5th international

EbA Community of Practice Workshop

November 24 & 25, 2020
Virtual format

Learning Brief

Implementing EbA together: tools, policies & solutions

In November 2020, the BMU-IKI funded and GIZ-implemented Global Project Mainstreaming EbA welcomed a group of over 200 Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) practitioners from 50 different countries to the 5th international EbA Community of Practice Workshop.

The workshop took place in an entirely virtual format and aimed to create a space for exchange and mutual learning that fosters and improves the implementation of EbA during and beyond the ongoing pandemic. For two days, EbA practitioners came together to discuss common challenges to the implementation of EbA as a measure for climate change adaptation. The international workshop offered a dynamic program of panel discussions, interviews, workshops, and other exchange formats.

Next to updates about global policy processes and developments in the field of biodiversity and climate change adaptation, the heart of the workshop was the formal and informal exchange between a diverse group of people from different backgrounds, who work towards the shared goal of implementing and upscaling EbA.

KEY MESSAGES

- In the light of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, Nature-based Solutions (NbS) such as EbA to "build back better" gain importance.
- Next to "restarting better", a main task is to mainstream EbA into long-term planning processes in close cooperation with governments and sectors.
- In order to mainstream EbA globally, it is key to create and maintain a strong network of partners, especially in challenging times.
- There is a need for more participatory approaches to EbA to ensure that those, who are most affected and vulnerable to risks associated with climate change, can drive adaptation processes.

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→ Content

The importance of mainstreaming EbA 3

EbA in international policies 4

EbA in National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) 4

Promoting NbS in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) 5

The role of networks for mainstreaming EbA 6

The Nairobi Work Programme 7

Trending topics

EbA for resilient food systems 8

Mechanisms and solutions for linking EbA and integrated water resource management (IWRM) 9

Monitoring & evaluating EbA 10

EbA governance in practice 11

Communicating EbA 12

Imprint 13

→ The importance of mainstreaming EbA

With the Covid-19 pandemic, the importance of connecting and cooperating for mainstreaming NbS, and specifically EbA, became visible more than ever.

In 2020, it became evident that there is a strong link between biodiversity and human well-being. It is clearly documented that human activity is the major cause of global biodiversity loss (by various *IPBES* reports and the *Dasgupta review* commissioned by the UK government).

Consequently, it is crucial to start applying a systems perspective to enhance human and ecosystem health. In addition to this, transformative change towards a greener economy needs to happen as soon as possible. It should start with sustainable and green recovery from the challenges posed by Covid-19 and continue with addressing the slow-onset crisis of climate change and biodiversity loss through preventive measures.

Currently, we see an unprecedented interest in the role of nature in helping humans adapt to the adverse effects of climate change, so mainstreaming Nature-based Solutions is a major opportunity to "restart better" after the Covid-19 pandemic. That means re-directing investments from actions and products with negative biodiversity impacts to more sustainable options.

Input by: Birte Derrix & Lukas Hach (BMU-IKI)

Next to "restarting better", a main task is to mainstream EbA into long-term planning processes in close cooperation with governments and sectors.

In order to successfully mainstream NbS in the long run and thereby give nature a more prominent position in the debates on climate change adaptation, it is required to consider the scale of governance and engage key decision-makers from different sectors at national, sub-national and local levels.

When considering the wide range of actors who need to be involved in mainstreaming processes - government, business, finance, society in general - the question to be asked is: with whom do we mainstream NbS and what is it they need from us? Only this way we can leverage long-term strategies to address the climate challenges ahead.

Sectors such as agriculture and livestock, fisheries and aquaculture as well as forestry and tourism, whose activities rely on resilient ecosystems, need to further carry out measures to adapt to a changing climate. However, mainstreaming is not limited to these sectors, as it should also be taken into consideration in the infrastructure, energy, health, manufacturing and processing, as well as finance sectors. Regarding the latter, it is crucial to consider innovative financial mechanisms that integrate environmental considerations. We need to put nature to work for finance, and most importantly, finance to work for nature.

Input by: Oliver Hillel (CBD)

→ EbA in international policies

To facilitate the implementation of EbA measures worldwide, it is important to be aware of new and upcoming developments in relevant international and national policies.

