Communication Strategy for the outputs of NEA

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Communication Strategy for the outputs of the National Ecosystem Assessment

Introduction

Ethiopia is situated in the northeast of the horn of Africa and belongs to one of the top 25 biodiversity-rich countries in the world. The topography of Ethiopia is highly varied wherein parts of the two globally recognized biodiversity hotspots, viz., the Eastern Afromontane and the Horn of Africa exist. These biodiversity hotspot areas are comprised of a high level of endemism and diversity of flora, fauna, and other organisms. Given the high diversity of ecosystems and diverse farming systems, it is vital to understand the current status of biodiversity and its future dynamics and also generate scientific evidence that would be used in making decisions that pertain to biodiversity and ecosystem services. Such evidence can only be used as an input for making policy decisions in setting priorities and designing biodiversity conservation strategies when there exists a reciprocal understanding between scientists and policy makers. This, in turn, calls for a strengthened science-policy interface. With such rationale, the UN Environment World Conservation Monitoring Center (UNEP-WCMC), which provides support to countries in undertaking National Ecosystem Assessments (NEA) in accordance with the conceptual and assessment frameworks of the Intergovernmental

Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) has initiated assessments in five countries in 2017. In the case of

Ethiopia, the NEA is being undertaken with the support of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV) through the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Network (BES-Net) project.

The Ethiopian Biodiversity Institute (EBI), as a primary national entity in charge of ensuring the conservation and sustainable use of the country's biodiversity and ecosystem services, has been engaged in coordinating the implementation of the assessment by involving national scholars from universities, research institutes and non-governmental organizations.

The assessment has been conducted on five broad ecosystem types (Mountain, Forest and Woodland, Aquatic and Wetland, Rangelands and Agricultural ecosystems) with the assumption that it addresses seven policy relevant questions which were pre-identified through stakeholder consultations during the scoping stage of the NEA project. One of these policy relevant questions, for example, is that focuses on the state of awareness of key stakeholders (policy makers, managers and media) on biodiversity in each ecosystem and their contribution to human wellbeing.

The results of the NEA showed that population growth, agricultural expansion, patchiness of sectoral policies, low awareness and lack of adequate evidence that would be used as input for policy and decision making processes are the key drivers of the threats to biodiversity and ecosystems services.

This communication strategy, therefore, is prepared to inform stakeholders about the status and dynamics of Ethiopian ecosystems and the need for taking appropriate measures to abate or halt degradations with the intention of raising the awareness of stakeholders and decision makers on this vital issue. Correspondingly, it aims, among others, at building awareness about the mechanisms for integrating efforts towards effective use of the outputs of the NEA at different levels. To these effect, issues included in this communication strategy are the objective, activities and outputs of NEA, details on approaches of communication and outreach programs, target audiences, activities and expected outcomes

Outcomes of the strategy

The outputs of the NEA are effectively communicated and the relevant stakeholders are well informed laying the ground for informed decision making, enhanced partnership among actors, and promoting synergies in addressing biodiversity and ecosystem services conservation issues.

Communication objectives

- To disseminate the key findings of the NEA to relevant stakeholders including communities, policymakers, scientists and practitioners;
- To raise public awareness, at all levels, on the trends of degradation of biodiversiry and ecosystem services and also infrom about the solutions to halt the degradation; and
- To stimulate the designing of appropriate interven tions regarding biodiversity conservation and the im plementation of such measures through collaborative sprit.

Target audiences

Two categories are recognized: internal and external.

- Internal audience for NEA consists of those who are responsible for its implementation by promoting its importance. These include:
- Higher educational institutions;
- Research institutions;
- Government ministries, authorities and agencies;
- Regional agriculture and environment offices; and
- Law enforcement institutions.
- External audience refers to those who use the assessment findings and turn it into practice.

These include:

- National and international NGOs;
- Professional associations;
- Civil societies;
- Religious institutions;
- Consumer associations
- Farmers and pastoralist communities who lar gly represent Ethiopian local communities;
- The business sector; and
- Medea.

