

Integrating EbA into national planning

To effectively address the negative impacts of climate change now and in the future, climate change adaptation strategies need to be integrated into wider national policies and planning processes – adaptation cannot stand in isolation. A conscious effort is needed to ensure that ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) options are both incorporated into climate change adaptation strategies and included in work to integrate adaptation into other planning processes such as national development planning or sectoral policies and strategies.



In order to identify the potential role of EbA for different sectors, an understanding of the climatic and non-climatic drivers (see Briefing Notes 1 and 3) in each sector should be developed and the possible contribution of ecosystem services towards addressing these should be analysed. The effective integration of EbA into adaptation strategies and wider sectoral or cross-sectoral planning can be promoted by making a solid case for EbA that can be understood by decision makers in the context of their own political remit. Ensuring uptake of EbA will further depend on understanding the policy, planning and financing landscape to identify and/or create opportunities and entry points for integrating EbA. Developing evidence of the costs, benefits and cost-effectiveness of EbA measures will also be crucial for their wider adoption and replication on the ground (see Briefing Note 5).

This Briefing Note covers why, where, when and how to integrate EbA into national adaptation strategies and other sectoral policy, planning and budgetary processes.

Making EbA sustainable: why the planning and policy contexts are key

EbA should be seen as a trajectory rather than a one-off intervention. Any discrete, funded project is merely launching a process that needs to continue for many years beyond the project life-span in order to realise adaptation benefits for target communities. This is due to the long time frames required for restoring and managing ecosystems, as well as the need to establish sustained and sustainable natural resource management that can support the continued provision of ecosystem services under climate change.

Given the long-term nature of EbA, adjusting the planning and policy context to make it more favourable to realising EbA goals is key to achieving sustainable adaptation outcomes over time. Recognising the importance of a conducive policy environment, the CBD definition (2009) of EbA stresses that it should be part of an overall

adaptation strategy, alongside other forms of adaptation (see Briefing Note 4). EbA interventions should seek alignment with national, regional and local plans and policy measures (i.e. laws, regulations and enabling instruments and institutions).¹ Actions geared at influencing policies and integrating EbA should form an integral component of any EbA project throughout its planning and delivery. Where existing plans and strategies do not yet consider the role of ecosystems, it is crucial to work on getting such considerations incorporated. Many countries have policies that recognise the role of ecosystems for economic growth and adaptation. But harmonisation of ecosystem-based planning across the regulatory, policy and planning frameworks remains an on-going challenge and the lack of coherence is a key barrier to any paradigm shift.

Finding entry points for EbA in the policy and planning landscape

National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), as mandated by UNFCCC COP 17 in 2011, represent the primary national strategy document for adaptation. NAPs are an iterative planning process that should be driven by the best available science. They therefore provide a key starting point for EbA integration. Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), which represent individual countries' commitments under the Paris Agreement and in most cases cover adaptation as well as mitigation, are normally aligned with the respective NAPs (where these exist). Given that 109 of the 189 intended NDCs submitted to the United Nations included ecosystem considerations in their visions for adaptation, with 23 countries explicitly referring to EbA,² there is a foundation upon which further EbA integration efforts can build.

Beyond national adaptation planning, EbA integration efforts also need to target the wide range of other sectoral and cross-sectoral plans and policies, including those on:

- Development (e.g. national development strategy, sustainable development strategy, green economy/growth strategy)
- Specific economic sectors (e.g. tourism, fisheries, forestry, agriculture, aquaculture)
- Environmental issues (e.g. water management plans, national biodiversity strategies and action plans, waste management strategies)
- Health (e.g. national health policies, strategies and plans)
- Infrastructure (e.g. national plans and policies on energy, transport, housing)
- Area-based planning and management (e.g. Land Use Plans, Integrated Watershed Management (IWM) Programmes, Plans for Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) and Marine Spatial Planning)

While adaptation and sectoral policies and plans at the national level are a good starting point for EbA integration, these high-level plans are not the sole determinant of adaptation action at subnational and local scales. Successful adaptation from national down to local scales requires integration and consistency between local decisions and actions and national level strategies.³ Area-based planning frameworks like IWM or ICZM can help facilitate such vertical (as well as horizontal/cross-sectoral) harmonisation, while also acting as effective vehicles for furthering the aims of EbA given their cross-sectoral approach and existing emphasis on landscape-scale ecosystem management and a holistic systems perspective (Box 1).