Entering the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030, one of the key tasks is to enhance global, regional, national and local commitments and actions to prevent further degradation of ecosystems. To do so, benefits of ecosystem restoration and conservation, such as climate change mitigation, productive landscapes and seascapes as well as economic return need to be highlighted.

Large scale restoration of terrestrial and marine ecosystems is currently hindered by governments, societies, economic systems, insufficient finance, inefficient allocation of resources, insufficient collaboration, and limited knowledge and capacity. The pathway towards enabling restoration can be influenced by a global movement for climate action that goes hand in hand with strengthening political will and capacity through partnering with a wide array of actors. These include the UN, other international organizations, private sector and entrepreneurs, sectors such as agriculture, as well as opinion leaders, and country governments.

EbA in National Adaptation Plans (NAPs)

Elaborating on the role of countries for ecosystem restoration and climate change adaptation, it can be highlighted that EbA is included in most countries' NAPs to reduce the threats of climate change. This triggers the potential to strengthen the link with other national strategies, leading the way to mainstreaming EbA into national planning with a cross-sectoral approach.

Some challenges for mainstreaming are the lack of evidence-based knowledge; limited data on economic viability and benefits; as well as a potential lack of cross-sectoral collaboration for the development of national and sub-national adaptation plans and strategies. Making M&E methodologies available and increasing funding is key to improve cross-sectoral coordination and strengthen capacities.

One obstacle for scaling up EbA is finance. There is a need for a flexible, fast-track funding mechanism to address gaps during the implementation process not only of larger projects, but also of smaller ones. The new Global EbA Fund, established by the BMU IKI, addresses this gap by working together with a wide range of actors such as NGOs, research institutes, think tanks and the private sector.

Inputs by: Barney Dickson (UNEP), Anika Ter-ton (IISD), Dennis Eucker (GIZ Brazil), Natalia Alekseeva (FAO OCB) & Ali Raza Rizvi (IUCN)

Example: Promoting NbS in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)

A policy brief was developed to highlight the benefits and advantages of NbS as a practical means to achieve the goals and the vision of the Post-2020 GBF.

The paper is the result of a collaboration between the Partnership for Environment and Disaster Risk Reduction network (PEDRR) and Friends of Ecosystem-based Adaptation (FEBA). It highlights 11 action targets from the GBF and entry points for NbS, in order to make its use and benefits tangible.

The document sets out general principles by which NbS and the approaches it encompasses, such as EbA, Eco-DRR, and Ecosystem-based Mitigation (EbM), among others, can contribute to addressing biodiversity loss while ensuring people´s benefit from nature.

The goal is to provide a useful baseline to assist Parties to the CBD in addressing challenges around the implementation of the GBF. Moreover, the policy brief showcases the potential of NbS to bring about transformational change, accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and ensure that, by 2050, the shared vision of living in harmony with nature is fulfilled.

The consensus so far is that NbS is an umbrella term that can be used to support communication and mainstreaming of different subsets of Ecosystem-based Approaches, providing the opportunity to bring together a common language and alignment of goals among the key global Conventions and Frameworks, such as the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

The role that NbS could play within the GBF is crucial in order to set in place a common conceptual framework to address the challenges of biodiversity loss. NbS should be included as a key aspect for climate change adaptation, as it ensures measures to conserve and provide benefits to current and future generations.

READ PUBLICATION

WATCH RECORDING

Interview with Jesse DeMaria-Kinney (PlanAdapt)

→ The role of networks for mainstreaming EbA

In order to mainstream EbA globally, it is key to create and maintain a strong network of partners, especially in challenging times.

Based on the assumption that there are many different perceptions and levels of knowledge on EbA, the need for creating standards and a common understanding of the approach led to the creation of global networks and platforms for knowledge exchange. Knowledge is considered the precondition for effective adaptation and protection of biodiversity, therefore knowledge management and capacity building among stakeholders is fundamental.

Implementing EbA to help people adapt to the adverse effects of climate change requires cooperation. As a global challenge, it cannot only be addressed by individual people, countries, or organizations. Networks like Friends of EbA (FEBA) are essential catalysts and multiplicators of knowledge. Co-learning and building on each others' strengths are decisive factors that allow mainstreaming EbA beyond national or institutional boundaries.

