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# UNDP Global Policy Centre on Resilient Ecosystems and Desertification

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## Annual Report 2020



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# ACRONYMS

<b>AI-CD</b>	African Initiative for Combating Desertification	<b>IPBES</b>	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
<b>BES</b>	Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services	<b>IUCN</b>	International Union for Conservation of Nature
<b>BES-Net</b>	Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Network	<b>LDN</b>	Land Degradation Neutrality
<b>BMU</b>	Federal Ministry for Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety	<b>NEA</b>	National Ecosystems Assessment
<b>CBD</b>	Convention on Biological Diversity	<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>COP</b>	Conference of the Parties	<b>PAGE</b>	Partnership for Action on Green Economy
<b>COW</b>	Coalition of the Willing on Pollinators	<b>PBL</b>	Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency
<b>CRIC</b>	Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention	<b>PEA</b>	Poverty-Environment Action for the Sustainable Development Goals
<b>EC/JRC</b>	Joint Research Centre of the European Commission	<b>PEI</b>	Poverty-Environment Initiative
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>GC-RED</b>	Global Policy Centre on Resilient Ecosystems and Desertification	<b>SGAN</b>	Sub-Global Assessment Network
<b>GEF</b>	Global Environment Finance	<b>SLM</b>	Sustainable Land Management
<b>GIZ</b>	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit	<b>SPM</b>	Summary for Policymakers
<b>GLO</b>	Global Land Outlook	<b>UNCCD</b>	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
<b>GPN</b>	Global Policy Network	<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>IDMP</b>	Integrated Drought Management Programme	<b>UNEA</b>	United Nations Environment Assembly
<b>IKI</b>	International Climate Initiative	<b>UNEP</b>	United Nations Environment Programme
<b>ILK</b>	Indigenous and Local Knowledge	<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
		<b>WCMC</b>	World Conservation Monitoring Centre



# INTRODUCTION

The 2020 work plan of the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Global Policy Centre on Resilient Ecosystems and Desertification Centre (GC-RED) was impacted by the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic which deeply affected the world last year. GC-RED, in line with wider UN/UNDP strategies, took dedicated measures to counter the impact of COVID-19 on its programme delivery by switching from in-person to virtual meetings where feasible, re-phasing global exchanges and meetings, and pursuing activities that were possible to be implemented despite COVID-19 related meeting and travel restrictions. For the first time in the Centre's history, the GC-RED workplan was approved at a virtual Programme Board meeting.

Despite these challenges, the Centre was able to realize solid results in all areas of its work and to contribute to wider dedicated UNDP efforts of providing support to countries to respond to and recover from the COVID-19 emergency. The latter are especially highlighted in this report.

The Centre continued providing support to countries to achieve their *Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets*, in partnership with the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). In 2020, this included the scenario analysis on recent trends and projected changes in land use in Eastern Africa up to 2050, with the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (PBL), the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission (EC/JRC) and the Governments of Kenya and Ethiopia, and the work with Kenya and Somalia to raise their climate ambitions through sustainable land management and restoration.

Through its *Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Network* (BES-Net) project, the Centre remained committed to strengthen the science-policy-practice interface at national, regional and global levels for more effective conservation of biodiversity and sustainable maintenance of ecosystem services, directly contributing to the implementation of Capacity Building Rolling Plan of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).

The Centre also continued leading the UNDP Managing Agent function to implement the *Poverty-Environment Action for the Sustainable Development Goals* (PEA) project, jointly with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Through this work, the Centre continued to be a pro-active global node in UNDP's Global Policy Network (GPN) and contributed to UNDP's wider efforts on nature-based solutions for development.

In 2020, the Centre implemented a total portfolio of about US\$ 5.6 million through two projects, namely: the project encompassing the Global Policy Centre component, which covers the activities related to natural capital and ecosystems and livelihoods resilience, and the BES-Net component; and the PEA project.

In April 2020, the Centre's programme document was extended until 2028 to reflect an additional Euro 20 million contribution mobilized from the Government of Germany for the Second Phase of BES-Net (BES-Net II) which will be implemented between 2020 and 2028.

# PROGRESS & ACHIEVEMENTS: GLOBAL POLICY CENTRE PROJECT

This section highlights the main results achieved under the GC-RED project in terms of advancing global thinking and knowledge sharing on sustainable development in drylands and other fragile ecosystems. It outlines the progress made and achievements generated in the areas of: I) natural capital; II) resilience building; and III) knowledge management and networking.

## I. NATURAL CAPITAL



The Centre supported the implementation of the following initiatives during this reporting period: Future Perspectives on Land for Eastern Africa; Global Land Outlook (GLO); and Climate Promise. In addition, the Centre supported UNDP's engagement in the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, 2020 Drought and Desertification Day (DDD) and UN Decade for Deserts and the Fight Against Desertification.

### • Future Perspectives on Land for Eastern Africa

The technical workshops, in Nairobi and Addis Ababa, were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic and replaced by an Online Working Group (OWG). A workplan was developed for the OWG comprising four virtual sessions, or discussion blocks, organized between June and December as follows:

- “Session 1 – Launch of OWG” (19 June);
- “Session 2 – Land Use Changes” (3 July);
- “Session 3 – Socioeconomic Impacts” (7 August); and
- “Session 4 – Policy Implications” (25 September).

Thirty-two professionals from Kenya, Ethiopia, PBL, EC/JRC, the World Agroforestry Centre, the International Crops Research Institute for Semi-Arid Tropics and the Center for International Forestry Research as well as GC-RED contributed to the deliberations of OWG.

Significant progress was achieved since the launch of OWG in June:

- Agreement with the Kenyan and Ethiopian partners on the scope, approach and outcomes of the pilot phase study;
- Compilation of all the information needed for the study, completion of the analysis on recent trends and projected changes in land use up to 2050, and peer review of the scenario outcomes by OWG;
- Review of the impacts of the projected land use changes on agricultural production, food self-sufficiency and food security by OWG;



Photo: UNDP

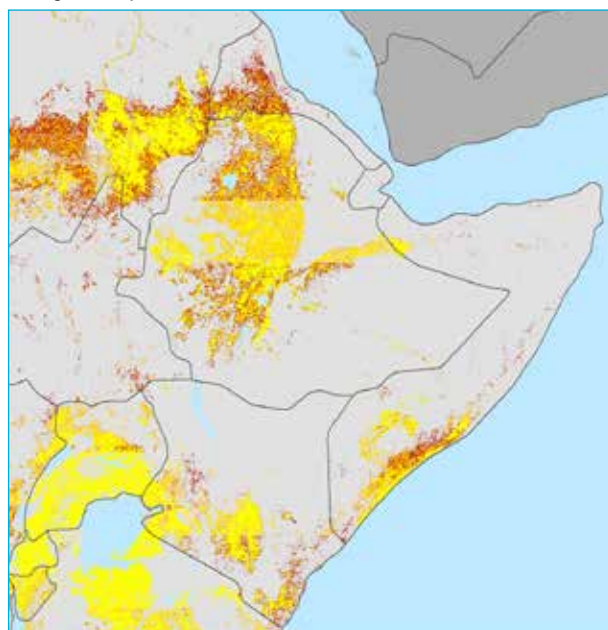


- Discussion of the policy implications of the study by OWG - i.e., how do current policies in Kenya and Ethiopia in the areas of land use, agricultural production and food security align or misalign to the trends and developments suggested by the respective scenarios?

The policy implications of the projected land use changes depend on the scenario that the country will follow for its development. The study revealed a wide range of potential impacts on agriculture, food self-sufficiency and food security among the three scenarios under consideration. The policy objectives and achievements in Kenya and Ethiopia were compared to the scenario projections to identify shortcomings and formulate policy recommendations to strengthen the alignment of the country's development trajectory with its sustainability ambitions.

