

NATURE-BASED ECONOMY WEBINAR REPORT

*The african grassroots perspective
on the economics of biodiversity*

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Background

As preparations to finalize the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework continue, the African CSOs Biodiversity Alliance (ACBA) in collaboration with the African Development Bank (AfDB) believe it is important to facilitate dialogue between key stakeholders. African grassroots communities understand the important role biodiversity plays for local livelihoods and wellbeing. Grassroots communities are disproportionately dependent on nature for survival but are also knowledgeable in approaches that deliver nature and people positive livelihoods and economies. Regional economic bodies and development finance institutions can ensure biodiversity positive outcomes through their investment policies and practices. This dialogue offers a valuable platform for an exchange of perspectives on the Africa we want between grassroots representatives and regional development bodies and development finance institutions.

The Dasgupta Review is an independent global review on the economics of biodiversity commissioned by the government of the United Kingdom (UK). It considers, amongst other things, the consequences of biodiversity loss that are often misunderstood and overlooked. Prosperity has been at the expense of nature and ecosystem services. Greater pressure is being placed on nature to meet people's need thereby breaching planetary and local ecological boundaries. The Review highlights that the biodiversity crisis requires institutional and market responses to steer global growth and development towards a nature and people positive future. It also notes that the past and contemporary economic development models are yet to understand the fundamental role that nature plays in global prosperity.

The African Development Bank (AfDB) believes that biodiversity gains are an essential consideration in green

recovery plans and that these plans should also improve the quality of life of Africans. Therefore, *the Bank's High 5*, supports biodiversity conservation including restoration of degraded lands. The AfDB Group has also created the *COVID-19 Rapid Response Facility* (CRF), to support its member countries' and private enterprises' responses to the economic and social impact of the pandemic as they commit to build back better. AfDB also encourages increased investments in Nature based Solutions (NbS), incorporation of biodiversity values into national accounting and engagement of the private sector in terms of making their financing practices biodiversity friendly.

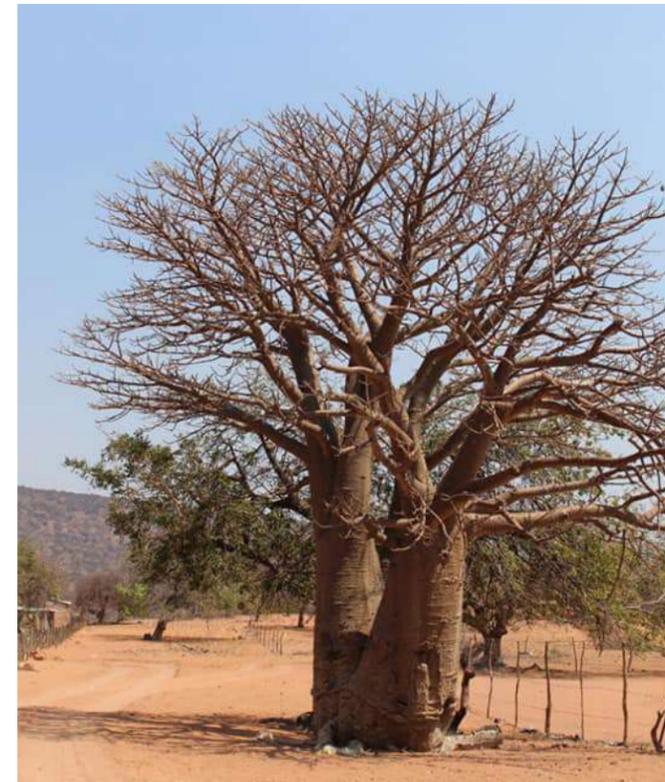
Founded in February 2020, the African CSOs Biodiversity Alliance (ACBA) provides a platform for African CSOs to speak with one voice about the role of sustainable use, a rights-based approach to decision-making and equitable distribution of benefits from nature. The alliance facilitates sharing best practices, collaboration opportunities, and aims at influencing regional, continental and global biodiversity policy processes and practices. ACBA strives to support civil society actors in the diversification of approaches to sustainable development for biodiversity gains. By working with governments, investors and other actors to pursue biodiversity conservation ensuring that conservation and development are mutually reinforcing priorities.