Networks have the potential to scale-up EbA and invest more into climate change adaptation, exchange on identifying policy gaps and to create multi-disciplinary working groups that write policy recommendations. Here, the co-generation of knowledge and the collection of evidence on why EbA works can influence national and international policies.

As strong international networks and cooperation have been established throughout the past years, further steps are to actively use networks for mainstreaming EbA into sectors and to work on practical guides for implementation. It should be the goal of knowledge management to enable all actors involved to carry out EbA activities in a responsible and informed way. Apart from providing theories and influencing policies, action and interaction are key.

There is a need for more participatory approaches to EbA to ensure that those who are most affected by and vulnerable to climate change can drive adaptation processes.

An important concern for mainstreaming EbA is the representation of local voices at an international stage. Too often, the people who are most affected by and vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change are not consulted. Therefore, the role of networks is to engage with local stakeholders, join forces and thereby empower them to be involved and heard in national and international discourses.

The idea behind engaging local stakeholders to share their knowledge and co-create relevant evidence for policy advice with them is to acknowledge the efforts they have already made to innovate and adapt to a changing climate. In order for global EbA projects to design effective measures, local knowledge plays a critical role.

It is the task of networks to enhance a bottom-up knowledge flow and to empower people to tell their own stories on EbA. When it comes to providing information to local communities and bringing topics from a global level, a challenge is to generate the information in local languages. A lot of material is only available in English, which creates barriers to participation for the people most affected by climate change. Bringing closer opportunities for capacity building and tools to engage in EbA measures in an effective way could provide further benefits for these communities.

Overall, the need for combining strategies and joining forces to maximize EbA effectiveness is given, and requires expanding EbA practices by opening up to transdisciplinary and intersectoral cooperation. EbA should be understood as part of a holistic strategic approach for climate change adaptation and should make use of networks to multiply and share knowledge and practices worldwide.

Panel discussion with Ali Raza Rizvi (IUCN), Xiaoting Hou-Jones (IIED), Dorothea Konstantinidis (BMU-ZUG) & Arno Sckeyde (GIZ)

Example: The Nairobi Work Programme

The Nairobi Work Programme is the main stakeholder platform on adaptation and resilience under the UNFCCC. It is an example on how networks serve as a platform for various interest groups to join forces, share knowledge and influence policy making.

The work of the Nairobi Work Programme (NWP) is demand-driven and especially targets the needs of developing and less-developed countries. The thematic work of the NWP on biodiversity and climate is focused on forest and grasslands and how to integrate ecosystem approaches in adaptation policies, mainly NAPs and NDCs.

Nowadays, there is political momentum to strengthen and scale up synergies between the Rio Conventions, with the aim of facilitating the adoption of adaptation strategies that integrate biodiversity and ecosystems.

One current effort of the NWP is to create a scoping paper on adaptation options, considering traditional hard technological, as well as social and institutional measures for EbA. Many of these measures and lessons learned have merged from case studies in places such as Isiolo county, Kenya; Namakhwa District, South Africa; Hindu Kush in the Himalayas; grasslands in Peru and many other regions.

The gaps emerging from these case studies involve scientific knowledge, e.g. on interdependencies and linkages due to the complexity of the topic; methodological gaps, mainly on how to appraise especially non-economic factors and benefits of working with nature; standardization of methodologies, e.g. on M&E or capacity building; and the need of transdisciplinary and intersectoral work to enable grasping diversity and complexity. The scoping paper includes lessons learned on combining strategies to maximize effectiveness, on genuine participatory approaches and on sustainable financing models.

In line with this, gender-responsiveness, transboundary planning as well as the importance of traditional knowledge play a key role in the paper. Hence, it is a priority to include other actors by creating enabling conditions, supporting policies and targeted communication. The NWP is keen to continue engaging other actors and organizations in the discussion on how to further strengthen cooperation through networks, specifically focusing on national adaptation planning.

WATCH RECORDING

Input by: Fatema Rajabali (UNFCCC)

→ Trending topics: EbA for resilient food systems

When it comes to climate change, agriculture, as no other sector, has a threefold role: as a contributor to climate change, as it emits around one quarter of greenhouse gases; as a victim of climate change, compromising food and nutrition security due to extreme und unpredictable weather events; and yet, as a problem solver, as it holds almost half of the solutions to global climate goals (FAO, 2019). This makes agriculture an indispensable element of both, the global adaptation and mitigation response. EbA can support this.

