



African Climate Week – Track 2.
Session 6: Harnessing nature for transformative adaptation in Africa

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There is growing recognition that the global crises of climate change and biodiversity loss are strongly interlinked, with climate change representing a major driver of biodiversity loss. (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services [IPBES] 2019). And, there are no quick fixes to solve the climate emergency and our over-exploitation of natural resources. But, we do have nature, which has a fundamental role in both mitigating climate change and enabling us to adapt to it with its immense restorative power and some of the most cost-effective climate solutions. By working with nature, humanity has the potential both to reduce emissions by more than a third of what is needed by 2030 and to build climate resilience. We need to explore and invest in what nature does best: self-healing. This is what we call nature-based solutions.

This session of the African Climate Week discusses the potential for NbS and its enabling environment in Africa, and will explore ways to nurture and advance NbS in Africa, notably in national planning. Country experiences from developing and implementing NbS through exchange of approaches such as rehabilitating or restoring critical ecosystems (e.g., wetlands or mangroves), enhancing ecosystem connectivity through corridors and hybrid combinations of green and grey infrastructure will be exchanged. Specific opportunities and challenges to adopting and applying NbS will be discussed, and awareness of relevant tools and approaches will be exchanged with participants.

KEY OUTCOMES:

- In Africa, we are seeing a growing recognition of the value of nature-based solutions to build resilience to climate risks spanning from flooding, droughts, heat and soil erosion caused by extreme weather events, both at national and at urban level. But implementation is lagging.
- NbS are very effective when co-produced with local communities. They bring solutions to urban challenges and can reduce climate risks, but existing approaches and knowledge needs to be decolonized, with new research approaches and methodologies. Local knowledge and traditional nature management approaches need to be better leveraged. Additionally, land-use changes and the use of resources needs to be documented at local level, to use it to develop and implement effective adaptation plans that use nature.
- Implementing NbS solutions needs to be linked to the local communities' interests. To catalyze effective NbS implementation, they should provide ecological services that local communities will benefit from.
- In order to ensure NbS become more widely implemented, we need to explore and present their advantages, and the financial value they have against "grey" solutions. It is important that NbS are seen as effective solutions to bring services to the community and save money. This is important especially for local governments, where the delivery of basic services is the utmost priority.
- To scale up NbS implementation and ongoing projects, we need to showcase already economically viable and sustainable projects, so to attract further investments.
- NbS needs a localized African definition, so it can be widely shared among practitioners, but also so it can be adapted to local contexts, and make sense for local communities. The global term as it is vague, and this can hinder implementation and lead to under/over counting of what counts as effective NbS for the African context.
- On top of effective financing models, widespread NbS implementation requires additional efforts in awareness rising, capacity building of relevant stakeholders, coordination between different layers of government and effective partnerships between public organizations, private stakeholders, and civil society
To ensure long-term sustainability and a sense of ownership of NbS projects, the scaling of project should start with a locally-led projects, managed by local communities. Once the project is developed, it can be used to develop regional and national plans.

KEY OUTCOMES REGARDING CITY:

- ICLEI is working on a three pathways strategy for NbS implementation in city contexts: First, they represent city in international contexts, and push for more involvement and commitments of cities against biodiversity crisis, in favor of SDGs implementation, but they still need to work on accountability of promised measures. Second, they believe planning and implementation need to be linked. By targeting very particular places in the city, with biodiversity interest for instance, they could prioritize implementation and then scale up projects. Finally, finance from private sector must help projects to shift to economically viability.
- Cities are vulnerable, whenever it comes to poorly handled natural hazard. Cities need to gain they financial independence, so they can adapt to natural hazard they are facing, and

build the infrastructure needed to adapt climate change. Infrastructure of cities, like sanitation or transportation, are basic needs in citizens' life, and should not be overlooked, but managed by local administration in order to answer it as effectively as possible.

