



KEY MESSAGES REPORT



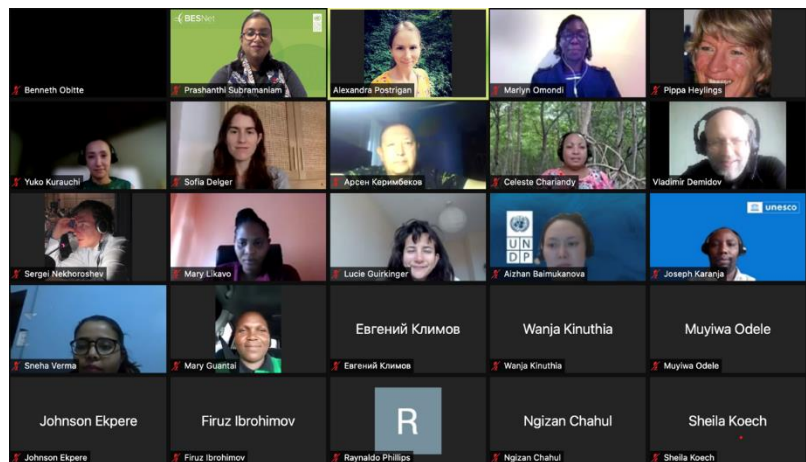
First Thematic Workshop:
Multi-Stakeholder Engagement
for the BES Solution Fund
Countries

23 February 2022

Introduction

Alongside the Introductory Workshop for Post-Trialogue Countries Supported by the Biodiversity and Ecosystems Services Network's (BES-Net) BES Solution Fund, which was held in October 2021, a survey was conducted to find out the respective countries' learning and capacity building needs.

According to the survey results and the introductory workshop discussions, a consensus was reached that a series of virtual workshops will be organized every quarter as a forum where the country teams can share knowledge and build capacity on the themes of common interests.



The first thematic workshop was organized on 23 February 2022, focusing on benefits and methods of engaging with stakeholders and knowledge holders during the implementation of the BES Solution Fund, including the Trialogue approach, a signature solution developed by BES-Net to engage science, policy and practice communities, including indigenous and local knowledge (ILK) holders

Over 30 participants from Kazakhstan, Kenya, Nigeria, and Trinidad and Tobago, four of the target countries benefitting from the BES Solution Fund in the First Phase (2020-2023), attended the virtual event.

This report outlines the key insights and messages that emerged during the workshop, paying particular attention to the constructive discussion during the breakout sessions.

Highlights of the meeting

Environmental challenges are complex systemic matters to be addressed by a diverse community of actors. Activities under the BES Solution Fund aim to tackle dynamic and interlinked challenges of biodiversity loss and land degradation. A single set of actors cannot achieve it. There is a need to involve and collaborate with a diverse group of stakeholders to ensure an effective and sustainable response.

Managing nature is about managing people. Understanding natural resources goes hand in hand with understanding the actors involved, their interests and their relationships with one another and with nature. This knowledge is a prerequisite to setting up good governance practices of natural resources.

The stakeholder engagement format and level of engagement are context-specific and may vary over time. Inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower are equally valuable options along the spectrum of stakeholder engagement. The most strategically appropriate engagement level shall be made carefully considering the context, the role of the actor, his/her influence and interest in the process.



Divisive hierarchy and power dynamics could influence innovation and knowledge sharing. It is an integral part of stakeholder engagement to analyze stakeholders' influence-interest rate, considering that innovation, insight and change often come from the edges of the system, from the stakeholder with less decision-making power. Stakeholders that don't regularly sit at the critical decision-making tables can be ambassadors of change and give a voice to many who were not heard for generations.

Applying gender lens in stakeholder engagement activities at all stages enhances gender-responsive and gender-transformative outcomes. Reaching out to female experts, being mindful of multiple burdens carried by women in households, supporting female champions in local context may be among the actions to promote women's participation that bring an overarching result.

Preparation is important. Preliminary rounds of discussion help build up the momentum and ensure representation and meaningful engagement of less represented communities like ILK holders, women and youth. As part of trust-building and cultivating a safe space to share their experience and contribute, focused preparatory processes are beneficial before convening the main stakeholder engagement session or event.

Dialogue between diverse sectors and knowledge systems requires building trust and acknowledging the equal value of different perspectives and experiences. BES-Net's signature stakeholder engagement solution, **Triologue**, was presented as one of the useful tools to facilitate dialogues and interactions between policy, science and practice, including indigenous peoples and local communities. The Triologue approach recognises underlying patterns of discord or challenge while providing tools to tackle them in a systemic manner. This approach develops an enabling environment, fostering understanding and trust among people with different backgrounds, knowledge, perspectives and interests and increasing their participation.

Indigenous peoples and local communities hold diverse knowledge to conserve biodiversity and address biodiversity loss. Meaningful engagement of ILK holders based on equanimity, trust and mutual respect supports the dialogue with the scientific and policy community for a more evidence-based biodiversity policies. The Multiple Evidence Base (MEB) approach highlights the benefit of promoting dialogue across, and "weaving", different knowledge systems to co-generate new insights and innovations.

As recognised by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystems Services (IPBES), **synergies across indigenous, local and scientific knowledge systems complement each other and contribute to understanding pollinators and pollination, their economic, environmental and socio-cultural values and their management globally.**

IPBES also affirmed that **ILK aids in avoiding, reducing and reversing land degradation** by offering different ways of thinking about people's relationship to nature and alternative land management systems and by promoting good governance.

COVID-19 pandemic has been a watershed for stakeholder engagement. Two years into the pandemic and yet to ultimately emerge from its consequences, the participants divided the practices into "before" and "after". Due to restrictions in physical movements and contacts, many traditional activities (overseas travels, large-scale in-person meetings, exhibitions or conferences) have been minimal.

The digital format is not a one-size-fits-all approach to stakeholder engagement. Easy to set up, online meetings became numerous during the pandemic but were not always purposeful. The participants tend to abandon virtual conferences, suffer zoom fatigue, and sometimes crave face-to-face connection. Digital suits specific platforms and communities that see it as an added value. However, some formats, like exhibitions, lose value if transferred online. Some communities also often prefer in-person meetings to make decisions.

Balancing the challenges and opportunities of virtual tools is context and audience specific. The digital space offered a valid alternative for some communities (e.g. science) and represented the opportunity for greater inclusion in some cases (e.g. women). While providing a greener, cost and time-efficient option to connect, the digital divide also pose challenges, leaving behind less tech-savvy users (e.g. elders) and participants from rural areas.

Key considerations when working with indigenous peoples and local communities include cultivating trust with them and acknowledging and respecting their cultural distinctiveness. Working with intermediary organisations recognised by indigenous peoples and local communities and applying the Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) principle are important milestones to engage with indigenous peoples and local communities.

The way forward requires combining the best practice of stakeholder engagement with advanced technologies. Cost-effectiveness reduced carbon footprint, and inclusivity of the online tools complement (but not substitute) a meaningful stakeholder engagement process. Leveraging certain stakeholders like youth and young researchers as go-betweens between technology and low-tech communities can also help make the most of digital stakeholder engagement approaches.