

IUCN UNFCCC Newsletter

Focus on: Ecosystem-based Adaptation

Dear reader,

This is the second issue of the IUCN newsletters showcasing IUCN's and its Members' contributions to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) process in the build up to COP 15 in Copenhagen in December.

The first issue focused on REDD, a nature-based solution to mitigation, whilst this second issue focuses on Ecosystem-based adaptation, a nature-based solution to adaptation.

Please send us your feedback, comments, contributions, and inform us if there is any interesting activity, project or initiative you wish to showcase in these newsletters or on our website!



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> November is IUCN's EbA month

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IUCN and Ecosystem-based Adaptation

Ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA), as defined by the Convention on Biological Diversity, is the use of biodiversity and ecosystem services as part of an overall adaptation strategy to adapt to the adverse effects of climate change.

Ecosystem-based adaptation applies the sustainable management, conservation, and restoration of ecosystems to provide services that enable people to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Ecosystem-based adaptation is often more cost-effective and more readily available to the rural poor than adaptation solutions based on infrastructure and technology.

IUCN is promoting the recognition of EbA as an important element of responses to climate change, and for its inclusion under the Adaptation Framework/Programme being discussed as part of the post-2010 climate change agreement.

> CBD Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on biodiversity and climate change report
www.cbd.int/doc/publications/cbd-ts-41-en.pdf

Voices from the field: Ecosystem-based Adaptation in the Mekong basin

Interview with Geoff Blate

Coordinator
Climate Change
WWF Greater Mekong

Why is ecosystem-based adaptation important in your region?

60 million people in the Mekong river basin and 300 million in the Mekong sub-region both in rural and in urban contexts, depend, directly or indirectly, on ecosystems for water, food and provided regulatory services. Degradation of the ecosystems, both induced by global climate change and local processes, will affect the livelihoods that depend upon them.

Considering the role of ecosystems in adaptation is therefore not an option, but an essential part of adaptation solutions. Ecosystem-based adaptation has the potential to increase resilience in the Mekong region and contribute to overall sustainable development.

What is being done?

A number of initiatives are taking place in terms of protection and efficient use of natural resources, which have relevance for adaptation. For example, there are a number of projects on sustainable community fisheries in Cambodia, Thailand, Lao (e.g. Wetlands Alliance, www.wetlandsalliance.org). WWF is implementing the Tram Chim project in the Plain of Reeds area in the Mekong Delta in Vietnam (www.panda.org/what_we_do/where_we_work/greatermekong/?uNewsID=156981). The project works to restore natural fire and hydrological regimes in wetlands. Several community level actions that have been put into place in response to climate variability elsewhere in the Delta are also adaptation measures, now responding to greater scales of change, such as the innovative solutions to flooding provided by the building of lower earthen dykes, which enable the harvesting of fish. These types of solutions can increase both ecosystem and human resilience in the face of climate change.

What is needed to support this?

Several vulnerability assessments have already been carried out, but actual implementation on the ground is what is really needed now. Political buy-in is also needed. Policy makers, investors, and other stakeholders need to be convinced that maintaining healthy ecosystems is a sensible means of adaptation and that we need to start moving away from investing all resources in hard infrastructure (dams, sea walls, etc.).

Financial resources are required to be able to appropriately involve multiple actors and to develop clear adaptation plans (with monitoring and evaluation, stakeholder engagement and commitment beyond project cycles).

Regional scale data and information sharing is required to understand what is happening at the larger ecosystem-scale and how adaptation solutions will impact the environment.

What are your expectations for COP 15?

We need an agreement that emphasizes the role of ecosystems in adaptation as well as the importance of an overall ecosystem approach to adaptation and mitigation. It is essential to avoid maladaptation and the negative impacts of mitigation responses, as frequently observed in the case of dams. The Copenhagen agreement should include such safeguards.

> Contacts

WWF Greater Mekong
www.panda.org/greatermekong

Wetlands Alliance
www.wetlandsalliance.org

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Voices from the field: Ecosystem-based Adaptation in South Africa

Interview with Trevor Sandwith

Director
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Why is ecosystem-based adaptation important in your region?

In South Africa, the mining sector is dominant in the economy, but there is a huge dependence, especially in rural areas, on agricultural systems – for crop production and cultivation, grazing and other dryland and rangeland uses, and fishing. Water availability and distribution are limiting factors in the country's economy, which is extensively based on the use of natural resources. Diversification of the economy, e.g. through tourism and wildlife, is also dependent on the integrity of ecosystems.

Climate change is strongly affecting the environment on which human communities depend, so adaptation strategies and actions must include consideration of how ecosystems, and the services they provide to livelihoods, are being affected.

What is being done?