### Changes in cropland and grazing area as per middle-of-the-road scenario (SSP2) (Source: PBL)

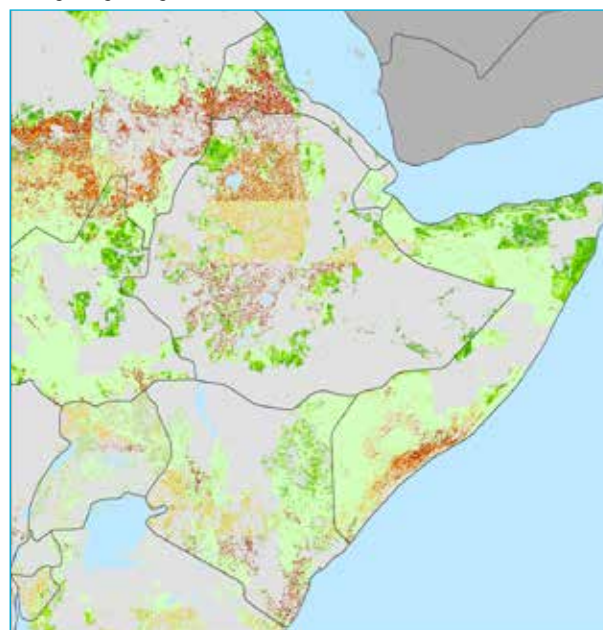
Change in cropland in East Africa under the SSP2 scenario



#### Legend

Cropland in 2015	No cropland
Expansion in 2030	Outside region
Expansion in 2050	Water bodies

Change in grazing area in East Africa under the SSP2 scenario



#### Legend

Grazing area in 2015	No grazing area
Expansion in 2030	Outside region
Expansion in 2050	Water bodies
Grazing to cropland 2030	
Grazing to cropland 2050	

OWG confirmed that the scenario projections are useful for informing better policymaking on sustainable land use and management in Kenya and Ethiopia. The group reiterated that the scenarios developed reveal the general directions of the anticipated changes and provide an order-of magnitude of these changes. They recommended improvements to current policies to promote sustainable land use, increase agricultural production and strengthen food security.

An overview of the progress achieved was presented to the fourth Regional Forum of the African Initiative to Combat Desertification (AI-CD) in December. The regional partners welcomed this progress and called for scaling-up the pilot phase into a full-fledged programme covering other countries and including capacity building and technical/policy support activities.

The final report of the study and summary for policymakers will be completed in the first quarter of 2021.

## Global Land Outlook

The Centre attended the virtual preparatory meeting of the second edition of GLO (GLO2) in April. The objective was to seek feedback and consensus on the storyline and thematic elements with a view of preparing a strategic publication to inform the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030). This publication, titled “Land Restoration: The Decade for Action and Impact” will be launched at fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP15) to UNCCD in late 2021.

Two restoration scenarios were developed for GLO2 and reviewed by key partners, including the Centre, during an online workshop organized by PBL in June. These include:

- The baseline scenario which explores the effects between now and 2050 of land degradation considering future land use change and climate change. It assumes no significant additional efforts on restoration.
- The restoration scenario estimates the potential benefits that large-scale restoration may bring. It assumes the implementation of the current commitments that countries have made on restoration to 2030, through management improvements as well as by preventing further loss of areas that are crucial for carbon, water and biodiversity.

During this workshop, the Center introduced its on-going study with PBL and EC/JRC on scenario projections for Eastern Africa, highlighting the complementarity between the two initiatives. The study will inform the GLO2 chapter on land use planning, possibly in the form of a case study.

The Centre participated in the GLO2 Steering Committee Meeting in November to discuss the progress achieved to date and review the thematic papers prepared to inform the development of GLO2. These papers cover, among others, the themes of gender equity and responsiveness, tenure security, urban-rural linkages and resilient food systems.



## UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration

The Centre supported UNDP’s engagement in the preparatory phase of the [UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration](#). In May, it participated in a webinar to discuss the background, theory of change and pathways to achieve the intended goals of the Decade. The Decade will build on existing initiatives such as the Paris Agreement, Land Degradation Neutrality, Biodiversity Targets, Bonn Challenge, etc. No specific restoration targets are established for the Decade, rather the intention is to support the achievement of existing targets. A recent study, [Goals and Commitments for the Restoration Decade](#), estimated that the total restoration commitments cover close to 1 billion hectares, almost half of which are in Sub-Saharan Africa.



In September, the Centre participated in the “Strategy Reveal and Engagement Kickoff” of the Decade. The Decade’s Strategy was revealed, along with its Communication and Engagement Plan. The Decade “aims to foster a global restoration culture in which restoration initiatives start and scale up across the planet”.

The goals of the Decade are to: ① Enhance global, regional, national and local commitments and actions to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of ecosystems; ② Increase understanding of the multiple benefits of successful ecosystem restoration; and ③ Apply knowledge of ecosystem restoration in education systems and within all public and private sector decision-making.

The Decade will support country-led efforts to achieve their restoration targets through policy advocacy, capacity building and catalyzing investment for large-scale restoration projects. The Centre reiterated UNDP's readiness to support the Decade through its global country presence, broad project portfolio and policy work of the Nairobi Centre.

## ● Climate Promise

The Centre is supporting the implementation of the [UNDP Climate Promise](#) in Somalia and Kenya through technical guidance on the role LDN targets in enhancing Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC). The objective is to enhance climate ambitions by strengthening the alignment between NDC and LDN targets, thus scaling-up the role of sustainable land management and restoration in achieving NDC targets.

The support focuses on the land-use system (cropland, grassland and forest land) in order to reflect the recently adopted LDN targets for [Somalia](#) and [Kenya](#) in the revised NDC reports. The Centre is contributing expert advice towards the substantive review of the NDC reports to be submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Specifically, this includes: ④ Technical backstopping of the UNDP country office; ⑤ Advising national partners on sustainable land management, land degradation neutrality and the alignment of LDN and NDC targets; and ⑥ Reviewing the NDC report prior to its submission to UNFCCC.

While the synergies and benefits between the objectives of UNFCCC and UNCCD are evident, alignment on the ground between the land and climate commitments is lacking. There is no consistency or cross-referencing to date between NDC and LDN targets. Enhancing the alignment between these targets in terms of hectares, geographic specificity and land restoration measures, will help the country achieve its climate mitigation and adaptation ambitions, while improving its land resources. For example, a commitment to rehabilitate and increase the productivity of 472,000 hectares of grassland by 2030 in Somalia, or to increase soil organic carbon by 319,000 tonnes in cropland in Kenya – through sustainable land management practices - can also contribute to their respective NDC terrestrial carbon sink ambitions.

The NDC review process, including the alignment of the climate and land targets, is on track in Somalia with the objective of submitting the final report to UNFCCC in the first quarter of 2021. The process was delayed in Kenya due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, but efforts have now resumed to complete the review by March 2021.