The Dasgupta Review and its policy recommendations for shaping the economics of biodiversity served as a valuable resource that enriched the webinar discussion on the economics of biodiversity by exploring the local realities on the ground for Africa's indigenous and local communities.

Highlights

- A. *More inclusive dialogues* among conservation institutions, development finance institutions, regional development bodies, governments and critical groups including youth, indigenous people and local communities (IPLCs) acknowledging that African perspectives are fundamental in the identification of solutions that curb biodiversity loss.
- B. Our lives and economies are embedded in biodiversity
- C. Africa has a large share of intact biodiversity remaining hence, it is important that the continent embraces transformative change in how we manage the continent's biodiversity informed by the experience and knowledge of grassroots communities, indigenous people, and small-scale farmers
- D. A conducive environment must be created for *IPLCs and small scale farmers to contribute to global commitments* ensuring that the multiple values of nature such as intrinsic and economic are understood.
- E. The options for transformative change can be achieved along three main transitions:
- *Measures of economic success*: Gross Domestic Product (GDP) does not account for social wellbeing across generations. Additionally we should combine human and natural capital matrices
 - *Balancing supply and demand*: Invest more in conservation but in a manner that benefits people and nature. We also have to reduce humanity's demand on nature often referred to as consumption patterns. Most important we have to invest more women's access to education and health
 - *Strong and resilient institutions*: We need polycentric institutions that embrace the best of local and global best practices. Financial systems must channel investment that enhances our natural capital

- F. *Ecosystem health is the true measure of human well-being* and at times requires "doing nothing" so that nature can thrive on its own.
- G. *Measures to assess, quantify, record and report biodiversity's return on investment* are needed to promote investment into nature, especially to avoid undervaluation of ecosystem services.
- H. For ecosystem needs to be central to economic decision-making, *it is essential to bring onboard local, national and regional stakeholders and financial institutions.*
- I. *Increase productivity of nature*: invest in the health of the land
- J. Through significant investments especially in much needed infrastructure, regional economic blocks and development finance institutions can reduce their ecological footprint by adopting policies and investment practices that yield outcomes that are positive for people and biodiversity



Proceedings

OPENING REMARKS

Pauline Nantongo, the moderator, welcomed all panelists and participants to the discussion and following the agenda (see Annex I) ushered the speakers to share their remarks.

Vanessa Ushie from the African Development Bank (AfDB) applauded the growing coalition of actors that include governments, private sector, CSOs, and development finance institutions taking major steps under conservation of biodiversity and nature. AfDB has numerous initiatives that are aimed at addressing biodiversity loss and gave multiple examples of such programs led by the innovative bank. COVID-19 provides an opportunity to focus on biodiversity and build-back better.

Kaddu Sebunya reaffirmed nature's inestimable value, especially in Africa where millions are dependent on ecosystem services. He emphasized that nature-positive approaches are made more imperative by shifting dynamics in African demography, resource use, infrastructure and economies. Further, Africa's rich biodiversity is a critical contributor to climate mitigation and adaptation. To ensure Africa's biodiversity continues to deliver global public goods for communities, African voices must be recognized and convene government platforms to inform decision-making policies. This includes the African youth who must be involved now and can harness technology to make meaningful contributions to a future where biodiversity is at the center stage of economic development.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS:

Sandy Sheard

Sandy Sheard shared highlights from the Dasgupta Review, indicating that human prosperity has often been at nature's expense. Biodiversity is declining at unprecedented rates, unequivocally demonstrating that humanity's consumption of nature has stripped its ability to supply ecosystem services efficiently. Given that all economies, livelihoods, and well-being depend on nature, it is our most precious asset and managing it is everyone's responsibility. We need to move away from our current path towards one where we engage sustainably with nature.

