Learning Brief

Entry points for mainstreaming Ecosystem-based Adaptation

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Experiences from practitioners on how to successfully integrate Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) in national and subnational processes and harness synergies.

Wetlands in Nor Yauyos Cochas Landscape Reserve, Peru. Photo: © GIZ/Mathias Bertram

What do we mean by entry points?

Climate change adaptation – including the use of ecosystems and the services they provide – is as much an institutional, political and governance issue as it is a technical issue. A key aspect of mainstreaming is finding appropriate entry points for integrating EbA into concrete but also often complex policy and planning frameworks and decision-making processes.

Entry points are **windows of opportunity** – e.g. situations or processes – that help gain the interest of policymakers, stakeholders or the broader public for integrating EbA into ongoing national and subnational processes and harnessing synergies with other approaches. They may occur at all levels of governance. They also include situations or processes that help gain

Key messages …

- A key aspect of mainstreaming is finding appropriate entry points for integrating Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) into concrete but also often complex policy and planning frameworks and decision-making processes.
- Entry points are windows of opportunity – e.g. situations or processes – that help gain the interest of policymakers, stakeholders or the broader public for integrating EbA into ongoing national and subnational processes. They normally relate to problem awareness, political will and concrete policies/solutions to overcome the problem.
- Promising concrete entry points for EbA include the national adaptation plan (NAP) process, synergies between United Nations conventions (e.g. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)) and the creation of strong links between national and subnational policies for effective implementation.
- Concrete examples from Brazil and South Africa show that entry points for EbA mainstreaming are, in practice, very diverse and are context-specific situations that require clear political will, institutional leadership, and extensive but essential multi-stakeholder dialogues and consultations at national and subnational level.

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the interest of policymakers, key stakeholders or the broader public for a cross-cutting topic like EbA.

Entry points may relate to

(i) problem awareness (e.g. crisis over food and water, climate change impacts, disasters, etc.);

(ii) political will (e.g. government actors or civil society/ interest groups/voters who are driving forces to address the problem); and

(iii) policies/solutions to overcome the problem (e.g. strategies and concrete actions at various levels by various actors). That means that many things have to come together in order to successfully mainstream EbA.

In general, **potential entry points** are governance processes that can include, for example, the development, revision and/or strengthening of:

- **Policy instruments,** including
  - planning instruments, e.g. development plans, sector plans, nationally determined contributions (NDCs), NAP processes, National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), watershed plans, strategic environmental assessments, and land-use plans;
  - command and control instruments, e.g. climate change and environmental laws, standards, and environmental impact assessments;
  - economic and fiscal instruments, e.g. investment programmes, funds, taxes, fees;
  - educational and awareness-raising measures, e.g. environmental education, extension programmes; and
  - voluntary measures, e.g. voluntary environmental agreements and standards.
- **Institutions**, e.g. climate change task forces, watershed committees, land-use associations.

Promising entry points for Ecosystem-based Adaptation

Entry point 1 – Strengthening EbA within the National Adaptation Planning (NAP) process

The **NAP** process – established under the UNFCCC **Cancún Adaptation Framework (2010)** – is meant to help countries reduce vulnerability, build adaptive capacity and mainstream adaptation in development planning. It is a **continuous**, progressive and iterative process that follows a **country-driven,** gender-sensitive, participatory and fully transparent approach. Because of its significance in the ongoing international climate debate, the NAP process is key in planning and implementing EbA measures, especially in countries where ecosystems play a role in reducing risks for people.

The following **key messages** regarding the NAP process as entry point for EbA have been shared within the Community of Practice:

The NAP …

- **… sets the strategic framework for reducing vulnerabilities of people and maintaining their livelihoods in the context of climate change.** Since people – especially the most vulnerable ones – depend on ecosystems across sectors and scales, EbA needs to be a key element in NAP processes;
- **… identifies key medium-term and long-term adaptation needs.** NAPs are **not a 'wish list' but a prioritised set of strategies funded by national and international sources.** Due to the multiple social, environmental and economic benefits of ecosystems and the services they provide that go beyond adaptation, countries should prioritise their role in the NAP process;
- **… is closely linked with adaptation goals under the NDCs.** The NAP process should serve as a concrete process for achieving NDC adaptation goals, which include the use of ecosystems and their services in more than 70 % of all NDCs;