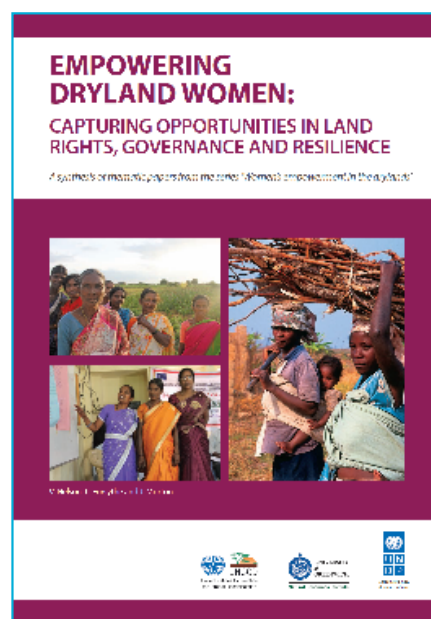
## ● UN Decade for Deserts and the Fight Against Desertification

The Centre contributed to the final report on the [UN Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification \(2010-2020\)](#). The report, led by UNCCD, was submitted to the United Nations General Assembly to highlight the activities and achievements of the Decade. In partnership with UNCCD



and UN Women, the Centre supported the implementation of the Decade through a series of activities on gender mainstreaming and women empowerment including:

1. Organization of Gender Days on the margin of UNCCD COPs (COP11 in Windhoek in 2013; COP12 in Istanbul in 2015; and COP13 in Ordos in 2017);
2. Publication of a series of policy papers to propose strategic actions in the policy, institutional and capacity spheres to reduce gender inequalities in the drylands with respect to land rights, governance and resilience;
3. Organization of capacity building workshops on mainstreaming gender in LDN projects and programmes;
4. Preparation of a guiding note to help countries integrate gender considerations in their drought action plans;
5. Establishment of the UNCCD Gender Caucus to support the integration of gender considerations into COP decisions.



These sustained efforts led to the adoption of the first ever [Gender Action Plan](#) of the Convention at COP13 to accompany the implementation of the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework.

Positive trends are already emerging indicating that awareness about gender issues has increased among UNCCD country parties. A quantitative analysis of COP14 decisions shows that the number of decisions that included references to gender issues has increased by 75 per cent as compared to COP13.

## • 2020 Drought and Desertification Day

The Centre supported UNDP’s contribution to the [DDD2020](#), including the Global Observance led by UNCCD and the national observance in Kenya organized by the Government. The focus of DDD2020 was on changing public attitudes to the leading driver of desertification and land degradation: humanity’s relentless production and consumption. There is growing demand for land from agriculture, urban expansion and infrastructure. According to UNCCD, almost 75% of all land has been transformed from its natural state and the health of existing arable land is declining. Ensuring food and clothing for ten billion people by 2050 will require significant changes to lifestyles, which in turn can influence business practices. Therefore, DDD2020 sought to highlight how much of what people eat and wear comes from food and fibre, which in turn comes from the land.



Photo: UNDP

In collaboration with UNCCD, the UNDP Administrator released a [video message](#) for the Global Observance stressing that “simple changes in our everyday lives will ensure that we have enough land to meet our growing demand for food, feed and fibre. The choices we make when buying food or clothing have long-term consequences on the sustainability of our land resources”. Moreover, the GC-RED Director participated in the Kenya observance, conveying that “everyone can make a difference” and reiterating “UNDP’s continued support to sustainable land management in the country”.

## II. ECOSYSTEMS AND LIVELIHOODS RESILIENCE



The Centre pursued its support to the UN Coalition to Combat Sand and Dust Storms and the Integrated Drought Management Programme during this reporting period.

### • UN Coalition to Combat Sand and Dust Storms

On behalf of UNDP, the Centre supported the inter-agency effort leading to the establishment of the United Nation Coalition to Combat Sand and Dust Storms (SDS). It contributed to the elaboration of the Coalition's terms of reference and accepted to co-lead the working group on "Mitigation and Adaptation" along with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and UNCCD. The Centre will build on its strong partnership with these agencies, as well as on UNDP's large project portfolio on sustainable land management and restoration, to deliver this work.



In July, the Centre participated in the third meeting of the SDS Coalition to adopt the Coalition's framework documents including its [Strategy](#), Action Plan and Governance Framework. These documents were approved unanimously, and the leadership of the Coalition will be assumed by FAO in the coming two years. The Strategy includes five elements, namely: ① Enhancing UN inter-agency collaboration; ② Advocacy and awareness-raising; ③ Exchange of information and capacity building; ④ Development of a "plat-form" for SDS; and ⑤ Fund raising.

The activities defined in the Action Plan for 2020-2022 will be delivered through five working groups: ① Adaptation and mitigation (FAO, UNCCD and UNDP/GC-RED); ② Forecasting and early warning (UNEP and World Meteorological Organization [WMO]); ③ Health and safety (World Health Organization and WMO); ④ Policy and governance (UNCCD and UNEP); and ⑤ Mediation and regional collaboration (United Nations Economic and Social Commissions for Asia and the Pacific, West Asia and Europe).

The fourth meeting of the Coalition was organized in October to finalize the establishment of the Working Groups and initiate the implementation of priority activities agreed in the Action Plan. The Centre's working group – i.e. Working Group 1 (WG1) - will focus on promoting sand and dust storms mitigation and adaptation. This includes work on: ③ Source mitigation to control the anthropogenic drivers of SDS such as unsustainable use of agricultural land, deforestation, overgrazing, depletion of water sources and industrial activities; and ④ Coping with the socio-economic impacts of SDS on human health, agriculture, energy, industry, transportation, infrastructure, water and air quality.

Two priority activities were agreed by WG1 for the coming year leading to UNCCD COP15 in December 2021, namely:

- **Sand and Dust Storms Toolbox:** WG1 will develop this toolbox to assist countries in preventing SDS and in coping with them, as requested by UNCCD Parties at COP14. This online platform will present tools and best practices for risk and vulnerability assessment, source mapping, and anthropogenic source control and mitigation options. This includes high-impact, context specific SDS adaptation and mitigation measures. The development of the toolbox will build on the on-going work of UNCCD and FAO in this area, which will be supported by UNDP/GC-RED with the objective of launching the toolbox at COP15.

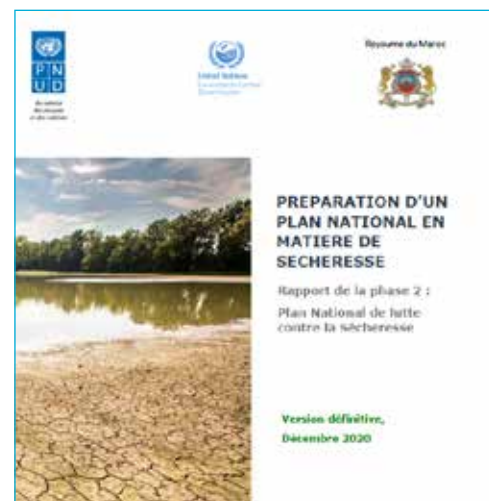
- **Funding Proposal:** Preparation of a project proposal for submission to potential donors to fund the activities of WG1 on SDS mitigation and adaptation. The mobilization of financial resources is critical for delivering these activities particularly for:
  - Ⓐ Conducting vulnerability assessments in both source and impact areas;
  - Ⓑ Training and capacity building on SDS mitigation and adaptation good practices; and
  - Ⓒ Developing and implementing a communication strategy to increase the visibility of the Coalition’s work.

According to the Governance Guidelines of the Coalition, the United Nations agencies should provide the necessary resources, both human and financial, to support the implementation of the Coalition’s activities. GC-RED secured funding (US\$10,000) from UNDP to support the development and launch of the toolbox in 2021.

## ● UNCCD Drought Initiative

The preparation of the Drought Action Plan for Morocco, supported by the Centre within the framework of the UNCCD Drought Initiative, was completed in December. The Plan is the result of a comprehensive consultative process in 2019-2020, leading to its adoption by the Government. The plan consists of three pillars:

1. Drought Assessment – including the socioeconomic and environmental impacts of drought, the national policy framework and institutional arrangements for drought risk management;
2. Drought Action Plan – covering six (6) strategic pathways to mitigate and adapt to the effects of drought. These include:
  - Ⓐ Strengthening governance and institutional coordination;
  - Ⓑ Building resilience to drought;
  - Ⓒ Generating and sharing knowledge;
  - Ⓓ Building capacities of national and local actors;
  - Ⓔ Establishing sustainable and flexible finance instruments; and
  - Ⓕ Promoting research and development, regional and international cooperation.
3. Implementation Modalities – including governance arrangements, technical support, priority interventions, budget requirement, monitoring and evaluation.



