

Ecosystem-based approaches to adaptation

Strengthening the evidence and informing policy

Using ecological solutions to adapt to climate change – and promote sustainable development



In brief

Ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) involves the use of biodiversity and ecosystem services to help people adapt to the adverse effects of climate change. Like community-based adaptation (CBA) EbA has people at its centre, and it uses participatory, culturally appropriate ways to address challenges, but there is a stronger emphasis on ecological and natural solutions. We believe EbA has great potential to increase people's resilience and ability to adapt, but it's being overlooked in national and international policy processes. This project aims to show climate change policymakers when and why EbA is effective: the conditions under which it works, and the benefits, costs and limitations of natural systems compared to options such as hard, infrastructural approaches. It aims to promote and provide tools to support the better integration of EbA principles into policy and planning.

Why now?

Field-based EbA projects are proliferating. IUCN, for example, is implementing 45 EbA projects in 58 countries. But we have to decide on the right approaches to design and implementation – and to do this we need better-consolidated, empirical, comparative analysis of the effectiveness of EbA. International policy guidance on adaptation is emerging through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and other multilateral processes, and increasingly countries are developing their own policy responses, such as National Adaptation Plans and Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs). The international and national architecture for financing adaptation is also being developed. We need to ensure that learning informs guidance and these responses.

Timeline

July 2015 – September 2019

Our plans

Our focus is on EbA effectiveness in Asia, Africa and Central and South America.

Asia	Africa	Central and South America
Bangladesh	Burkina Faso	Chile
China	Kenya	Costa Rica
Nepal	Mali	El Salvador
	South Africa	Peru
	Uganda	

We'll work with in-country partners to develop clear country-specific policy recommendations and explore opportunities for and obstacles to uptake. We'll produce practical tools and guidance to help people integrate EbA into policy and planning, and communicate our findings and recommendations at key international events and through relevant platforms and networks such as the Nairobi Work Programme and the UNFCCC Adaptation Committee.

Who's who

IIED

IIED will manage the project and work with IUCN and UNEP-WCMC to develop a common research methodology. IIED will take the lead on in-country work with local partners in Bangladesh, Kenya, China and South Africa and work with IUCN and UNEP-WCMC to collate and share research results widely.

IUCN

IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) will work with IIED and UNEP-WCMC on research, policy engagement, and capacity building and outreach activities at all levels. IUCN will take the lead on in-country work through regional and country-office staff in Nepal, Mali, Uganda, Burkina Faso, Peru, Chile, Costa Rica and El Salvador.

UNEP-WCMC

UNEP-WCMC will provide technical support to IIED and IUCN, especially with developing practical guidance and tools on integrating effective EbA measures into policy planning, and presenting project results to the UNFCCC and at other international events.

Case study partners

In-country partners will lead action research/ learning activities at existing EbA project sites, and help make the case for EbA in national and sub-national climate change and development policy and planning processes. In addition to IUCN country and regional offices, in-country partners include the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies, Centre for Chinese Agricultural Policy, Kenya Wildlife Service, Kenya Drought Management Authority, Conservation South Africa and Association for Nature and Sustainable Development (Peru).



Outputs and activities

Output 1: Documenting evidence on whether EbA works and is value for money

Developing common research methodology	across all sites
Conducting field research	with in-country partners
Collating research results	what works where, and what are the gaps?
Running national validation workshops	with in-country experts
Gathering and sharing case studies	focusing on EbA cost/benefit analysis; policy/institutional barriers; monitoring and evaluation; effectiveness in under-studied ecosystems and sectors; and the role of genetic diversity and indigenous knowledge in adaptation
Publishing papers	in peer-reviewed journals

Output 2: Promoting the incorporation of EbA in national and international adaptation policy and planning

Conducting baseline assessment of EbA-relevant policies	in each country and at the international level; planning for integrating findings into climate change and other policy processes – and identifying opportunities to influence policy
Initiating National Policy Dialogues	with in-country partners
Engaging relevant national stakeholders	to gain approval and support for EbA
Tailoring country-specific and international policy briefs	with local and national experts
Presenting policy briefs	at national, regional and international fora
Communicating research findings at international events	including the IUCN World Conservation Congress, and through the internet and social media

Output 3: Enhancing capacity of government, civil society, and donors to incorporate EbA measures into national and international adaptation processes

Conducting baseline assessment of existing skills/capacity of policy makers	with in-country partners
Producing toolkit for integrating EbA measures into project planning	to improve the institutional response to climate change, and develop people's skills in planning and implementing EbA
Convening international EbA workshop	in collaboration with the UNFCCC Nairobi Work Programme
Sharing research findings	through knowledge platforms and learning networks

What does EbA look like?

An example from the Andean Potato Park, Cusco, Peru

Climate change has already affected the Andean Potato Park communities. Glaciers and water levels are decreasing; flooding is more frequent; the timing of the rains has changed; temperatures have become more extreme. Planting a diversity of potatoes provides a safeguard against unpredictable conditions and crop failure. Pooling their land allows the farmers to experiment with planting different varieties in different micro-climates. The Potato Park communities have increased the level of potato diversity in the park threefold in five years: from about 200 to 650 varieties. This ancestral strategy to reduce risk provides a highly diverse and evolving gene pool for current and future adaptation. The Potato Park has also empowered the communities, including women, to defend their rights and find new market opportunities.



Get involved

Project updates and our outputs will be available online.

Visit our webpages

www.iied.org/ecosystem-based-adaptation

Get in touch

We are keen to explore ways to extend the reach of our work. Please get in touch if you would like to find out more or share ideas and experiences from your own projects.

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Project Materials

Biodiversity; Climate change

Keywords:

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About our funders

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www.international-climate-initiative.com

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