- **… is not a document but a process for adaptation which is very country-specific depending on governance and policy structures;** it can range from top-down to bottom-up approaches and it should pay attention to traditional and/or indigenous knowledge on ecosystem management in the context of adaptation whenever possible;
- **… needs to be built upon existing and ongoing initiatives and policy frameworks.** EbA can build a bridge between NAPs and existing policy processes that support conservation and the sustainable management of ecosystems and their services;
- **… should be closely linked with subnational policy and management frameworks;** decisions about ecosystems and their management – including their role in the context of adaptation – are often taken at subnational level. It is crucial to integrate EbA in the local development and budgeting frameworks to ensure sustainability;
- **… needs to involve a range of actors (e.g. government, civil society, private sector), sectors (e.g. agriculture, marine resources, water, sanitation) and scales (from local to landscape or even biomes) for effective implementation.** EbA as a multi-sector and landscape approach has the potential to support complex policy-settings such as the NAP process, which needs a significant time investment to increase ownership and acceptance in society. In particular, the role of the private sector in sustainable ecosystem management is still neglected and should be strengthened to increase EbA effectiveness under NAP;
- **… requires appropriate monitoring and reporting to communicate impacts;** setting up monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems to monitor EbA impacts and communicating them as part of the NAP is essential, but challenges to M&E, including lack of data and lack of coordination across sectors and scales, needs to be taken into consideration. Realistic time horizons for showing adaptation benefits should be applied; and
- **… should lead to adequate capacity development** especially at local level to fill information gaps.

Further information

- UNFCCC NAP Adaptation Workstream[i]
- UNFCCC supplementary materials to the NAP technical guidelines, including useful guidance from the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), United Nations World Food Programme (UNFP), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Union for Conservation of Nature and Conservation International[ii]

Lessons from Brazil

Mainstreaming EbA in Brazil's National Adaptation Plan

(by Mariana Egler, Ministry of the Environment, Brazil)

In Brazil, the NAP process was initiated between 2013 – 2016 and started as a sectoral approach led by an interministerial working group on climate change adaptation. At the same time the Brazilian-German Biodiversity and Climate Change in the Mata Atlântica project commenced with the establishment of an EbA capacity development framework that led to a common understanding on vulnerabilities and role of ecosystems. In total, seven sectoral strategies, including infrastructure, food and nutritional security, but also industry and mining, explicitly encompass EbA elements, while seven others refer to ecosystem services. Key enabling factors for integrating EbA into the Brazilian NAP process included the following:

- **Defining clear spatial entry points:** As a biodiversity-rich country, it was crucial for the Brazilian government to prioritise protected areas in key biomes with high population density – such as the Atlantic Forest – as regional and spatial units for supporting EbA in the context of the NAP, since these areas provide key ecosystem services to people (e.g. water provision, climate regulation, erosion prevention).
- **Timing and leadership:** The NAP elaboration was a result of the work of the Federal Government Working Group on Adaptation, under the leadership of the Ministry of the Environment. In this process it was possible to engage and promote a high level of commitment among various ministries and sectors.
- **Partnerships and collaboration:** Partnerships between the secretariat for climate change and secretariat for biodiversity within the Ministry of the Environment played a key role in EbA mainstreaming, as did partnerships between 18 key sector ministries and federal institutions, which required constant coordination.
- **Building capacities:** Partnership and funding from the German Government supported the dissemination of information and awareness-raising on EbA within the Brazilian Government and allowed for further uptake in the NAP development process. More than 270 people – mostly from national and subnational governments in the Atlantic Forest biome – participated in EbA trainings; 65 people participated in training-of-trainers measures and serve as multipliers of EbA to different projects.

Brazil's NAP process was successfully achieved based on constant coordination and capacity-building efforts. During the process, adjustments were necessary in terms of parties involved and coordination among and between different actors from government, civil society and research institutions. It was important to learn that there are key sectors for the NAP process, which are however resistant to EbA (e.g. from grey infrastructure, agriculture sectors) and which need to be more involved and informed in order to achieve change.

At present, the government of Brazil is in the process of creating partnerships between the government, civil society and research actors to implement practical EbA projects within the framework of the NAP. This includes the formulation of long-term financing strategies, including the development of an EbA project portfolio under the Green Climate Fund as well as pilot projects on payment for ecosystem services with the National Water Agency and the private sector.