## ● Integrated Drought Management Programme

The Centre contributed to the peer review of two knowledge products developed by the Integrated Drought Management Programme (IDMP), namely: “Drought and Water Scarcity” and “Integrated Drought Management Framework”. The former is a policy note that articulates the difference between drought and water scarcity in a simple language, illustrated with case studies, targeting policymakers and development practitioners. The latter is a technical report on the integrated, risk-based approach to drought management. Considering the complexity of this framework, the Centre proposed to develop simplified materials (summary for policymakers, short notes, videos, etc.) to facilitate its adoption and implementation at the country level.

The Centre represented UNDP in the annual Advisory Committee meeting of IDMP, organized by WMO in August. The purpose of the meeting was to review the implementation of the programme and endorse its annual workplan for 2020-2021. The key takeaways from this meeting are summarized below:

- a. Engagement in International Processes:** IDMP is increasingly engaged in international processes on drought risk management. It is currently supporting the UNCCD Intergovernmental Working Group on Drought and advising countries on the development of drought action plans. The Advisory Committee stressed the importance of UNCCD as a strategic platform for strengthening collaboration among IDMP partners.
- b. Knowledge Products:** The knowledge products, “Water Scarcity and Drought” and “Integrated Drought Management Framework”, will be finalized for publication in early 2021.
- c. Fund Raising:** Significant efforts were made by IDMP to mobilize financial resources for its activities. A major breakthrough was the recent approval of a US\$7.9 million project funded by the Adaptation Fund. The Advisory Committee recommended to pursue resource mobilization efforts to increase technical and capacity building support to countries.

### III. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND NETWORKING



The Centre’s knowledge management and networking activities were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Planned workshops were cancelled and international meetings were postponed. However, the Centre adapted to this new reality by scaling-up its online engagement to deliver planned activities.

The workshops of the initiative “Future Perspectives on Land for Eastern Africa” were replaced by an Online Working Group (OWG), with four sessions organized between June and November to prepare the study and build capacities on the use of scenario analysis to inform policymaking on sustainable land use and management. Most of the events for knowledge management and networking of the BES-Net project were also rescheduled and switched from face-to-face to virtual format (See the following section, [“Progress & Achievements: BES-Net Project”](#), for further detail).

Dedicated efforts were made to improve the visibility of the Centre and its activities among targeted internal and external audiences. The [Centre’s website](#) was the main channel used to disseminate progress on its policy and programme support initiatives on [Sustainable Land Management and Restoration](#) and [Resilience Building](#).

Moreover, the Centre activities and achievements were disseminated regularly through social media networks. As of December 2020, the [GC-RED twitter account](#) had more than 2,300 followers.

As part of the Bureau for Policy and Programme Support, the Centre worked successfully to represent UNDP in a number of strategic events, organized virtually this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.





Some of these events include:

- Fourteenth and fifteenth meetings of IPBES Bureau and Multidisciplinary Expert Panel (MEP) on 20-24 January and 7-17 September, respectively;
- Preparatory meeting for GLO2 on 23 April;
- Partners' meeting of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration on 27 May;
- Technical workshop on the Land Restoration Scenarios developed for GLO2 on 6 June;
- Advisory Committee Meeting of IDMP on 25 August;
- Strategy reveal and engagement kick-off of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration on 15 September;
- Third and Fourth meetings of the United Nation Inter-Agency Coalition to Combat SDS s on 2 July and 21 October, respectively;
- Fourth IPBES Capacity Building Forum on 7-8 December; and

Fourth Regional Forum of the African Initiative to Combat Desertification on 9 December.

# PROGRESS & ACHIEVEMENTS: BES-NET PROJECT

The BES-Net project has been implemented since 2016 with the aim to promote dialogue and collaboration between science, policy and practice sectors in line with the IPBES Capacity-building Rolling Plan for more effective biodiversity and ecosystem services (BES) management, which, in turn, contribute to long-term human well-being and sustainable development. The project is implemented under a consortium partnership with the [UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre \(WCMC\)](#) and the [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization \(UNESCO\)](#) with the financial support of the German Federal Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety's (BMU) [International Climate Initiative \(IKI\)](#) and [SwedBio](#) at the Stockholm Resilience Centre. BES-Net also collaborates closely with over 110 BES-focused organizations and initiatives all over the world to maximize the complementary impacts on the ground.



While constant review and revision of the annual work plans were required throughout the year in the face of COVID-19 crisis, BES-Net managed to deliver some tangible results. In 2020, the project was dedicated to the transition from the first to the second phase. The team worked on wrapping up the activities and consolidating/disseminating the lessons learnt under BES-Net I (2016-2021)<sup>1</sup>, while at the same time establishing a renewed and expanded project management/coordination mechanism and initiating new activities under BES-Net II (2020-2028).

The status and the progress of BES-Net were reported biannually to the Advisory Committee, which consists of the project donors, IPBES and its UN collaborative partner organizations and other key partner institutions, to solicit guidance on the short-term and long-term project directions. The experiences and the achievements of the BES-Net project were also shared regularly with IPBES through the biannual Bureau and MEP meetings and the respective task forces/technical support units in which the BES-Net consortium member organizations are represented.<sup>2</sup>

The following section provides an overview of the progress of the BES-Net I and II, focusing on their four inter-linked components: ① improvement of policy-relevant national evidence base on BES; ② strengthening of science-policy-practice interaction and networking around emerging BES expertise and information; ③ coordinated implementation of priority BES solutions; and ④ enhancement of global BES knowledge sharing platform.

<sup>1</sup> Taking into account the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the project, IKI approved to extend the duration of BES-Net I for six months up to 30 June 2021.

<sup>2</sup> UNDP participates in the IPBES task force on capacity building. UNEP-WCMC hosts the IPBES technical support unit on policy support tools and participates in the IPBES task forces on capacity building, and knowledge and data. UNESCO hosts the IPBES technical support unit on indigenous and local knowledge and participates in the IPBES task force on scenarios and models, and knowledge and data.



# I. IMPROVEMENT OF POLICY-RELEVANT NATIONAL BES EVIDENCE BASE



The BES-Net project, under the global coordination by UNEP-WCMC, supports capacity building in selected countries to conduct National Ecosystem Assessments (NEAs) to complement the global assessment being undertaken by IPBES. NEAs provide countries with a credible, legitimate and relevant evaluation of the current knowledge on BES framed around key policy questions. Referring closely to the [IPBES Guide on the Production of Assessment](#) and leveraging the expertise of the [Sub-Global Assessment Network](#), the assessment process encompasses not only the production of the assessment reports, but also the development of policy support tools to integrate assessment findings into decision-making.

## • NEA Tranche I Countries

Under the first tranche, NEA support is provided to four countries within the framework of BES-Net I, namely Cameroon, Colombia, Ethiopia and Vietnam. In each country, an expert evaluation of the latest knowledge about the interactions between people and nature has been carried out under the auspice of the national science-policy BES platform around the unique and contextualized sets of policy-relevant questions:

- **Cameroon:** How can biodiversity and ecosystem services contribute to transformational change in the emerging Cameroon policy and governance options?
- **Colombia:** How does the knowledge of the status and trends of biodiversity and ecosystem services, analysed through the lens of diverse knowledge systems, contribute to decision-making to improve people's quality of life?
- **Ethiopia:** What is the contribution of indigenous knowledge on conservation and sustainable use of selected ecosystems (forests; rangeland; wetland and aquatic ecosystems; and agroecosystems and mountains)?
- **Vietnam:** What is the state of awareness of key stakeholders (policy makers, protected area managers and media) on forests, wetlands, and marine and coastal ecosystems goods and services and their contribution to human well-being?

All the Tranche I countries have experienced significant challenges in refining and finalizing NEAs, including both the full assessment reports and the Summary for Policymakers (SPM), as per the original annual workplans, due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, each country team has shifted the authors' meetings and the stakeholder consultations from face-to-face to online format swiftly to keep moving forward on the assessment steps and processes.