GRASSROOTS PERSPECTIVES FROM CSOS :

Lucy Waruingi

Ms. Waruingi underscored that working with local communities in East Africa has validated that they have more holistic perspectives on nature's values, given their attachment to and dependence on nature. Community's understanding of livelihoods are not fully accounted for in measures of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and this should change. Management and governance tools informed by community perspectives will ensure greater success of conservation projects, mitigation processes and decision-making processes for nature.

Hawe Hamman Boubu

Ms. Boubu pointed out that rainforest biodiversity in Cameroon is reducing at an alarming rate directly affecting IPLCs and women. In response, her team developed a project at the intersection of gender and climate change driven by community-based climate change adaptation and mitigation. These interventions include; solutions for energy efficiency, regenerating indigenous knowledge while integrating it into local

management practices, and raising awareness on the implications of climate change. She noted the importance of intergenerational exchange of knowledge especially to the youth who are now increasingly disconnecting from indigenous knowledge systems.

Khalid Mather

Mr. Mather reflected on social injustices that are being driven by scarcity borne of resource depletion. Concentrated control over essential resources continues to limit aspirations for humanity and is reflected in challenges to conservation. To change this, current measures of economic prosperity must become more diverse, inclusive and define value on longer timelines. Besides identifying nature's asset value, it is necessary to transform current models of exploitation and resource consumption. While the valuation of biodiversity is instructive, caution is needed to avoid the replication of corporate models of resource accounting that undervalue nature and have not prioritized the environment.

Ousmane Gning

Mr. Gning spoke from his vast experience working with local communities in Senegal to protect biodiversity and ecosystems. He confirmed that they have seen significant success in mangrove conservation, land restoration and sustainable fish farming. Successful interventions have been shaped by appropriate government fisheries' regulations and are further propelled by technological innovations that renew fish habitats. These changes have helped improve ecosystem services in the area while supporting local communities to start income generating activities and introducing new markets at local and national levels for their commodities. The most direct ripple effect is the conception of a new program that seeks to ensure the conservation value chains are based on sustainable use of renewable energy. It encourages adoption of clean energy across all sectors.

PERSPECTIVES FROM REGIONAL ECONOMIC BODIES AND DEVELOPMENT FINANCE INSTITUTIONS

Moussa Leko

Mr. Leko introduced Economic Community of West African States' (ECOWAS) new environmental policy that aims to promote a conservation economy that delivers tangible benefits for the region. The regional body has since developed a plan with seven priorities that include harmonization of policy frameworks and policies, resource accounting, restoration of degraded lands and ecosystems at the sub-national level while conserving biodiversity to improve food security.

Vanessa Ushie

Ms. Ushie shared AfDB's strategic commitment to biodiversity in its transition to foster green growth in Africa. Underlying thematic approaches that shape interventions include nature-based solutions, nature-based finance and investments, and enhanced valuation of nature. She emphasized that these approaches of green development will be applied across all sectors from energy, agriculture, water, and infrastructure. *The Great Green Wall* project exemplifies the bank's efforts. Additionally, AfDB supports the global center on adaptation, working with the *Africa Ecological Futures* initiative in collaboration with partners to promote petroleum and mining sectors to take up nature-based solutions in their infrastructure development projects. The bank has also prioritized mainstreaming natural capital in African development finance in collaboration with the *Green Growth Knowledge Platform*. Emphasis is on embedding nature in finance, operations and policy.

Nour Abdrassoul

Mr. Abdrassoul shared a coherent case study focused on the management of natural resources in and around the Congo Basin, an area with significant potential but has been undermined by biodiversity loss. Principles that guide the Development Bank of Central Africa States' commitment to biodiversity include: protecting and preservation of vulnerable habitats; avoiding financing projects that negatively impact natural resources (e.g. protected areas, natural forests and parks, fish reserves); and undertaking environmental assessments prior to providing any financing. They also participate in the inception stages where they collaboratively design the projects to ensure that they are environmentally friendly.