Forest in Brazil. Photo: © GIZ/Florian Kopp

Entry point 2 – Using synergies between the UNFCCC and CBD

Public administrations and implementers often face the challenge of responding to various policy frameworks that often have not been set up in parallel. One example is the three United Nations Rio conventions, which are dynamically different, as they were shaped by different policy processes and institutions.

Ecosystem-based adaptation is a framework that bears significant potential for addressing both climate change adaptation and biodiversity conservation objectives of countries under the UNFCCC and CBD convention in a holistic manner. The UNFCCC NDC/NAP framework as well as the CBD Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020, including its 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets and the NBSAP, provide essential entry points for strengthening ecosystem-based adaptation at country level.

The following example from South Africa shows how synergies between the UNFCCC and CBD as well as the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification have been used as an entry point for integrating EbA.

Lessons from South Africa

Mainstreaming EbA into the national policy process by addressing climate change, biodiversity loss and desertification control targets under the Rio conventions

(by Tshifhiwa Munyai, Department of Environmental Affairs, South Africa)

South Africa, being among the mega-biodiverse countries worldwide with its very distinct biomes, is very exposed to increasingly adverse impacts of climate change. Consequently, the National Climate Change Response Policy (NCCRP) was set up, which recognised biodiversity and ecosystems among the priority sectors impacted by climate change. In addition, in 2015 South Africa developed climate change adaptation plans for all nine South African biomes, which identified EbA as one of the response measures.

This process also kick-started the development of the Strategic Framework and Overarching Implementation Plan for EbA in South Africa 2016–2021; it calls for (i) effective coordination, learning and communication; (ii) evidence of EbA through research and M&E; (iii) integration of EbA into climate change policies; and (iv) implementation of demonstration projects. South Africa's initial NBSAP was revised in parallel and aligned with the CBD Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 as well as the national EbA Strategy, supporting EbA implementation for achieving multiple benefits in the context of sustainable development (outcome 2.2.). The NBSAP also includes activities, indicators and targets for implementing EbA.

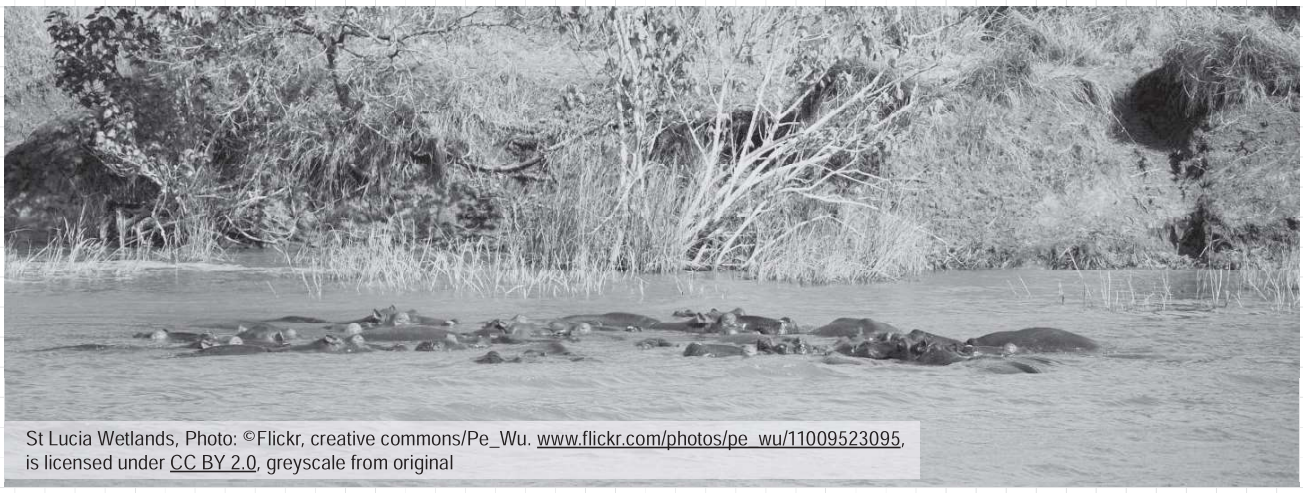
The revision of South Africa's national action programme to combat desertification and land degradation under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) served as another entry point for EbA mainstreaming; the NAP process now states that 'by 2030 South Africa ensures to restore degraded ecosystems for contributing towards climate change adaptation and mitigation by promoting

sustainable land management and ecosystem-based adaptation approaches'.