PARTICIPANTS:



1. Ms. Doreen Nyanjura, Deputy Lord Mayor, Kampala, Uganda
2. Dr. Meggan Spires, Director of Climate Change, Energy & Resilience, ICLEI Africa
3. Dr. Bernadette Snow, Deputy Director - One Ocean Hub, Nelson Mandela University
(virtual)
4. Ms. Alice Estelle Nkongo Nchare, Technical Assistant, Africa Climate Change Adaptation Technical Assistant – WWF Cameroon
5. Mr. Roland Hunter, Senior Sourcing Manager - Nature-based Solutions, Africa, South Pole
6. Mr. Richard Matey, Executive Director, Alliance for Empowering Rural Communities
7. Mr. Harrison Nnoko Ngaaje, Co-founder and Executive President, NGO – Nature Based Solutions

Moderator: Richard Munang, Deputy Regional Director, Africa Office, UNEP

From the whole Panel discussion:

NbS are key elements to tackle climate change and its consequences. Unfortunately, the implementation and promotion of NbS is not smooth, and can sometimes lead to irrelevant

projects. Several improvements were proposed here to improve NbS implementation. Starting from NbS itself, the very definition of it needs to be broadened. As of today, the term does not fit to already existing behaviors, or does not make sense to local communities that are supposed to apply or to maintain these NbS. Secondly, local communities are a resource for NbS. By decolonizing African curricula and methodologies, co-producing of research and knowledge is key to access and disseminate NbS solutions nourished from local, contextualized and efficient knowledge.

Indeed, the bottom-top approach is more suitable in this situation. Local communities should be at the center of an organized project, with NbS project answering their needs as well and providing them with ecosystemic services. It should be done at local scale, as it is essential to develop economically viable and sustainable systems. Then, thanks to organized and harmonious policies and monitoring methodologies between different bodies, incentives, in a top-bottom approach, should help local projects to scale up to influence policies and be implemented through regional plans, national plans and development plans.

CONFERENCE SUMMARY:

Please note that the broadcast only started during the Panel Discussion

Question asked through the Panel discussion:

If Humans are the problems, and Nature is the solution, why do we keep destroying Nature? How can we make Nature become the norm, an asset, and create income for people?

Mr. Harrison Nnoko Ngaaje: We are Nature as well. Therefore, we should take harmonious actions. In biological science, we can see that there is a blend between animals, plants and human, which allow each of these party to survive. This is why in Cameroon, NbS are implemented from two approaches: bottom-top and top-bottom. Government policies are there, but local communities are needed. That is why in every NbS project of mine, I ask myself *“what is the place of local community? How are they involved and how do they participate?”* This question is fundamental, because when we want to implement something, we look at policies, but we should also look at the interest of the local communities, those who live side-by-side with animals and plants. Therefore, NbS should protect the environment but also provide ecosystem services that help the community.

How do we leverage NbS in a way that incentives come toward them? Today, these NbS receive few incentives, and if they are too small, people turn away from NbS.

Mr. Roland Hunter: South Pole is a developer and a trader of carbon credit projects. They develop projects that have measurable mitigation impacts, but it doesn't mean that they are not interested in adaptation or resilience projects. They are developing multiframework approach, for more marketable projects, that reduce GHG emission, but also benefit from biodiversity preservation and sustainable development that will be welcomed at field level, so it will ensure perpetuity. I

disagree with the idea of “incentives are not there”, but I suggests that they are directed into very specific contexts.

What incentives are here for informal sectors, young people? What incentives are there for them to develop NbS?

Mr. Roland Hunter: Incentives are only present for ownership, and should help deliver jobs, speak to needs of people and contribute to infrastructure building. It’s not beneficial if you feel outside the influence of the incentive. This consideration should be taken care from the beginning of the project.

Incentives are here, but we don’t see a lot of them. It is because the lessons or the projects that are implemented are not showcased, and are not able to attract more incentives?

Ms. Alice Estelle Nkongo Nchare: How to value the role of Nature in order to drive innovative and transformative adaptation actions on the ground? WWF Africa has 5 main pillars, the first one is “capacity building”. Specifically, we are focused on showcasing documents about NbS for adaptation and tools, and we are organizing capacity building on climate change adaptation and NbS for adaptation. One important question for WWF is: how can we create pan-African coalition to drive this innovative and transformative adaptation actions blending both traditional and indigenous solutions? Also, Africa needs to have a common narrative about NbS.

How the data you are generating can be linked with indigenous knowledge that can help NBS to go forward?

Dr. Bernadette Snow: Data is important, so is alternative and other knowledge. The merging of the two is called co-productional research and co-productional knowledge. It is a way to produce NbS, creation methodologies and open pathways. Co-production knowledge with local communities will provide opportunities, and solutions.

How can we promote indigenous solutions?

Dr. Bernadette Snow: Indigenous knowledge should be promoted by two ways: decolonize curricula and other is research approach and methodologies. We need to keep improving value of nature, and amplify those who carry these value, especially young people.

How have you managed, in your communities, to work on what they do?

