

EVAMAB closing workshop (Bahir Dar, 13-17 May 2019)

Summary

Context

About 35 scientists and African Biosphere Reserves managers gathered in Bahir Dar (Ethiopia), between May 13 and May 17, to present the results of the EVAMAB project (coordinated by CEBioS) and discuss ecosystem services in African Biosphere Reserves (BR).

Participants came from Africa (Benin, Ethiopia, Ghana, Madagascar, Tanzania, Uganda), Europe (Belgium, France), Indonesia and Canada.



Group picture of the participants (by Lucie Ongena, CEBioS)

Objectives

Key results of the EVAMAB project were presented to introduce the subject of ecosystem services (ES) in African Biosphere Reserves (BRs). A participatory approach gave the opportunity to all participants to draft recommendations about the assessment of ecosystem services, their economic value, and their incorporation in the management of African BR.

These will be summarized in a manual aiming to support the management of African BR in favour of both Nature and People – using the ecosystem services approach. This manual will use EVAMAB results as case studies, among others, and will be presented to the AfriMAB network in September 2019.

Main outcomes

Key initiatives and results of the EVAMAB project were presented, such as payment for ecosystem services-initiatives in Uganda, community-based workshops held in Benin, Uganda, Tanzania and

willingness-to-pay studies conducted among communities surrounding Lake Tana. They demonstrated the opportunity of using ecosystem services as a tool for clear communication, buy-in of conservation and development policies and international comparability.

The general format of the manual to be produced was agreed to be concise, easy to use, but not too general at the same time, enabling to take into account the specificity of the different MAB sites. It should also be useful to other stakeholders but MAB managers are the main target audience of the manual. A policy brief should accompany such a manual, and training about using it would be highly desirable.

The participatory approach enabled to gather different points of view and information regarding:

- **Reasons for (not) using rapid ES assessment tools**, such as the opportunity to involve stakeholders, the constraints of time, skills and budget, the legitimacy of results, etc.
- **Possible entry points** to feed the results of such tools into MAB Reserve management and ways to trigger change: communicating results to the stakeholders, co-designed action plans, mainstreaming of results in local by-laws, adapted communication channels,...
- **Other ecosystem services-based approaches** to complement the use of rapid ecosystem services assessment tools, such as the co-production of knowledge & dialogue (serious games, scenarios, etc), communication media (local media, goodwill ambassadors, local 'brands', sports contests, traditional events etc), traditional knowledge (sacred sites, importance of traditional leaders, etc).
- **Main advantages and risks of the economic valuation** of ecosystem services in support of the sustainable management of African BRs. Advantages cited include helping to diversify between economic activities, attracting funds and investments, designing compensation schemes, supporting appreciation and awareness of ES, etc. Risks cited include imbalance between existing methodologies for different ES, volatility in price of ES, potential underestimation, increasing the gap between suppliers and beneficiaries, etc.
- **Most impactful stakeholders** and how to reach them, which includes actors at the local, regional and national level, and is to be adapted to each context.
- **Best practices**, success stories, regarding the **economic valuation** of ecosystem services in African MAB Reserves and/or beyond
- **Success stories of research** impacting decision making and conditions for research to be taken up by decision-makers

Main outputs

A **summary** and a detailed **report** of the workshop will be circulated to all participants and will be made available on the EVAMAB website www.biodiv.be/evamab, together with the powerpoint presentations and pictures of the workshop. The workshop was also summarized in a **Conservation News** piece to Oryx—The International Journal of Conservation. It will be published in the October issue. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/oryx>

The **manual** will be drafted based on the recommendations and discussions of the workshop. A first version will be presented to the AfriMAB community at the AfriMAB meeting in September. It should be finalized in 2019 and printed in 2020.

Short interviews of participants were filmed. They will be used to create **short video clips**, which will then be published on the CEBioS Youtube channel and EVAMAB website, and be presented e.g. at the AfriMAB meeting or other conferences and events.