Box 1. Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) as a vehicle for EbA

In 2010, the Government of Madagascar initiated a national policy and action planning process for ICZM, to be implemented by a sequence of five-year national ICZM programmes (the first in 2011-15). This process is overseen by a National Committee for ICZM, comprising ministries for a number of sectors including the Environment, Forests, Mines and Maritime Transport. Regional ICZM Committees and plans are to be developed, although only one has been established so far. The United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) EbA project in the country supports and improves the ICZM policy with the inclusion of climate change considerations. This includes strengthening ICZM coordination mechanisms at the regional level and developing four regional ICZM based adaptation strategies. Feeding into this will be the development of a methodology to measure coastal ecosystem services – both productive and protective services – to inform vulnerability assessments.

Guiding principles for integrating EbA into relevant plans and policies

The best strategy for integrating EbA into plans and policies will depend on national context and circumstances, but the following general principles can be of help:

Develop the evidence base and build the capacity of decision-makers

Collect and collate data that can inform assessments of climate risk, climate impact pathways and adaptation solutions. This should include information on social-ecological drivers and interdependencies. Use area-based models to understand ecosystem linkages. Discuss this data with government officials and other experts and jointly explore future climate risk and vulnerability (including climate impacts on ecosystems) of their respective sectors. If other climate change vulnerability assessments are underway, integrate ecosystem considerations and EbA into these. Use this participatory process of developing the evidence base to raise awareness, get buy-in, foster ownership, build the capacity of decision-makers to strengthen their support for adaptation, including EbA, and to develop a climate change policy for their sector/sub-sector that may be used to drive the integration process. With an enhanced understanding of the latest available scientific information, government officials will be better positioned to design appropriate adaptation strategies to produce desired adaptation outcomes for their sectors. Use the 'pathways' approach to adaptation planning to reduce costs in the face of uncertainty (see Briefing Note 4).

Screen policies, plans, laws and budgets to identify where harmonisation is needed

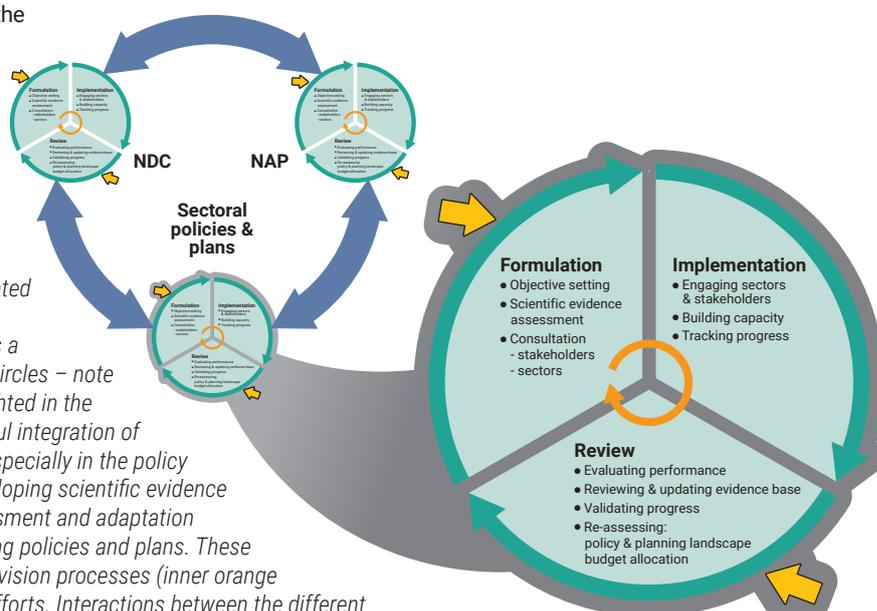
Review relevant policies, plans, laws and budgets to identify misalignment with respect to meeting adaptation objectives. Strengthen the role of the budget as the integrator of climate change into sectoral plans. Screening of policies, plans and budgets involves analysing whether current practices contradict adaptation goals and whether they could lead to increased vulnerability to climate change in the future. Contradictions may be revealed, among others, within Ministry spending plans, where one portion of the budget is helping to build resilience, while another is undermining this goal. For

Figure 1. Enhancing the success of EbA integration: targeting relevant policies, plans and budgets at opportune times. Relevant policies and plans for integrating EbA include climate change adaptation related processes, such as NAPs and NDCs, as well as many sectoral policies (e.g. forestry, health, water). Each has a regular policy and planning cycle (represented by the circles – note that all circles have the same content, which is highlighted in the large 'zoomed in' circle). Key entry points for successful integration of EbA along these iterative cycles (golden arrows) are especially in the policy formulation stage (e.g. through objective setting, developing scientific evidence and consultation with stakeholders for problem assessment and adaptation prioritisation), and during review and revision of existing policies and plans. These stages are accompanied by budgetary approval and revision processes (inner orange cycle), which also need to be targeted by integration efforts. Interactions between the different policies / plans (blue arrows) and their respective cycles need to be factored into integration efforts. This includes considering synergies and conflicts between objectives, roles and responsibilities, and budget lines.