Mr. Richard Matey: NbS needs to be defined in African context, because sometimes communities and young people don’t understand, and sometimes it means something they already know or apply, and it is something difficult to comprehend. Also, local communities are less empowered, or don’t benefit from incentives to support what they do. So, my organization supports

communities and young people for local solutions they do, so they can direct access to fundings and actively participate in decision making processes in their country.

What role do you see for such informal food producers or traders playing in enhancing the optics of NBS in food? Do you have, in ICLEI, solutions or proposals that can become the norm for ensuring that food systems can actually become strengthened?

Dr. Meggan Spires: 90% of food consumed in cities comes from informal sector, and more and more people moves to the cities. We often underestimate how organized informal communities are. For instance, I visited a waste management team in a market, where I thought I would have to explain the concept and system, and manage the process closely. On the contrary, I discovered a very structured organization of market management with heads of sectors and a market leader, and I focused on listening to them, and coproducing a solution that made sense in their context. This highlights the need to avoid imposing solutions top-down, but to help communities improve their existing approaches and use a bottom-up approach when possible. We are making progress in the pathways we propose to accelerate action for nature in cities. First, by ensuring representation of local governments and regions within the CBD process for the Biodiversity COP in December in Montreal, Canada, which is the equivalent to the UNCCC COP for Climate. We want to ensure that cities and local governments have a voice in this process, and that national government understand that cities have a vital role to play in dealing with the biodiversity crisis. We also established [CitiesWithNature](#), a platform where cities from all around the world are signing up and committing to biodiversity actions. Accountability is key in this context: commitments are being made to achieve the SDGs, through Cities with Nature, from national governments with NDCs, from business through ESGs. We need to track action made and ensure commitments are not just words, but transform into change on the ground that benefits people. Then, regarding urban planning I want to highlight our success in Dar es Salaam, where we targeted the most biodiverse areas in the city to prioritize implementation projects. The planning of a project, right from the outset, should be linked to implementation. The third point is about finance. We did a lot of demonstrations with small scale projects in ICLEI, but we now need to scale them. The core strategy is to use grant finance from private sector as bridging funds to move NbS projects from non-financially viable to financially viable projects.

Do you have a perspective so we can see scaling happening?

Mr. Roland Hunter: Incentive are not always fit for purpose. For instance, how do we kick start a carbon financed project of forest in Cameroon? As a solution, the government decentralized forest management to community based-structures, which is great, and the standard 10-year period is for 25 years. Unfortunately, it's 5 years too short to be accepted by the carbon standards, because there is the principle where we want to know if this carbon asset of that forest management plan has a long-term tenure. There is a need to align the different metrics, to align the different definitions of things and across borders, between different bodies for common work. We need to talk across silos.

How do we ensure politic actions among actors on NbS? What do you think needs to be done in order to take this into next level?

Mr. Richard Matey: We must gather young people around a common goal. Therefore, we created the Youth Climate Council, an institutional mechanism to support the Youth Climate Movement in the country, to bring together youth organization, young people across the country. We don't lead, but we create a space so we have a direct interaction between them. We did this in Ghana, and now we want to do the same in Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria.

What do we need to do to ensure that youth start seeing money in this?

Mr. Richard Matey: Youth actions are very innovative and impactful. In order to have money, you have to focus on the impact, to finance what you are doing. Where there is a possibility, they try to make a business case based on an action they are doing, so the financial providers look at the financial viability and sustainable viability of the impact, and the possibility of scaling up the impact. Youth are concerned about project implementation, but also about money management.

How best is Kampala municipality addressing the flood issue using NbS? How are you engaging public-private sector in the cost of this?

Mrs. Nyanjura Doreen: Kampala heavily suffers from floods. The cause is these floodings is that nature has been tampered with. Also, the flooding is related to uncollected garbage. Kampala municipality can only collect 56% of the garbage it produces. The remaining garbage goes into pipes and blocks water from flowing. This is because, as local council, Kampala relies on central government to pay for these services, and the money they collect from taxes goes to the central government, it does not stay in the hands of the local authorities. Additionally, the priorities of the local and the national governments are very different. Kampala only has 10 collector tractors, although it is a very populated city, and relies on central government, they are not independent. As a solution, citizens need to rise to show the central government that they need solutions tailored to their local needs.

Without having alternative, there is no absolutely no way that NbS would become part of the transformations. Which alternative have been put in place?