Key messages

▪ Ethiopia is ecologically and cultural diverse country endowed with rich biodiversity resource and associated community knowledge;

▪ Ethiopia possessesdiverse ecosystems (the major ones being Mountain, Forest and Woodland, Aquatic and Wetland, Rangelands and Agricultural) that provide varying services on which local livelihood and the country's economy heavily rely;

▪ Ethiopian communities possess rich indigenous and local knowledge (ILK) for managing biodiversity and using ecosystems- for both material and non-material benefits;

▪ The government of Ethiopia has demonstrated commitment to the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services through formulation of relevant policies, putting in place appropriate institutions and capacity building;

▪ Participatory conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services is improving through gradual increase of community participation and involvement of other actors;

▪ Ethiopian ecosystems that are characterized by more than 13 major vegetation types, diverse endemic fauna and flora and microorganisms are confronted with threats originating from anthropogenic and natural drivers;

▪ A seriesof changes which the ecosystems are passing through is negatively affecting the rare and endemic plants and animals, the keystone species and the characteristics of the ecosystems; and

▪ If the current trend is left unchecked, the country's biodiversity and ecosystem services will continue to decline putting in jeopardy local livelihood and the much aspired fast-track sustainable development. This, therefore, calls for collaborative efforts that aim at:

- improving public awareness in the face of growing threats to biodiversity and ecosystem services;
- enhancing the use of indigenous and local knowledge relevant to biodiversity conservation and sustainability of ecosystem services, and also strengthening traditional institutions and practices;
- generating accurate and up-to-date comprehensive Brelevant information; and
- Translating policy and legal provisions relevant to biodiversity and ecosystem services into actions.

Communication channels

- Face to face engagements (through meetings and events);
- Broadcast Media (Television, Radio);
- Print media (Newspaper, Brochures, Banner, Summary for Policy Makers, the Assessment Book);
- Social media; and
    - Facebook, Twitter, YouTube
    - Website (www.ebi.gov.et)

Branding

Branding is a shortcut visual approach to inspire the audience to sell the concept of biodiversity and ecosystem services and the NEA. It helps to cut through the media, policy makers and the public at large.

In this communication strategy, the theme **"Ecosystem services: nature's gifts that help us thrive"** will serve as the motto that would later be designed into a logo for the NEA outreach program.

Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation aim at overseeing the implementation of the communication process, verifying that actions identified in the strategy are implemented as per the plan, and also help to evaluate whether tools and approaches employed have brought the desired result.

The following approaches will be used to measure the effectiveness of the communication strategy:

- Feedback of attendees at an event or meeting;
- Analysis of opinion of people as reflected via social media (Facebook, Twitter);
- Public feedback through different media; and
- Positive or negative news, reflections and stories in mass media outlets.

Activities		Implementation timeline					Responsible
		2022					
		February	March	April	May	June	
1	Preparation of communication materials and printing						
	1.1 Brochure	▓	▓				Project team & EBI staff
	1.2 Summary for Policy makers	▓	▓				Project team and SPM author
	1.3 Composite book	▓	▓				Lead authors & project team
	1.4 Biodiversity platform's guideline	▓					Project team
	1.5 NEA validation workshop poster			▓			Project team & EBI staff
	1.6 NEA logo			▓			Project team & EBI staff
2	Communicating the process and findings of the NEA						
	2.1 Panel discussion I (via broadcast media)			▓			Project team, EBI leadership & EBI communication directorate
	2.2 Panel discussion II (via broadcast media)			▓			Lead authors & EBI communication directorate
	2.3 Press conference on the NEA and establishment of the National Biodiversity Platform						Project team
	2.4 National Biodiversity Platform establishment and NEA report validation workshop						Project team, EBI staff, Platform members
	2.5 Television documentary about the Platforms session			▓	▓		Project team, EBI communication directorate
3	Monitoring and evaluation			▓	▓	▓	Project team