An online help desk remained active and live webinar sessions have also been continuously held to assist the country teams in updating each other on the status of activities and addressing any emerging risks together in a timely manner. Collective effort is also ongoing to identify and consolidate the key lessons learnt from the assessment processes up to date, which are to be shared with, and reflected in the work of, Tranche II (supported by UNEP-WCMC independently) and Tranche III (supported through BES-Net II) countries.



Photo: UNDP

As a result of the dedicated actions, the NEA processes have generated a wide range of impacts in policy and practice throughout 2020, contributing to the implementation of the different thematic areas of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD):

- **Biodiversity planning:** In all four Tranche I countries, NEA is identified as a critical reference to inform the revision of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan. In Cameroon, the National Platform for Science-Policy Interface on BES played a pivotal role in synthesizing the country’s inputs to the draft post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. In Vietnam, assessment findings are being used to advise the revision and development of the Law on Environmental Protection and the National Strategy on Environmental Protection, being also projected to inform the Biodiversity Law in 2021. The assessment process also has fostered synergies between the Ministry for Natural Resources and Environment and the Ministry for Planning and Investment, a step towards cross-sectoral integration of BES considerations.
- **Capacity building:** Tranche I countries are currently finalising their assessment report, providing a critical evidence base about the BES trends in each country according to their policy information needs. These processes have raised capacities on each of these countries for fostering stakeholder engagement and encouraging dialogue between science and policy. For example, scenario and modelling training for authors has been instrumental in understanding outcomes of alternative policy options to strengthen the conservation and sustainable use of BES. The NEA teams in the four countries have actively been participating in a number of regional and global forums to share their experiences on the assessment and associated processes.
- **Communication, education and public awareness:** The countries have developed useful communication strategies to accompany their assessment process with the aim to keep the general public informed about the NEA progress and encourage them to participate in the assessment reviews through online and offline channels. Colombia adopted BES-Net’s Triologue methodology to integrate the knowledge and perspectives of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLC).

As a result, traditional knowledge holders helped shape the Colombia’s assessment report critically with a creation of a chapter dedicated to the indigenous and local knowledge (ILK) on BES. In Vietnam, a discussion is ongoing to integrate NEA into the university curriculums. The experiences of Tranche I

countries in establishing the national science-policy BES platforms as part of the NEA process have directly been incorporated into the *Guidance Manual on National Biodiversity Platforms*, which is currently under development by the IPBES task force on policy support tools.

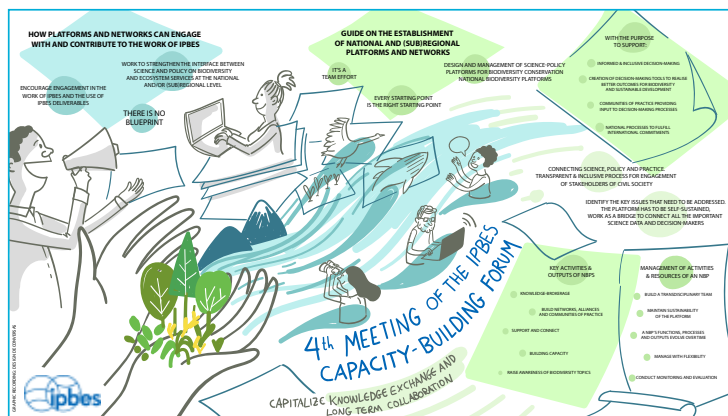


Photo: IPBES

As part of the results/lessons compilation and dissemination effort, UNEP-WCMC has been leading the development of the Information Document for the twenty fourth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice of the CBD scheduled to be held in early 2021. The document will outline the key prominent positive impacts observed of the NEA process on the CBD implementation.



## • NEA Tranche III Countries

Under BES-Net II, NEA support will be extended to four additional countries, namely Argentina, the Dominican Republic, Malawi and Thailand. Although the project experienced a considerable delay in setting the operational/management arrangements, regular online consultation were maintained with each of the target country government agencies even in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. By Q4 of 2020, three out of the four countries formally accepted the letter of invitation to join the BES-Net project and initiated the work to identify/contract the focal organization to coordinate the assessment process as well as the overall NEA work planning.

Accordingly, the NEA kick-off meeting was held virtually on 9 December 2020, introducing the participants from the Dominican Republic, Malawi and Thailand to BES-Net and the general framework of the assessment. The meeting was a great opportunity to obtain the ideas and opinions from the country teams concerning their overall aims to achieve the project as well as the existing capacity gaps which need to be addressed. A more formal NEA inception workshop is scheduled to be held for all the Tranche III countries virtually during the course of January-February 2021.

Meanwhile, an initial brainstorming session was convened among the BES-Net consortium members to deliberate on how to strengthen the integration of ILK into the Tranche III NEA process to promote the multiple-evidence based approach. Experiences were exchanged concerning the inclusion of ILK and evidence in NEAs in Tranche I and II countries as well as in the IPBES global/regional/thematic assessments. The brainstorming sessions will be continued 2021 onwards to explore the most suitable approaches for ILK strengthening on NEA as per the unique national and local contexts of the target countries.



Photo: UNDP

## II. STRENGTHENING OF SCIENCE-POLICY-PRACTICE INTERACTION AND NETWORKING



The Trialogue is BES-Net’s flagship science-policy-practice triangular communication and capacity building methodology. At the regional level, Trialogues are implemented to support the uptake of approved IPBES thematic assessment reports in the regional/national/local policy and decision-making, scientific research and on-the-ground programmes and projects. At the national level, the Trialogue approach is used to create a three-way dialogue between scientists, policymakers and practitioners (e.g. IPLC, farmers, businesses, civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations) in support of the ongoing NEA processes.

### Francophone Africa Regional Trialogue

In 2020, BES-Net worked on the organization of the fifth Regional Trialogue, focusing geographically on Francophone Africa and targeting seven countries, namely Benin, Chad, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Togo and Senegal. The aim of the Regional Trialogue is to facilitate mutual learning and joint commitment to action around the themes of the IPBES [thematic assessment on pollinators, pollination and food production](#) (2016) and [thematic assessment on land degradation and restoration](#) (LDR) (2018), focusing geographically on Francophone Africa and targeting seven countries, namely Benin, Chad, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Togo and Senegal. The Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development in Cameroon kindly agreed to host the [Francophone Africa Regional Trialogue](#) in May 2020 in Yaoundé, at the margins of the celebration of the International Day for Biological Diversity. Nevertheless, due to COVID-19, the event was postponed, and the new date in 2021 is yet to be determined. A background study is still ongoing to understand the regional and national contexts of pollinators and LDR through a literature review and key informant interviews.

In a run up to the main face-to-face event, pre-Trialogue virtual dialogue sessions were held between October and December 2020 with the objective to provide the practice sector stakeholders in the target countries with an opportunity to exchange knowledge and experiences on pollinator-friendly land rehabilitation and sustainable land management, including the impact of COVID-19 on these practices. Various remote communication tools were adopted, such as WhatsApp, Zoom and Survey Monkey, to effectively facilitate conversation among 70 participants at national and regional levels. During the Zoom meeting, additional communication support was provided to create a trusted space and enabling environment to elicit comments and contributions from the participants such as the French-English simultaneous, graphic recording service and MentiMeter live polling tool, etc.



Image: UNDP

As a result, a diverse set of inputs were collected through text, voice and video messages, presentations, photos and other files and polls. The data, information and stories shared through the virtual sessions

will be integrated into the Francophone Africa Regional Trialogue background document, which is currently under finalization. They will also be presented at the Trialogue event to inform the future IPBES assessment uptake action planning and implementation. All the participants, who responded to the evaluation survey, rated the organization and facilitation of the virtual sessions positively. They also confirmed that the virtual session enriched their knowledge of pollinators and LDR themes and expressed their willingness to keep in contact with other participants for continuous networking and peer learning/support.