Mr. Harrison Nnoko Ngaaje: We need to decolonize NbS technologies. We always want to import technology and knowledge to communities, which does not work. I prefer to improve what we are doing, and we will give them space. If you import technology, you have to import a lot of them, capacity building that people don't possess. We have to include indigenous knowledge in planning. In Cameroon, we decentralized natural resource management at level of council, such as agricultural and tree planting activities, and communities participate in approaches mapping, land use planning, and these approaches are integrated into council development plans. The approach is all about improving existing knowledge. For instance, reforestation. We need to use native tree species.

How do we connect the ground to the top, knowing that the people from the ground knows what they want and how to do it but need a little push, to move to the top, in terms of opportunities within NbS? How do we fill these gasps?

Ms. Alice Estelle Nkongo Nchare: We work with Climate Crowd Walk in local communities. We put local communities at the center of these walks, we build key adaptation and mitigation interventions and we bring them up at national or regional levels. We also trying to mainstream Nature into key development plans, and key regional plans. At local level, we have community development plans. At national level, we have NDCs, and at regional level, we have various development plans of regional economic communities. We are looking on how we can mainstream Nature into these plans so we can drive transformative solutions. I would also like to point at promoting locally aids for NbS. We need to push for more locally-led adaptations interventions at regional and local scale.

In your view, what needs to be done to balance these competing rights, between the right to protect, and the right to give opportunity to those in need?

Dr. Bernadette Snow: We need to understand that we live in very complex system. We cannot separate socio-economic well-being of Human away from Nature. We need to link the two. We also need to understand that this is a human right. We are accountable to all voices, that all have a right to healthy environment, because it ensures and secure sustainable, healthy and social society. We need to understand this and find this mechanism to ensure this. Lastly, we need to understand that there is a dynamic, and give legitimacy for people to speak up. For instance, we need to shift the power in the hands of Africa, so they can come up with solutions.

Inputs and Q&A 1:

- *How to maintain people-centered solutions like sustainable cooking with indigenous solutions, with NbS? People-centered solutions vis-a-vis the gas debate vs actions that have nothing to do with gas but that are solutions to people.*
- *What is relevant to Africa? I think Nature has much more value than money, we value so many things. / What is the source of these concepts and of these values?*
- *Local communities need to influence policies. But we can't do it in a theoretical way, we need practical evidences. We need on the ground actions and results to show that NbS solutions are effective, and influence government policies.*
- *Regarding NbS, we noticed that some of them are making communities life difficult, and most of the time, the poorest ones.*

Dr. Bernadette Snow: Regarding the cooking perspective. There are clean cooking solutions locally-produced all over Africa that are very efficient. Food sovereignty links with valuing and commodification of Nature. One of the reasons is that policies are to blame for, because the fell that only that the only way to get Nature into policy is to commodify nature. We really need to unpack the inherent intangible value of Nature to people. We also need to find mechanisms and

pathways so don't have to convince presidents that we need to protect and preserve natural areas, because it has more value than dollars, because it is connected to so many different things.

From where does the concept NbS come from? And what would you say on that?

Dr. Bernadette Snow: The concept has been emerging from an accounting perspective. We are destroying ecosystems services, that provide us mitigations and protection solutions. We need to unpack the term NbS a little more deeply, and look on how we describe and classify the term because it refers to so many different things.

What is the value of NBS?

Ms. Alice Estelle Nkongo Nchare: it serves to address climate change societal challenges through adaptation and mitigation. In WWF Africa, mainly through adaptation, we value NbS through 3 key principles:

- Avoiding to harm nature
- Using Nature to help people adapt
- Helping Nature itself adapt to climate change

How do we make sure that people don't think NbS are not just as planting trees, but as an opportunity to make money?

Mr. Harrison Nnoko Ngaaje: As a conservationist, our approach is to educate community people. But the question we ask ourselves is *"How do you adapt NbS to suit people needs?"*

Why are people not incentivized to take alternatives? Where are we wrong?

Mr. Harrison Nnoko Ngaaje: The problem lies in information sharing. We need to improve it. We need multi-stakeholders approach to create common ground for decision making. So far, we are thinking for communities with project that not adaptable for them, but we need the local communities, to document their land uses and resources usage. By doing that, communal development plans that will capture community projects, will help you understand desire of the community and you design a project following this with innovative technologies.

How do you implement changes when you are the mayor, when you have power?