Key enabling factors for integrating EbA into South Africa's climate change and biodiversity policies included the following:

- **NBSAP and the NCCRP as starting points:** Both the NBSAP revision and the NCCRP development processes included detailed consultation processes among different stakeholder groups and focused on the nine biomes of the country. This laid the foundation for further cross-sectoral collaboration and exchange between government and civil society on EbA that resulted in the development of the EbA Strategy & Implementation Plan as well as EbA Guidelines.
- **Information on vulnerabilities for strategy development at the right scale:** Vulnerability assessments at biome level provided the relevant information for defining climate change adaptation responses at biome, national and provincial level.
- **Clear definition and understanding on EbA:** Having a common and agreed upon definition of EbA was essential for creating a common understanding early on in the process. Starting from a biodiversity perspective, it was important to communicate that EbA combines biodiversity and ecosystem conservation, climate change adaptation and socio-economic benefits.
- **Clear institutional mandate and intra-institutional collaboration:** As the national focal point for UNFCCC and CBD matters, the Department of Environmental Affairs worked closely with various stakeholders, such as the South African National Biodiversity Institute, during the development and alignment of strategies. South Africa's EbA strategy also entails a detailed roadmap including the establishment of a cross-sectoral steering committee to support the implementation of the EbA strategy.
- **Extensive consultation and participatory approaches as a foundation for future implementation:** EbA is a long-term-oriented, cross-sectoral approach to support the livelihoods of people in the context of climate change. Involving various sector agencies and local stakeholders (civil society) right from the beginning was essential in building ownership. It is also essential to develop EbA activities based on indigenous knowledge wherever possible.

Currently, the Government of South Africa is in the process of finalising national EbA guidelines to provide clarity on the scope of EbA, principles and criteria for identifying appropriate EbA projects, modalities of implementation and monitoring of its effectiveness, and safeguards to maximise the chances of successful outcomes in the context of the EbA Strategy, the NBSAP, the National Adaptation Strategy and the UNCCD national action programme. The guidelines have outlined the process for the different user groups, such as (i) policymakers, project developers and implementers; (ii) funders; and (iii) researchers. In addition, South Africa's EbA Strategy will support the implementation of pilot projects in the next five years to showcase EbA evidence and support the further mainstreaming of EbA in policy processes. Challenges include how to secure long-term financing for the implementation of measures and a lack of human resource capacity.



St Lucia Wetlands, Photo: ©Flickr, creative commons/Pe_Wu. www.flickr.com/photos/pe_wu/11009523095, is licensed under CC BY 2.0, greyscale from original

Entry point 3 – Using linkages between national and subnational policy and planning processes for EbA mainstreaming

Relevant decisions under the UNFCCC provide a strong imperative for **engaging subnational actors.** For example, the **Paris Agreement** calls for **stronger, more ambitious climate action by cities and other subnational authorities, local communities and indigenous peoples.** It also highlights the **need to enhance capacities** at subnational level and support local communities, vulnerable groups and indigenous peoples in responding to climate change as well as enhance the resiliency of ecosystems. In particular, it recognises that countries are not homogeneous in their vulnerability to climate change or their adaptation priorities.

Connecting national and subnational levels helps in recognising this diversity systematically, providing entry points for vulnerable groups and communities to participate in the process as well as opportunities for considering adaptation needs and priorities at the ecosystem level.

At a practical level, it is recognised that much of the **implementation of adaptation actions will occur at subnational levels** even if they are guided by a national-level strategy. Subnational level government have autonomy, make plans, and often govern huge areas – especially for EbA.

During the last few years, various **locally-driven approaches** such as community-based adaptation have **generated good results in building individual and community adaptive capacity.** All of this means that **linking national and subnational processes is critical,** both in aligning with the principles and objectives of the UNFCCC and in ensuring that adaptation efforts are effective, particularly in terms of reaching the most vulnerable people and communities and enhancing ecosystem resilience.