Agroecology addresses multiple challenges of current food systems and it can contribute to achieving a resilient and low emission food systems, while contributing to disaster risk reduction and biodiversity targets at the same time. This goes hand in hand with the potentials of agroecological approaches to ensure food security without negatively affecting biodiversity and increasing the vulnerability of farmers and their livelihoods to droughts, floods, and other extreme weather events.

Adaptation to climate change calls for a transformation of our food system, which means pairing technological innovations with regenerative and sustainable land use practices. Further improvements in agricultural practices may happen for instance through investments in social capital, co-creation of knowledge with farmers, new marketing networks and responsible governance. In this setting, trainings, peer-to-peer learning and awareness campaigns can foster behavior change towards more sustainable agricultural practices using a holistic approach in the face of a drastically changing climate.

Microfinance is a mechanism to help and motivate farmers to transform their production systems and to invest in sustainable agricultural practices, such as agroecology or permaculture. Shifting the paradigm away from the sole purpose of agriculture to produce as much food as possible at the lowest price requires financing mechanisms that provide incentives to work together with nature and include an ecosystem-lens whilst being economically viable.

Following are some examples which demonstrate how EbA can contribute to enhancing the resilience of food systems:

Sustainable agroforestry coffee and cocoa production in a sustainable agroforestry system can create ecological and socio-economic benefits. Reintroducing native species provides important ecosystem services and is vital for the conservation of ecosystems, while being economically viable. In general, income diversification in those agroforestry systems through the introduction of secondary crops like plantains, pineapples and acaí is also important.

Sustainable aquatic food production and ecological conservation (e.g. through mangrove, seagrass and coral reef conservation and restoration) go hand in hand and can lead to more resilient aquatic ecosystems.

Silvo-pastoral systems are important for adaptation (e.g. heat stress for animals, moisture retention) with important mitigation co-benefits through carbon sequestration and reduced pressures on forests. However, productivity increases can have unintended effects on forest cover when scaling such systems, hence safeguards need to be developed.

WATCH RECORDING

Inputs by: Wiebke Foerch (GIZ NAREN), Jes Weigelt (TMG Think Tank), Yulissa Esther Alvarez (Centro Naturaleza), María Jose Leiva (Defensores de la Naturaleza Foundation), Oswaldo Flores (ProNatura Mex-ico), Monica Varela (RARE), Armin Deiten-bach (GIZ Brazil), Xuechan Ma (FAO), Augusto Castro (CIAT) & Jacinto Buenfil (UNEP)

→ Trending topics: Mechanisms and solutions for linking EbA and Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM)

Water is the most important natural resource for human survival. Therefore, concepts and practical examples as well as enabling and hindering factors and financing mechanisms for integrating EbA and IWRM play a key role and need to be included in the discussion on climate change adaptation.

The study Integrating EbA and IWRM for climate-resilient water management explores how the two leading approaches in water resources management and ecosystem thinking for climate change adaptation – IWRM and EbA – can be merged to achieve greater climate resilience in watersheds. It further shows that there is a need to build capacity, develop entry points for EbA, anchor EbA within national climate and water policies, implement pilots and demonstrate the benefits of EbA for water security. This includes systemic climate proofing of IWRM approaches as well as proactive development and conservation of healthy ecosystems by offering upscaling opportunities for EbA measures.

The strengths of EbA to improve water availability and water quality and to minimize the impact of extreme events are gaining growing attention in global key policies in the fields of climate change, Disaster Risk Reduction, sustainable development and biodiversity conservation.

This publication showcases practical implementation examples of integrated EbA-IWRM projects around the world, revealing structural similarities and key lessons for integrated EbA-IWRM approaches.

Further case examples during the event added to this:

Community-based Adaptation allows the establishment of a common practice-based understanding of what nature and ecosystems mean. In Nepal's Midhills, the incorporation and validation of local knowledge, accountability and group representation (e.g. participatory mapping), as well as the engagement of the local organization helped to increase rainwater infiltration in the catchment.