DISCUSSION

Ms. Pane Makko highlighted a great concern that biodiversity surveys often don't reflect realities on the ground. Additionally, biodiversity projects often overlook local communities' role in conserving and maintaining biodiversity in their lands. It is unfortunate that communities continue to face several challenges including expansion of protected areas that affect their livelihoods and often, lead to evictions and exclusion of communities in the management of their resources.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Ms. Zéneb Toure appreciated all panelists and participants for their contributions, noting that convening such a diverse array of stakeholders plays a formative part in increased transparency, inclusion and ownership necessary for African nature-based economy to thrive.

Way forward

This collaborative dialogue shared insights on how conservation economy delivers tangible benefits to Africa, revealing an abundance of biodiversity and its economic prospects. This will require replenishing nature, changing measures of economic success, transformation of relevant institutions and systems to transition to sustainable use of nature. Strategically engaging local communities in conservation and restoration of nature should be at the center of our engagement while leveraging traditional knowledge.

The participants agreed that there is a growing need to have similar multi-stakeholder strengthened dialogues as they continue collaborating in forums and discussions that will inform key outcomes that will be within the next biodiversity framework.

Annex

NATURE BASED ECONOMY WEBINAR

THEME: ECONOMICS OF BIODIVERSITY: *The African Grassroots Perspective*

June 30th 2021

2:00 – 4:00 PM EAT | 11:00 – 1:00 PM GMT

Time	Topic
2:00 – 2:20	<p>Opening Remarks by the Co-hosts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Moderator</i> – Pauline Nantongo - Executive Director, ECOTRUST Uganda • <i>Vanessa Ushie</i> – Division Manager, Policy Analysis, African Natural Resources Centre, AfDB • <i>Kaddu Sebunya</i> – Chief Executive Officer, African Wildlife Foundation
2:20 – 2:45	<p>Keynote Presentation: Unpacking the Theories of the Economics of Biodiversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sandy Sheard</i> – Head of the Review team and Deputy Director at HM Treasury
2:45 – 3:30	<p>Panel of Practitioners: Perspectives on Economics of Biodiversity for Africa</p> <p><i>CSO / Grassroots Perspective</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Lucy Wairungi</i> – Executive Director, African Conservation Centre • <i>Paine Makko</i> – Executive Director, Ujamaa Community Resource Team • <i>Hawe</i> – Executive President, African Indigenous Women Organization Central African Network • <i>Khalid Mather</i> – Environmental Scientist • <i>Ousmane Gning</i> – ENDA Tiers Monde (Francophone) <p><i>Regional Economic Bodies & Development Finance Institutions Perspective</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Moussa Leko</i> – Acting Director, Environment and Natural Resources, ECOWAS • <i>Nour Abdrassoul</i> – The Development Bank of Central African States, BDEAC • <i>Vanessa Ushie</i> – Division Manager, Policy Analysis, African Natural Resources Centre, AfDB
3:30 – 3:50	<p>Q&A Session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Moderator: Pauline Nantongo</i> – Executive Director ECOTRUST Uganda
3:50 – 4:00	<p>Closing Remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendations / Key messages • <i>Closing Speaker</i> – Zéneb Toure - OIC Director, AHGC & Division Manager for Civil Society & Community Engagement

HIGHLIGHTED SPEAKERS



MODERATOR
Pauline Nantongo
Executive Director ECOTRUST
Uganda



KEYNOTE SPEAKER
Sandy Sheard
Head of Review Team & Deputy
Director at HM Treasury



CLOSING SPEAKER
Zéneb Toure
OIC Director, AHGC & Division Manager,
Civil Society & Community Engagement



Vanessa Ushie
Economic Governance & Knowledge
Management, AfDB



Lucy Mulenkei
Executive Director Indigenous
Information Network



Lucy Wairungi
Executive Director African
Conservation Centre



Khalid Mather
Environmental Scientist



Ousmane Gning
ENDA Tiers Monde



Moussa Leko
Acting Director Environment &
Natural Resources, ECOWAS



Nour Abdrassoul
The Development Bank of Central
African States, BDEAC



Elie Aloko
The West African Development
Bank, BOAD