## .....● **Ethiopia National Trialogue**

Among the four countries where the NEA process is supported through BES-Net I, National Trialogues were previously organized in [Cameroon](#), [Colombia](#) and [Vietnam](#). The National Trialogues facilitated interaction among the assessment authors with the government representatives and the ILK holders to help make NEA more policy relevant and multiple evidence based.

The National Trialogue for Ethiopia was scheduled to be held in 2020 to help strengthen the participation of key stakeholders in the NEA process, bringing in multiple voices including those of IPLC, whilst ensuring that the assessment responds adequately to the policy-relevant questions, as illustrated in the previous section. However, in view of COVID-19 risk and the evolving situation in the country, a decision was made to postpone the event till early 2021. Meanwhile, regular consultation is being kept with the Ethiopian Biodiversity Institute, the coordinating body of Ethiopia's NEA, to set the new dates for the event and discuss the scope of the Trialogue.

## .....● **Stocktaking and Sharing of the Regional/National Trialogue Experiences**

A total of four Regional Trialogues and four National Trialogues have been organized to date under BES-Net I. An exercise is ongoing to take stock of the lessons learnt from the Trialogue implementation so far, showcase the results of the Trialogues towards the IPBES assessment uptake at regional, national and subnational levels and document the specific stories of change in different countries. Interviews were already held with over 20 partners of past Trialogue participants to seek comprehensive feedback.

The output of the stocktaking exercise will also be synthesized and translated into a series of communication products such as a policy brief, video, etc. and circulated widely for reference of the other partners collaborating on the IPBES assessment uptake. Based on the findings and recommendations of the exercise, the existing Trialogue methodological frameworks will be refined further to ensure more effective and efficient implementation of the Regional and National Trialogues through BES-Net II.

Furthermore, an online survey was organized, targeting the participants of the Anglophone Africa Regional Trialogue on "Bright Spots for Land Degradation Neutrality, Pollinators and Food Security", which was held in May 2018 in Nairobi, Kenya, with the aim to assess the event outcomes one year later. The responses provided the project with profound insights into the relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency of the Regional Trialogue, as well as the opportunities and challenges concerning the implementation of the agreed post-Trialogue actions.

It is highly encouraging to find that the majority of the survey participants strongly or somewhat agreed that the Anglophone Regional Trialogue contributed to enhanced knowledge (90%); expanded network (85%); and strengthened capacity and commitment to action on the IPBES thematic issues of pollinators/pollination and land degradation/restoration across policy, science and practice communities (over 90%). This issue will be addressed by BES-Net II, particularly in the component of post-Regional Trialogue support.



Some of the post-Trialogue progress updates contributed by the interviewees and other participants were posted on the [BES-Net web portal](#) as the “bright spots” cases. Two [joint webinars](#) are also held with the [Coalition of the Willing on Pollinators](#) between December 2020 and January 2021. Selected country representatives from previous Trialogues attended the webinar series and shared their unique experiences of promoting conservation of pollinators, building on the increased awareness and strengthened network through the Regional Trialogues. The BES-Net team also attended the [fourth meeting of the IPBES capacity-building forum](#) on 7-8 December 2020 and presented the [BES-Net efforts](#) on establishing and strengthening national and (sub)regional networks, highlighting the opportunities and areas of synergy.

### III. COORDINATED IMPLEMENTATION OF PRIORITY BES SOLUTIONS



The key outputs of the first and the second components of the BES-Net project are the comprehensive NEAs, including SPM, and the Regional Trialogue action documents with the concrete plan of action for the IPBES thematic assessment uptake. Under BES-Net II, the seed fund (also referred to as ‘BES Solution Fund’) will be allocated to the selected countries to continuously support the application of the messages and recommendations of NEAs and the Trialogue action documents jointly by policy, science and practice sectors.



During the first phase of the BES Solution fund (2020-2022), the BES Solution Fund support will be provided to a total of seven countries. Of these, two countries (i.e. Colombia and Vietnam) will work on the uptake of NEAs; four countries (i.e. Kazakhstan, Kenya, Nigeria and Trinidad and Tobago) will work on the implementation of the Regional Trialogue action documents/uptake of the IPBES thematic assessments on pollinators and LDR; and one country (i.e. Cameroon) will work on the coordinated uptake of both NEA and IPBES thematic assessments.

Originally, all the country teams were expected to complete the respective post-NEA/Trialogue uptake work plans for the two-year period by mid-2020. However, this initial schedule turned unattainable due to COVID-19. There was a significant delay in the finalization of NEAs in Colombia, Cameroon and Vietnam. The Francophone Africa Regional Trialogue was postponed until further notice. Furthermore, it became extremely difficult to conduct the participatory work planning, engaging all the key stakeholders from policy, science and practice sectors.

Despite the daunting challenge, Kazakhstan, Nigeria and Trinidad and Tobago teams managed to develop the draft work plans, which are currently under peer review by the BES-Net consortium partners. Other country teams are also in close coordination with key partners and stakeholders to brainstorm on the priority activities to be integrated into the workplan in view of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and related national BES agendas.



Photo: UNDP



A series of discussions are also ongoing concerning the enhanced engagement of IPLC in the post-NEA/Regional Dialogue work planning and implementation. Experience and expertise of UNESCO will be adopted to ensure that the uptake of NEAs and the IPBES thematic assessments will be undertaken in an inclusive and participatory manner, taking into account the needs and interests of IPLC in the respective target countries, particularly women.

## IV. ENHANCEMENT OF GLOBAL BES KNOWLEDGE SHARING PLATFORM



BES-Net seeks to expand and strengthen global BES network among the like-minded institutions and individuals beyond national and regional borders. To this end, the project adopts a broad range of online tools and applications to disseminate the key highlights of the BES-Net activities and their results and the latest updates of over 110 BES-Net partners widely. These online tools were considered key to maximizing the engagement of the partners and the beneficiaries with the project amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Over 1,300 people, from across the sectors of science (44%), policy (35%) and practice (21%), including ILK holders, have registered to the BES-Net web portal and nearly 2,200 users regularly utilized a wide range of services offered. For example, the portal hosts a comprehensive knowledge resource library, containing over 3,200 publications, research papers, policy documents and on-the-ground good practice reports, etc. on different BES thematic fields. It also contains the latest information on BES related events and vacancy opportunities.

Through the web portal, the registered users can access a rich database of organizations and experts working on different IPBES thematic assessment areas and freely contact each other and ask questions to the thematic experts individually or as group discussion beyond geographic and administrative boundaries. In 2020, BES-Net team also posted a series of 8 op-ed articles on the portal to analyse the nexus between biodiversity and COVID-19 in conjunction with various thematic topics such as land, climate change, gender, etc. with the aim to contribute to the growing interest in the linkages between biodiversity loss and the rise of infectious zoonotic diseases.

All in all, 27 news updates and stories from BES-Net and its partners were also posted to the website and shared widely on social media on a daily basis. Key highlights are also compiled into e-newsletter format and disseminated to some 4,000 subscribers on bimonthly basis, with 6 issues in 2020. As of December 2020, BES-Net's [Facebook account](#) is followed by more than 5,364 people (about 1.5% increase from December 2019 with an annual reach of about 44,000 impressions). The network's [Twitter account](#) is followed by approximately 1,560 followers (about 42% increase from December 2019) and collect roughly 56,000 impressions per month.