example, tax incentives to plant large areas of mono-cultures that will be negatively affected by future climate change will increase people's vulnerability over time (see Briefing Note 2 for elements contributing to resilience). By highlighting areas in which harmonisation is needed, the process of integrating EbA can also contribute to wider policy alignment between different sectors and at different scales. Work on establishing and maintaining strong partnerships with stakeholders from different ministries and sectors in order to improve harmonisation and integrate EbA in a meaningful way.

Understand the regular policy, planning and budgeting cycles to identify entry points

Review the timelines for revisions of policies, plans and budgets and design actions that promote the integration of EbA to relevant decision-makers in the lead-up to such revisions. Revision periods for existing policies and plans allow for integrating new evidence as it becomes available and making adjustments on the basis of best available information and experience. Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), for example, are scheduled to undergo a stock-take of their implementation every five years, starting in 2018,⁴ and will be revised starting 2020. This presents a window of opportunity to work with governments on incorporating EbA as a way of addressing climate vulnerability and highlighting the importance of climate risks to ecosystems themselves. Such windows of opportunity should also be identified across other relevant sectors in order to maximise opportunities for EbA integration (Figure 1). Policies and plans still under development, such as many NAPs, equally represent strategic entry points. Alongside policy revisions, annual budgetary review processes should be targeted to ensure appropriate levels of funding are made available to support the implementation of policies and plans.



Invest in monitoring, evaluation and a learning culture

Gather trend data on climate parameters, climate impact pathways, the effectiveness of EbA and other adaptation measures, including their performance against resilience outcome indicators. Carry out evaluations and discuss the results and their implications with relevant decision-makers and other stakeholders. Use these processes to foster a learning culture among relevant stakeholders,

encouraging results-based planning and adaptive management. This will help ensure that the quality and effectiveness of adaptation planning improve over time, thereby also making more efficient use of limited resources. Importantly, lessons learned from monitoring and evaluation processes should be used to inform and re-orient policies, plans and budgets, where appropriate.



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Moving to a sustainable EbA model

As the number of EbA projects is growing around the world, it is critical that these align with (and/or influence) wider adaptation planning and, ideally, the policy goals of relevant sectors. Only the integration of EbA into other strategies can secure the financial support and human resources needed for it to become viable in the long term. As the desired impacts of EbA measures are likely to emerge over longer time frames – well beyond the lifetime of any project – gaining such political and financial support is critical.

To help generate the political energy required for EbA integration into adaptation planning and other sector strategies, projects should develop capacity for EbA planning with a view to promoting political leadership and buy-in. Such efforts should always draw on (and add to) the latest scientific information to ensure that decisions are based on solid evidence (see Briefing Note 2). It is also important to invest in mechanisms that enable future replication of successful EbA, including legislation, policies, budgets, reporting systems and building constituencies of support among government, political and private sector leaders. Together, these actions will be vital for ensuring the sustainability and, ultimately, the effectiveness of EbA.

Key action points

- Include activities to generate quantitative risk assessments that address the role of ecosystems to inform national adaptation planning.
- Ensure wide ranging stakeholder participation in building the evidence base and in planning processes to capture all perspectives on costs and benefits of impacts and policy options.
- Strengthen the role of national or jurisdictional budgets and their revision cycles in integrating adaptation into sectoral plans.
- Work to harmonise policy and legal frameworks to deliver adaptation objectives through EbA.
- Build in well-developed monitoring and evaluation and invest in knowledge management.

References

¹ McDonald, J. (2011) 'The role of law in adapting to climate change'. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 2: March/April.

² Seddon, N., Hou-Jones, X., Pye, T., Reid, H., Roe, D., Mountain, D. and Rizvi, A.R. (2016) *Ecosystem-based adaptation: a win-win formula for sustainability in a warming world?* IIED Briefing. London: International Institute for Environment and Development.

³ Dazé, A., Price-Kelly, H. and Rass, N. (2016) *Vertical integration in National Adaptation Plan (NAP) processes: a guidance note for linking national and sub-national adaptation*. Winnipeg: International Institute for Sustainable Development.

⁴ UNFCCC (2018) *Taking stock and informing the preparation of successive NDCs*. Available at: <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/nationally-determined-contributions-ndcs#eq-3>