Common barriers for strengthening EbA implementation can be overcome through effectively linking national and subnational processes as follows:

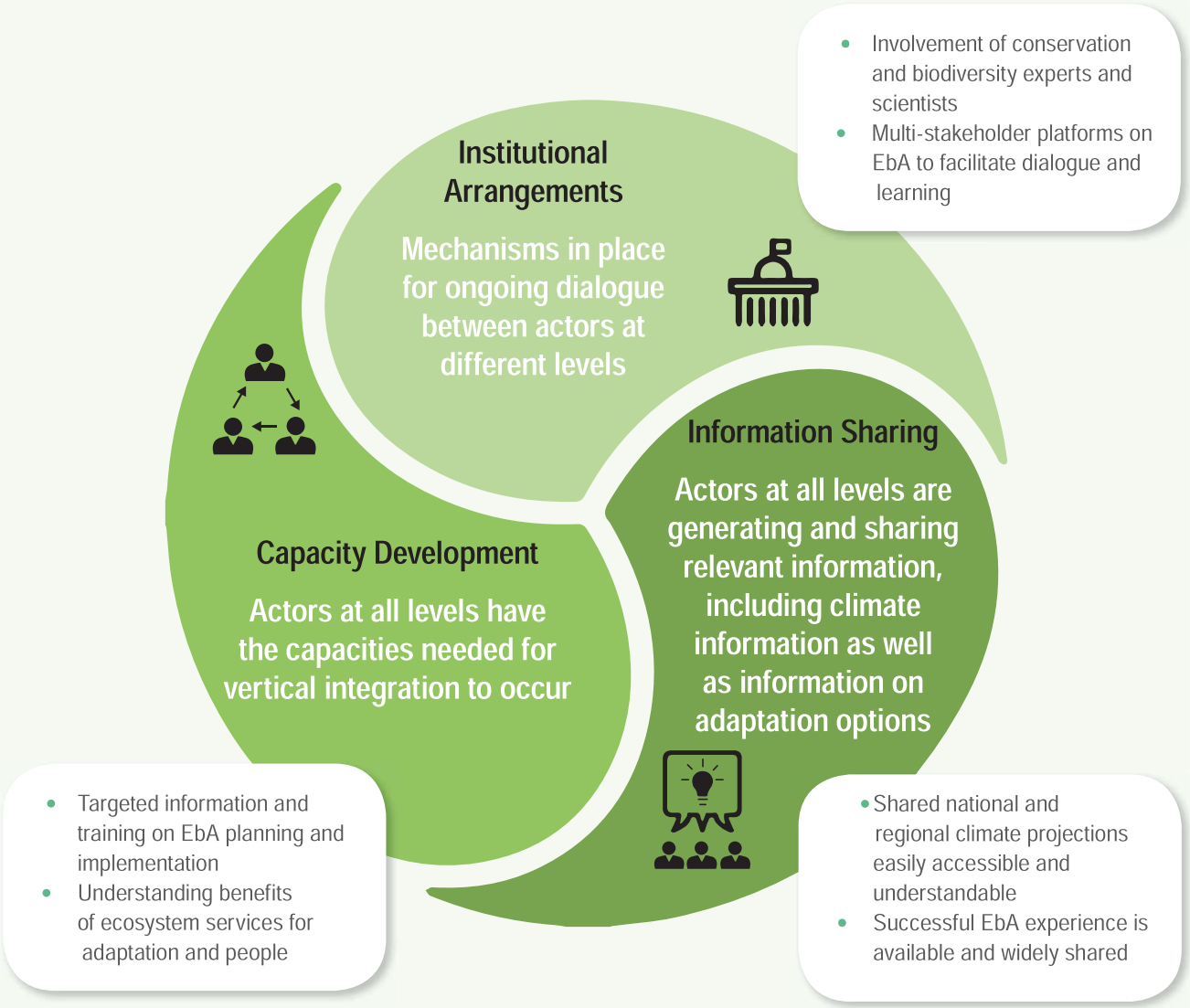
Financing and funding – It is sometimes very difficult to generate financing for small or local governments. Linking national and subnational governments allows money to be channelled from the national level to the subnational level. The implementation of EbA requires various resources that may exceed local communities' financial capacities; national level financing instruments could raise revenue for subnational EbA implementation.

Political/institutional – Implementing initiatives at scale can overcome limited or narrow mandates of certain levels of government. Ecosystems do not relate to political boundaries and belong at the interface of different levels of government ranging from local to national. It is therefore necessary to assess and work towards exploring and creating links between different levels of governments and sectors.

Information/knowledge/capacity – Different levels of government can share knowledge and learn from each other. Understanding how climate change will alter ecosystems and the supply and delivery of ecosystem services (positively or negatively) is essential. Therefore, any EbA measures must incorporate robust climate projections and relevant ecological data and be subject to rigorous monitoring – something that could be led by the national government and shared with subnational governments.