Between October and November 2020, the second online survey was conducted on the BES-Net's online communication and networking support activities. The result was highly encouraging with the confirmation that many BES-Net users, both registered/non-registered, continuously find the services offered through the web portal, social media channels and e-newsletter beneficial and useful. Meanwhile, the survey respondents provided a number of insightful comments on the areas of further improvement of the BES-Net online activities. The project will refine its communication and stakeholder engagement strategy based on these invaluable input as well as the comparative analysis of the first (2018) and the second online survey, which will serve as a blueprint for the future online communication and networking support under BES-Net II.

# UNDP CO-MANAGEMENT OF JOINT UNDP-UNEP POVERTY-ENVIRONMENT MAINSTREAMING EFFORTS

The PEA project is a joint initiative between UNEP and UNDP which aims at mainstreaming environmental sustainability and climate objectives for poverty eradication into development planning, budgeting and monitoring systems into public and private finance and investment. Eight full-fledged countries are being supported through the initiative with four in Africa (Rwanda, Mauritania, Malawi, Mozambique) and four in Asia (Bangladesh, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Nepal). In addition, Tanzania and Indonesia are being supported with Technical Assistance (TA) at country level. Three additional TAs are also being supported at regional level i.e. Green Bonds with South Africa, Blue Economy with Asia Development Bank (ADB) and UN Women on Climate Smart Agriculture.

In 2020, the PEA project continued to deliver on its objective to strengthen integration of poverty-environment-climate objectives into policies, plans, regulations and investments of partner countries to accelerate delivery of the 2030 Agenda. Since its inception in September 2018, the following has been achieved:

- 14 planning frameworks, legislation and regulations developed that integrate the poverty-environment nexus to enhance capacity to apply integrated approaches and tools for mainstreaming environmental sustainability and climate objectives into development planning and budgeting;
- 5 government-led inter-sectoral coordination mechanisms established and supported that promote coherence of planning, frameworks, legislation and regulations;
- data collected in 7 countries on environmental, social and economic data, analysed and reported applying a poverty-environment nexus perspective through national development and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) monitoring systems;
- 12 guidelines and tools developed to manage private sector investment decisions that facilitate or prioritize quality investments;
- 2 countries adopted Poverty-Environment Action tools/approaches resulting from South-South knowledge collaboration.

Following the approval of three additional TAs in 2019 by the Project Board, 2020 marked the start of three new partnerships formed at regional level through TA;

- UN Women on increasing regional priorities and investments in environmentally and gender responsive Climate-Smart Agriculture <https://pea4sdgs.org/ta-projects/gender-agriculture>
- ADB on Blue Economy focusing on identifying and developing Poverty-Environment Initiative (PEI) / Poverty-Environment Action tools that support budgeting and financing for a blue economy and disseminating this work through regional seas programmes and the Forum of Ministers and Environment Authorities of Asia Pacific <https://pea4sdgs.org/ta-projects/blue-economy>
- The German Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ) on Green Bonds in South Africa building on Synergies between Low-emissions Pathways and SDGs. <https://pea4sdgs.org/ta-projects/green-bonds> .



Photo: UNDP

The PEA website was launched on 29 June 2020 now serves as a common platform for showcasing PEA to a wider audience and promote information sharing and timely uploading of news (22 news in total) from Indonesia, Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Rwanda, Malawi for the year 2020. In addition, it has spaces to facilitate internal work and interactions between the UNDP Country Offices and global PEA team. The Horizon of Hope which is the PEA 2019 Annual progress report was published, shared and posted in the website in May 2020 at:

<https://pea4sdgs.org/knowledge/pea-publications/horizons-of-hope-poverty-environment-action-for-sustainable-development-goals-annual-progress-report-2019>.

Among others, the report covers progress on implementation of PEA through seven full-fledged country projects, as well as two technical assistance projects in 2019. It gives an overview on the project's performance using established baselines, indicators and targets at the global and country levels, and provides lessons learned during the first full year of implementation.

2020 also witnessed an increase in advocacy and coordination efforts with development partners engaged in supporting SDG implementation to mainstream the use of PEA integrated approaches and tools in their programmes and to ensure synergies with similar projects. This is evident in the increased number of times learning products that have been referenced by regional and global networks from 5 in 2019 to 16 in 2020. Some of the references include are not limited to the following;

1. **The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, SDG Partnership Platform**, PEA entry updated (September 2020)
2. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/partnership/progress/>
3. **ADB** referenced PEA mainstreaming approach, tools and results in the Asia Pacific Forum (March 2020, virtual session)
4. **ADB** and **Coordinating Body for the Seas of East Asia** referenced PEA mainstreaming in Blue Economy webinar: (20 July 2020, <https://pea4sdgs.org/knowledge/latest-news/poverty-environment-action-participates-in-an-asian-development-bank-webinar-to-promote-integration-into-financing-a-blue-economy>; <https://pea4sdgs.org/ta-projects/blue-economy>)
5. **The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development** referenced PEA in launch event of the PEA Project website (29 June 2020, <https://pea4sdgs.org>)



6. **GIZ** referenced technical assistance South-South exchange project on Green Bonds (June 2020, <https://pea4sdgs.org>)
7. **Indonesia Ministry of Finance, PATTIRO** (recognized in 2015 as one of best global think tanks in research and policy advocacy by University of Pennsylvania, USA) and **UNDP** webinar referencing PEA budget tagging (20 May 2020, <https://pea4sdgs.org/knowledge/latest-news/indonesia-gender-responsive-climate-change-budget-study>)
8. **Climate Finance Network** and Indonesia Ministry of Finance Fiscal Policy Agency reference Poverty-Environment Action in the 2020 Policy Brief, “The Contribution of Subnational Governments in the Implementation of NDC in Indonesia”, <https://pea4sdgs.org/knowledge/latest-news/policy-brief-the-contribution-of-subnational-governments-in-the-implementation-of-ndc-in-indonesia>)

UNDP, through GC-RED, continued to be the Managing Agent of PEA. In this capacity, GC-RED provided the following key support in 2020:

- Establishment of a consultant roster in close collaboration with UNDP Headquarters/Crisis Bureau: has been established to expedite sourcing of technical support focusing on four thematic areas; Finance and Investment, Poverty and Economics, Gender and Equity and Knowledge Management. This has proved to be effective with support provided under the Green Bonds TA where a consultant was hired to work on developing a Green Bonds Hand-Book. Under the Blue Economy TA, a consultant was hired to lead the preparation of a joint PEA and ADB report on Opportunities and Challenges for Investment in the Sustainable Blue Economy of Asia and the Pacific. Through the consultant, PEA is also supporting the integration of poverty, environment and gender dimensions, into this joint report to guide the planning and implementation of ADB’s Ocean Finance Initiative which aims to mobilize and align US\$ 5 billion of investment to support blue economy in Asia Pacific over 5 years.
- Efforts in creating linkages and synergies with other projects and programs that can anchor or support further engagement for sustainability. In some countries PEA is beginning to seek synergies with other partners i.e. financial institutions and with other agencies besides UNDP and UNEP. For example, Lao PDR has been working on tools for provincial investment profiles that consider objectives of environment and poverty eradication. These tools have been replicated by other partners i.e. GIZ in close collaboration with PEA, for use in other provinces. In addition, PEA has formed linkages with the UNDP global Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) funded project in countries that overlap i.e. Myanmar, Nepal and Bangladesh, due to PEA’s strong focus on Climate Financing and its strong linkages with SDG financing work at country level which is linked to some initiatives under the SIDA project.