A good example is Working for Water (www.dwaf.gov.za/wfw), a government program based on strong participation of local civil society. Profound changes are expected in the availability and the quality of water, in terms of both its geographic and seasonal distribution. Towns and villages depend on water coming down the mountains, whose integrity is threatened by invasive alien species, which are growingly affecting mountain ecosystems of the Cape Floristic Region. Investments in removing alien species has had a positive impact on water quantity and quality, as well as reducing the threat of these species on biodiversity.

The program has provided an opportunity to build capacity, involve local communities in a natural resource management process and enhance adaptive capacity. This approach is in line with the devolution of power to the administrations at the local level, and the development of more participatory approaches, that are currently going on in South Africa.

The project is an excellent example of adaptation to different changes – both environmental and societal. Climate change provides an opportunity to engage in cross-sectoral solutions, in this case in terms of agriculture, water, economy and biodiversity.

What is needed to support this?

An understanding is needed on how ecosystems and people will be affected by climate change. South Africa has already conducted a climate modeling process, which allows for prediction of the changes likely to happen, and a better understanding of the consequences for ecosystems and people.

Scientifically sound information to explain the processes happening at the smallest scale is also essential (for example, what is role of alien invasive species in affecting water and fire). Institutional capacity to coordinate these multi-stakeholder processes is needed – a programmatic approach, engaging the right Ministries to co-operate and pool resources. Political commitment must also reach out to the local scale and engage for example farmers, municipalities and NGOs with government departments in finding solutions to local problems.

What are your expectations for COP 15?

My expectation would be that the world rises to the occasion, sets differences aside and co-operates to pursue a global goal. Climate change is the one global problem that requires a co-operative solution. Perhaps donors, countries, communities, institutions, people, will be able to find practical solutions under a global banner – an emergence of innovative and inspiring solutions.

The world of nature conservation has been waiting for the stimulus that demonstrates that our investment in natural resource management is fundamental to the sustainability of life on earth.

Overall UNFCCC process update

The UNFCCC Talks in Bangkok were held from the 28th September – 9th of October. The outcome of Bangkok was a lack of clarity and controversy about the continuation of the Kyoto Protocol. The US has proposed a regime that would replace Kyoto and move away from its architecture of a legally binding reduction target for developed countries to one where individual countries (developed and developing) pledge national emission cuts as part of national low carbon strategies. Under the proposed international regime, these cuts would be centrally monitored, reported and verified, and would be reviewed regularly.

No clear progress was made on addressing the two major issues at stake: mitigation commitments (or ‘pledges’) by developed countries and major emitters among the developing countries; and financial assistance for all developing countries to adapt and reduce their emissions. Given the short negotiation time left, it is possible that Parties to the Convention may reach an agreement on the overall architecture of a new post-2012 climate change regime, rather than a detailed instrument. In that case, the ‘rulebook’ for the new regime will have to be worked out in the next couple of years.

IUCN at UNFCCC Barcelona

IUCN is attending the UNFCCC Climate Change Talks in Barcelona from the 2nd – 6th November.

The **Nature Conservancy**, an IUCN Member, will be holding a side-event titled “**Ecosystem-based Approaches to Adaptation: Resilient Nature – Resilient People**”. The event will present case studies of ecosystem-based adaptation, using new tools and information that address climate change impacts together with sustainable development and management goals, supporting human needs, especially those dependent on nature for security, well-being or livelihoods.

Tuesday, 03 Nov 2009
19:45–21:15; Room 4

The **Global Public Policy Network on Water Management** – a partnership of Stakeholder Forum and Stockholm International Water Institute – in collaboration with UN Water has convened a “**Water Day**” alongside the Climate Change negotiations in Barcelona.

The day will show that water is a critical concern for climate change adaptation and mitigation. The sessions will focus on climate change and a range of water-related issues: Water and Livelihoods; Water, Ecosystems and Forests; Water and Land; Water and Regional/transboundary cooperation; Water and Land; Water and Gender; Water and Energy, bringing together experts and advocates from across the governmental, non-governmental and intergovernmental spheres.

Tuesday, 03 Nov 2009
opening session 9:00, lunch provided at 12:15;
Fira Congress Hotel, opposite the conference centre.

Head of IUCN Water Programme, Mark Smith, will be speaking at both events.



> View our EbA position paper

http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/ecosystem_based_adaptation_november_09.pdf

> For more information

Visit the UNFCCC website at:
<http://unfccc.int>

Barcelona Climate Change Talks 2009:
http://unfccc.int/meetings/intersessional/barcelona_09/items/5024.php

The Nature Conservancy:
www.nature.org

Global Public Policy Network on Water Management (GPPN):
<http://gppn.stakeholderforum.org>