africa. Central Africa's ecosystems, such as the Congo Basin, are pivotal for global biodiversity, making engagement with IPBES essential for regional and global impact. Registration as a stakeholder is free, visit www.ipbes.net/stakeholders.

B. Recommendations for enhanced engagement in IPBES

In order to best foster African engagement in IPBES and ensure that IPBES assessments effectively inform national political processes and decisions throughout central Africa, the following courses of action (Figure 2) were recommended by the stakeholders:

Expansion of national biodiversity platform support:

It is recommended that the support for the implementation or enhancement of National Biodiversity Platforms be considered for extension to as many possible countries beyond the current selected countries—the DRC and Gabon.

Establishment of subregional Expert Network:

There is a crucial need to build a sustained network of biodiversity and ecosystem services experts utilizing the CABES framework to facilitate regular knowledge sharing and exchange on matters related to IPBES and biodiversity. The establishment of these subregional SPPIs is expected to foster essential awareness and networks, thereby contributing to improved representation of Africa in IPBES processes, enhancing capacity building, and promoting

crucial cross-sectoral collaborations within Central Africa. In addition, subregional SPPIs will enhance focused capacity building activities and exchange of ideas, thereby addressing the biodiversity knowledge gap.



Figure 2: Word count highlighting stakeholders' needs to actively engage in SPPIs, such as IPBES

CONCLUSION

In sum, establishment of Science-Policy-Practice Interfaces (SPPIs) at national and subregional levels, is critical to foster cross-sectoral collaboration, ensuring the effective mainstreaming of IPBES assessments into national political decisions across Central Africa.

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