Ms. Nyanjura Doreen: We are still fighting to regain power, as we were in the opposition before. But with the support of the people, we have power. You can find books about policies, but nothing about implementation strategy. So, whenever a policy maker come up with a strategy on how to implement, we are going to see some changing. For her, the question is more about sensitization. What people are we sensitizing, are we working on the right ones? We have to look more into different topics, for instance tourism, because tourism was told to be beneficial for local

communities, but it's been years since anything happens. Therefore, today it's very hard to convince local communities to preserve the environment, because they don't see the benefit of it.

Have you engaged local, private actors to work with the mayor? What was the results?

Ms. Nyanjura Doreen: We believe in partnerships; we have numerous private-public partnership. We also international organizations to ensure effective delivery of action for nature in city, like Expertise France. They play a fundamental role and are key for a city like Kampala to implement NbS, for instance in assistance in implementing clean cooking. This is a very serious topic, because in Uganda more than 80% of population is relying fire woods and charcoals, and public institutions are making things worst because schools, teacher, prisons are using charcoals as well.

What about youth? How are engaging them?

Ms. Nyanjura Doreen: Youth, women, pwd come first.

Concern the clean cooking, what are your takes?

Mr. Richard Matey: We have fuels not accessible to local communities, so people rely on fire woods. Therefore, we came with a new technology that can save wood fuel and reduce carbon emissions when burnt. We support local communities by putting in place local sustainable woodlot systems, to provide fire woods for them, instead of going into forests.

If the locally-led innovations are happening, why do we always have meeting like it never happened?

Mr. Richard Matey: Because some people are promoting foreign businesses.

So how can we have a level playing field?

Mr. Richard Matey: We should listen at what locals have to say, and bridge the gaps at local scale.

Who should do that?

Mr. Richard Matey: All actors have a role to play.

Does everybody have a role to play? Is everybody playing its part?

Mr. Roland Hunter: We should accept that there is a war going on against nature, made by very organized and experienced people, who can put value on something. We are fighting it asymmetrically. We need to quantify the value of not extracting this or exploit that.

Are we really trying?

Ms. Meggan Spires, hundreds of thousands are trying. But considering a pragmatic approach, there is no perfect solution. Any term and definition can be implemented in a way that is good or bad for nature. It's the responsibilities of organizations and individuals to do the best they can. It's about the balance between being pragmatic and actions oriented. Investors, cities are frustrated with plans, they want to go fast, but they are always trying to improve. NbS definition maybe needs to be improve, but it's something.

Inputs and Q&A 2:

- *Input: Terminology should not give room for people not to act. Actions matters, because they bring opportunities.*
- *About NbS, I'm not comfortable with different definitions for restauration and then try to adapt a western definition for restauration. What do you think about adopting such concept into Africa, and do you think we really need a related ones or do we need to take the exact same one?*
- *Regarding decolonization of agricultural knowledge, and regarding the fact that our traditions were effective in the past, can we adapt our knowledge to modern technologies?*

Dr. Bernadette Snow: We have to learn through our actions, because we need to take actions and learn from mistakes made from, and to stop wasting money of quick actions. Regarding ecosystems restauration and services, we need to be careful when it comes to definition. We always have to look at nature, as a source of solution to technology and providing. Finally, who is going to pay? It's the people who cannot pay that are going to suffers the most. Through ecosystem restauration projects, that come from communities, impacts on ecosystems can be reduced, and provide jobs. We need to take these ideas evoked here and progress in nature protection.

Ms. Alice Estelle Nkongo Nchare: We need to hear Africa voice, specialists, as one coalition of key African stakeholders, scientists and individuals to push NbS and all African knowledge.

Mr. Harrison Nnoko Ngaaje: We should protect nature in order to have money and food.

Ms. Nyanjura Doreen: Quotation by Robert Watson, co-chair of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment "While Nature provides essential goods and services like food, flood protection, and many more, it also has ritual, cultural, spiritual and religious significance, which need to be valued in policy making as well. People need to better understand the full value of nature and its protection and sustainable use".

Mr. Richard Matey: NbS plays a critical role. Young people need to be empowered and supported, and incentivized. Empowered by themselves, by government and private sectors.

Mr. Roland Hunter: We are all here because we believe in the message, we need to take it outside of this tent.

Ms. Meggan Spires: There is pressure for action and speed, but we need some evidence of science to avoid maladaptation. We are going to do that with better monitoring evaluation and learning. What would be innovative is a system that operationalizing our monitoring and learning so we can gain implementing speed in a way that it is responsible.