A multi-stakeholder approach can transform the socioeconomic and environmental reality of river basins, through actions that contribute to water security and its resilience to climate change effects, such as the conservation and restoration of natural areas and the promotion of positive impact entrepreneurship. Strengthening the engagement of local actors in São José dos Pinhais, Brazil, helped to build capacities for the development of a regional EbA Plan, and to run a climate proofing methodology to support local companies in managing climate change risks.

Innovative financial and governance mechanisms can come together in Water Funds, uniting stakeholders around a common goal to contribute to water security through NbS and sustainable watershed management. The experience of the Upper Tana-Nairobi Water Fund shows that the implementation of reforestation and restoration measures, best practices for agricultural management and capacity building with smallholder farmers as part of this fund can increase water quality and security.

A Water Stewardship Approach (WSA) has the potential to address the challenges of watershed management. In India, the implementation of watershed development measures, as part of a WSA, includes setting up institutions and building capacity at the local level to enable participatory and community-based resource management, as well as assessments of village water health, subsequently monitoring the related ecosystems.

The integration of EbA and IWRM into water policy frameworks and strategies can assure long-term political support. In Thailand´s water policies, EbA was used as a key guiding principle for adaptation in five fields: national policy, subnational implementation, M&E, climate finance and international exchange and cooperation.

Inputs by: Esther Dörendahl (consultant), Rachel Nisbet (IRHA), Anke Salzmann (Boticario Group Foundation), Nitin Kumbhar (WOTR), Ankita Yadav (WOTR), Colin Apse (TNC) & Atthapong Chantanumate (Office of the National Water Resources of Thailand)

→ Trending topics: Monitoring & evaluating EbA

The creation and implementation of a coherent M&E system to measure effective EbA is a crucial task for any climate change adaptation project. Understanding the outcomes and impacts of on-the-ground EbA projects is key to reduce the negative impacts of climate change on people.

Measuring the effectiveness of EbA projects requires a thorough process of designing a results framework; defining indicators and setting a baseline to operationalize an M&E system which is helpful to communicate the project achievements.

Some recommendations to design indicators and to perform a thorough EbA assessment are:

- the use of mixed methods for monitoring;
- working in an interdisciplinary team and;
- defining context-specific indicators and data collection methods.

Participatory M&E should always be encouraged. M&E key questions are therefore: for whom is the data collected and who is doing it?

The Guidebook for Monitoring and Evaluating EbA Interventions is a practical guide for planners and practitioners to better understand the outcomes and impacts of EbA. It gives an overview of the process for designing and implementing effective M&E for EbA interventions on the ground. This includes key considerations and components for each step of M&E for EbA projects and points to additional tools and methodologies that can be applied.

It is recommended to use the M&E Guidebook in the early stages of designing an EbA intervention, but it can also be used at a later stage to improve a process if needed. It is important to know that there is no "one-size-fits-all" approach and that M&E measures are always context-specific.

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Key lessons on M&E from cases around the world are:

The joint design and implementation of M&E systems together with partners on the ground (action learning) is crucial. These systems should include socio-economic and environmental variables, such as climatic conditions. For M&E systems to be effective, community member participation is required in all stages of the project.

The use of a Wetland Inventory Assessment and Monitoring System (WIAMS) can support the identification, diagnosis and prioritization of threats for ecosystem-based management of wetlands, as well as enhance stakeholder empowerment whilst enabling wetland managers and decision-makers to act. M&E systems need to be practical, site-specific and easy to manage. Attention should be paid to the standardization of parameters that do not cover the diversity of wetlands in India, as generic indicators could lead to ambiguous interpretations of M&E results.

WATCH RECORDING

Inputs by: Sylvia Wicander (UNEP-WCMC), Marai El Fassi (TMG Think Tank), Lucia Benavides (TMG Think Tank), Xiaoting Hou-Jones (IIED), Avantika Bhaskar (GIZ India) & Mirella Gallardo (Instituto de Montaña)

→ Trending topics: EbA governance in practice

EbA mainstreaming needs to take place at local and inter-institutional levels to unite top-down and bottom-up efforts. This coordination can create a holistic, coherent and well-distributed governance system for climate change adaptation.

Governance is the variable with the greatest potential to achieve successful mainstreaming of Ecosystem-based Adaptation into policies, plans and implementation. As EbA governance is usually set in a complex setting with a high number of actors involved (e.g. state, civil society, private sector) who have different stakes and levels of power, there exist various challenges along the way.