In order to link subnational with national processes, **there are three general enabling factors which must be in place:**

Figure Enabling factors for linking national and subnational policies (source: Terton, A. IISD, 2017)



The following **concrete enabling factors** for strengthening EbA in policy and planning frameworks at both national and subnational level have been shared within the community of practice:

Starting at national level:

- **Law enforcement frameworks** to apply national laws and regulations at local level such as a climate change act, disaster risk reduction and management act, land-use acts, etc.;
- **Decentralisation policies** to empower local governments and increase their decision-making, for example in terms of governance of natural resources, land- and seascapes, and improvement of livelihoods; and
- **International agreements** to move from internationally binding agreements such as the Sustainable Development Goals, NDCs and NAP processes to local action and indicators for reporting.

Directly linking the national and subnational level:

- **River basin and ridge-to-reef approaches** to use clearly demarcated areas and multi-actor structures (e.g. a river basin committee) as the basis for planning and management decisions; and
- **Regional consultation processes** to facilitate discussion between national and subnational decision-makers as a key entry point for communicating the importance of EbA. It is important to 'laymanise' or localise the communication language to prevent 'getting lost' in concepts. It is not important to introduce EbA as a term; rather the needs of local stakeholders should be addressed through proper management of ecosystems and the services they provide (e.g. risk reduction, provision of water, food, etc.).

Starting at subnational level:

- **Local level assessment frameworks** to communicate and use results of subnational or local climate risk and vulnerability assessments and ecosystem assessments;
- **Building on local governance structures** to make use of local wisdom, engagement, stakeholder networks (government, civil society, research) and governance structures to increase participation and ownership;
- **Making the case for EbA** to showcase good practices with tangible results and concrete areas of opportunity at local level that convince decision-makers at higher level.

In addition, members of the Community of Practice identified the following 'selling points' of the EbA concept to decision-makers:

Ecosystem-based adaptation should matter to both national and local decision-makers because…

- **… it is a cost-effective approach with multiple and long-term benefits.** It offers low-cost and low-regret solutions to decision-makers that go beyond adaptation because they protect ecosystems and the services they provide. This is especially important for planning in a corridor of uncertainty;
- **… it helps to manage landscapes and conserve ecosystems.** It creates a link between people, landscapes and ecosystems in a systemic land-use planning approach;
- **… it strengthens local action and ownership.** It considers traditional and community knowledge, supports participation and transparency, and combines the local community and environmental development initiatives; and
- **… it can be included in a holistic risk management and adaptation strategy.** As part of a holistic adaptation strategy, EbA measures can and often should be combined with further (grey) infrastructure and technical (e.g. early warning systems) and social adaptation measures (e.g. awareness-raising and social cohesion).

Conditions that favour entry points for EbA at local level are good when…

- … local people heavily depend on ecosystems and the services they provide;
- … problems relating to (climatic) hazards, ecosystem degradation, etc., are evident and people (e.g. communities and governments) are seeking solutions;
- … planning frameworks such as Integrated Coastal Zone Management provide the basis for decision-making;
- … a long-term rehabilitation of degraded ecosystems is possible;
- … policy and practice are well connected; and
- … people perceive EbA as the most efficient way to achieve an overall goal.

Mangroves in Mekong Delta, Vietnam. Photo: © GIZ / Integrated Coastal Management Programme, ICMP

About the EbA Community of Practice

The EbA Community of Practice, supported by the Global Project 'Mainstreaming EbA', which is funded through the International Climate Initiative of the German Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety and implemented by GIZ, is a knowledge and exchange network of EbA practitioners primarily from governments and international organisations as well as civil society and research institutions with an interest in strengthening ecosystem-based adaptation in planning and decision-making.

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The following members have been involved in its development:

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Intact Coastal Landscape, Indonesia. Photo: © GIZ / Mathias Bertram

Endnotes

i. UNFCCC NAP Adaptation Workstream http://unfccc.int/adaptation/workstreams/national_adaptation_plans/items/6057.php

ii. UNFCCC supplementary materials to the NAP technical guidelines, including useful guidance from the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), United Nations World Food Programme (UNFP), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), International Union for Conservation of Nature and Conservation International http://www4.unfccc.int/nap/Guidelines/Pages/Supplements.aspx

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