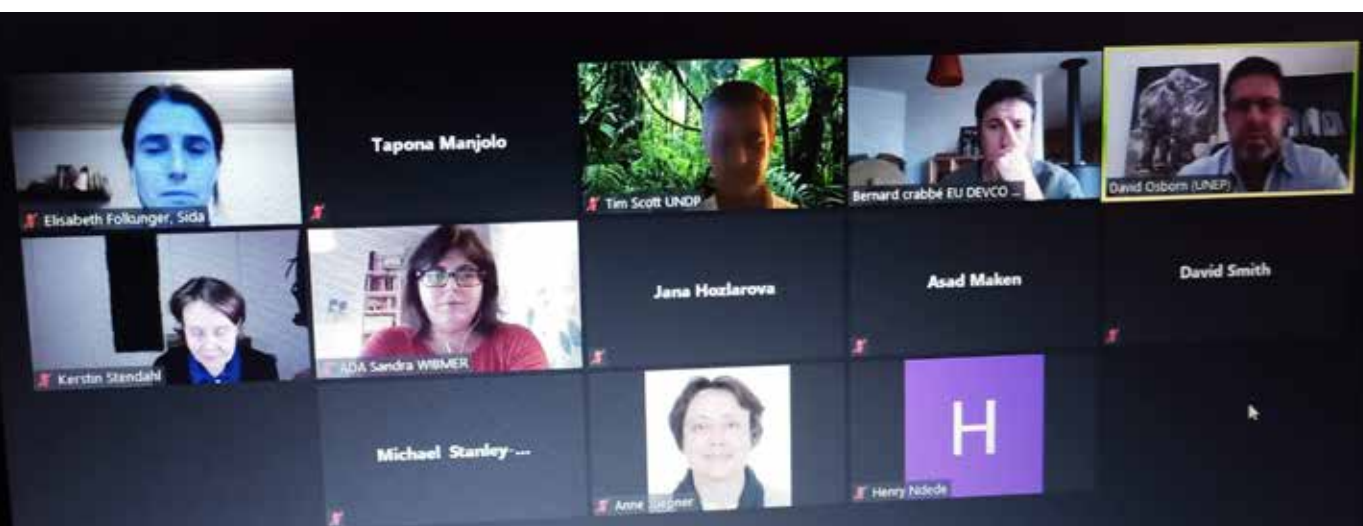


Photo: UNDP



Due to the COVID 19 pandemic experienced globally during March-Dec 2020, project implementation was affected in all PEA countries due to travel bans, restrictions on in-person meetings/workshops and shutdown of government offices working at limited capacity in most instances. Activities that required trainings, workshops, data collection, and international consultants were either postponed or canceled in some cases. The Project as a whole implemented a series of approaches to mitigate the impact of the pandemic. The Project has shown positive adaptive management strategies led by PEA Management that conducted a series of follow up calls with the countries to provide support. This support was evident in the request that was sought and obtained from donors on flexibility in supporting the provision of materials, equipment, online platform licenses, to strengthen the capacity of national partners to work online and continue to engage virtually as part of business continuity. Furthermore, a series of activities were reprogrammed or put on hold due to the pandemic. At global level, adaptation to the new reality was also made as the Project Board and staff meetings were all held virtually in 2020.

PEA Management developed a guidance note on Strategic Adaptive Management providing options for making savings within the project in light of the financing gap that the project is experiencing including opportunities for partnerships. This guidance note is expected to contribute to the Project Board decision pertaining to project extension for countries that are implementing up to August 2021. In addition, in 2020, the Centre facilitated implementation of a PEA portfolio of more than USD 3.6 million with purchases procured in 2020 amounting to USD 1.9 million.

A Mid Term Review (MTR) was undertaken under UNEP's Leadership and preliminary findings indicate that PEA's technical support has been well received by many actors at the national, regional and global levels to work towards its overall aim of strengthened policies, plans, regulations and investments to support Poverty-Environment priorities. The project is also recognised for its efforts in continued promotion of the agenda of nexus of poverty and environment action, carrying on to SDGs. The MTR recommends implementation of the resource mobilisation strategy that the project has developed to cover the current resource gap caused by unexpected funding shortfall from UNEP pooled fund reduction from Norway. The MTR also recommends, among others, the strategic promotion of concrete implementation of tools, instruments, financing (both public and private, policy, etc.), to mainstream the Poverty – Environment nexus being developed under PEA including those developed under PEI.



Photo: UNDP

# FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Table 1: 2020 Delivery (as of 8th Feb 2021)

Project Name	ATLAS Project/ Output No.	2020 Budget (USD)	2020 Expenditure* (USD) (excl. commitments)	Source of funds
Global Policy Centre	94431	300,530	164,513	UNDP (UNSO Trust Fund)
	93764	293,493	293,493	UNDP core allocation
BES-Net Phase I	97675	918,236	918,236	Non-core
BES-Net Phase II	119833	224,174	122,075	Non-core
PEA	111963**	3,646,044	2,419,759	Non-core
		2,153,248	1,707,902	UNDP core/TRAC
<b>Total</b>		<b>7,535,725</b>	<b>5,625,978</b>	

\* The figures are provisional until the 2020 Certified Financial Statements are issued by UNDP's Office of Finance Resources and Management

\*\* PEA country level and TA outputs under delegated authority can be found under different ATLAS Project IDs

Table 2: Non-core resources received in 2020 (as of 8th Feb 2021)

Project Name	Amount (USD)	Donor
BES-Net Phase I	66,037	Sweden (SwedBio)
BES-Net Phase II	0	
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>66,037</b>	
PEA	234,742	Austria (ADA)
	1,758,860	EU
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>1,993,602</b>	
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2,059,639</b>	



*Table 3: Non-core resources for utilization in 2021 -2022/2028 (as of 8th Feb 2021)*

Project Name	Available Amount (USD)	Pledged Amount (USD)	Donor
Global Policy Centre*	320,612	0	UNDP (UNSO Trust Fund)
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>320,612</b>		
BES-Net Phase I**	751,971	0	Germany (IKI)
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>751,971</b>	<b>0</b>	
BES-Net Phase II	21,624,965	0	Germany (IKI)
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>21,624,965</b>	<b>0</b>	
PEA***	199,536	0	Austria (ADA)
	2,396,770	5,049,177	EU
	553,432	1,497,760	UNEP/Sweden
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>3,149,738</b>	<b>6,546,937</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>25,847,286</b>	<b>6,546,937</b>	
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>32,394,223</b>	

\* The current Global Policy Centre project runs until 31st December 2021.

\*\* Available amount is inclusive of 2019 commitments. BES-Net I project will run until 30th June 2021.

\*\*\* PEA project runs from 1st September 2018 to 31st August 2022.



Photo: UNDP

# WAY FORWARD

2021 is the final year of implementation of UNDP's current Strategic Plan (2018-2021). Accordingly, the Centre will carry out a final evaluation of its current programme this year and develop a new programme in support of UNDP's new Strategic Plan 2022-2025 early next year. However, it is expected that the Centre's current Service Offer (endorsed in late-2019) will continue to be relevant as part of UNDP's wider efforts in supporting countries to recover from the still persisting COVID-19 pandemic and achieving the SDG agenda and related targets.

Due to last year's impact of COVID-19 on key global events, 2021 will now be the "super year" for nature with the CBD COP15 (Kunming, May 2021), UNFCCC COP 26 (Glasgow, November 2021) and UNCCD COP 15 expected to take place in December 2021. The Centre will support UNDP's contributions to these events as needed with a particular focus on highlighting and showcasing the role of sustainable land management and restoration in upscaling climate action.

Amongst persisting challenges in the donor environment and the COVID-19 pandemic effects expected to continue to be felt at least during the first halve of 2021, the Centre needs to intensify its efforts to mobilize new funds for the Centre's work on land and cover related staff and operational costs for its programmatic work from 2022.







**we focus on**

poverty eradication and environmental sustainability in fragile ecosystems.



**we support**

sustainable and resilient development in drylands and other fragile ecosystems, aiming to reduce vulnerability and ensure better living standards.



**we contribute to**

the implementation of the SDGs, which will result in improved livelihoods and socio-economic wellbeing, and ultimately lead to pro poor growth.



**we mainstream**

poverty-environment objectives into national/local development and budgetary frameworks to promote poverty eradication, while advancing sustainable management of natural capital.

**UNDP | GC-RED**

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