While there are many stakeholders to EbA governance, not all of them have equal decision-making power, economic privileges and information. Therefore, EbA governance needs to be discussed at various levels and from different perspectives. Multi-level climate governance allows combining top-down and bottom-up approaches. This also includes horizontal coordination on the ground.

The chosen governance approach must be tailored to specific contexts and socio-ecological systems. When working on local adaptation projects, building trust and promoting social cohesion and confidence in decision-making are fundamental to tackle EbA governance challenges.

Adding to context-specific EbA governance, it is important to formalize the establishment of multi-level governance structures, because governments cannot drive EbA initiatives alone – they require support and collaboration from all areas of society to ensure proper and inclusive EbA governance.

These governance practices may include setting up working groups to foster multi-level and multi-sectorial participation, to design adaptation measures collectively based on local knowledge, as well as to promote capacity building and create long-term alliances.

Finance delivering mechanisms for EbA depend on governance structures that provide vertical and horizontal linkages. The biggest challenge is a lack of finance and to assure that finance, if present, is delivered to the people and projects it is aimed at. Here, local governance structures can be effective in mobilizing stakeholders, delivering finance to where it matters and overcoming sectoral barriers for EbA.

There are more factors beyond setting up proper governance and financing structures for EbA in each context. In order to be effective in delivering long-term adaptation results, livelihood benefits and the respect of rights are key.

Key elements for successful initiatives are:
- sharing a common agenda;
- support of backbone organizations;
- fostering continuous communication;
- shared measurement evaluation systems;
- mutually reinforcing activities in a coordinated action plan.

WATCH RECORDING

Inputs by Thora Amend (consultant), Xiaoting Hou-Jones (IIED), Markus Radday, (WWF Russia), Pilar Jacobo (CONANP Mexico), April Cid (Ithaca Environ-mental) & Ntando Mkhize (Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries South Africa)

→ Trending topics: **Communicating EbA**

While EbA is widely practiced, it has been shown that some challenges regarding communication can be overcome by putting communities' perspectives at the core of strategies at the local and global level.

Effectively communicating EbA represents not only an opportunity to create a common language for climate change adaptation discussions, but also to bring local representatives to global stages.

To do so, it is useful to hold (regional) dialogues and organize workshops to create awareness, build capacity and identify opportunities for EbA. Here, a variety of insights and interpretations usually meet; learning from others' experiences and about their understanding of EbA becomes possible.

The importance of framing clear and specific messages for communicating EbA is fundamental. In more concrete words, a comprehensive communication strategy should:

- include best practices;
- define key terms;
- and enable cross-sectoral dialogue.

In addition to the components of a comprehensive communication strategy, there are further approaches to bridge possible gaps between different target groups, levels of knowledge and understandings of EbA:

Representing local voices at global level is key. As highlighted in other thematic areas before, local communities are most vulnerable to and affected by climate change, which makes testimonies of their experiences and the consideration of their needs key elements for effective EbA. A communication strategy should therefore focus on EbA's benefits for communities and organizations in implementing EbA and adapting to a changing climate.

Employing creative approaches such as storytelling and different multimedia formats (i.e. images, videos, illustrations), hold a lot of potential. These tools offer the possibility of sharing in a more didactive way how EbA brings benefits to communities. Storytelling and narratives allow to learn from the perspective of those involved in adaptation strategies, including decision-makers and communities who invest in building resilience every day.

Adding to the question of how to overcome the challenges to communicating EbA, integrating and mainstreaming EbA in university curricula (specifically in environmental engineering) is a way to promote its consideration in various fields and familiarize professionals from different backgrounds with EbA from the start of their career onwards, so that they understand and consider it in their future projects.

Inputs by: Gabriela Flores (IIED), Tristan Tyrrell (SwedBio), Kristin Meyer (IUCN ECARO), Vesna Bjedov (IUCN ECARO) & Jihan Adil (SEEP)

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Registered offices
Bonn and Eschborn

Address
Friedrich-Ebert-Allee 36 + 40
53113 Bonn, Germany

T +49 228 4460-1535
F +49 228 446080-1535

E eba@giz.de
I www.giz.de; www.adaptationcommunity.net

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