



## Participatory assessment, monitoring and evaluation of biodiversity (PAMEB)

Internet workshop 7 - 25 January 2002, and policy seminar 21 May 2002  
convened by the Environmental Change Institute, University of Oxford

### Introduction

by Anna Lawrence

#### Why participatory monitoring and evaluation of biodiversity?

All stakeholders who use, manage or conserve biodiversity will need to assess it in some way. Local people have different objectives and ways of doing this, from policy makers and government departments who are responsible for commitments to the Convention on Biological Diversity. Improved understanding of each other's approaches to evaluating biodiversity can have benefits for rural communities, governments and intermediary organisations. Participatory monitoring and evaluation of biodiversity involves different stakeholders working together to assess biodiversity, which can help scientists to support local people in managing biodiversity, or local people to contribute to national biodiversity monitoring processes.

#### The internet workshop and policy seminar

European Tropical Forest Research Network (ETFRN) and the Environmental Change Institute (ECI) have convened a workshop and seminar to take stock of existing knowledge in this field, communicate findings to decision makers and provide recommendations for biodiversity monitoring and evaluation which benefits rural people and national level biodiversity managers.

The convened workshop consisted of two stages: an internet workshop from 7-25 January 2002 and a policy seminar on policy implications of participatory biodiversity assessment at 21 May 2002 in London, UK. In the first, the internet workshop 270 people from 55 countries from all over the world participated. The policy seminar had 46 participants from 18 countries (of which 8 developing countries).

All results, case studies and background documents are available on this website. A CD ROM is specifically composed for those people interested in the subject but who do not have access, or restricted access to the internet. The CD was edited by Anna Lawrence and Jeannette van Rijsoort. For more information on how to obtain the CD. please contact the ETFRN Coordination Unit at [etfrn@etfrn.org](mailto:etfrn@etfrn.org).

#### Definitions

Although we recognise that there is a debate about 'what is biodiversity' we emphasise that perceptions of biodiversity depend on who you are, what you value and need from the environment. If we accept this, we can move on to look at practical issues - how do we better understand the different perspectives, and communicate them between stakeholders - and how useful is this communication to different stakeholders. Some people are worried by the word 'participatory'. We don't mean to imply any particular definition or methodology by using this word; we are more concerned to emphasise the need for 'inclusivity' i.e. recognising all the stakeholders and supporting their involvement in decision-making.

Since we took the view that it is not particularly helpful to debate definitions in this setting, the workshop took a pragmatic approach:

- 'monitoring and evaluation' should be interpreted broadly, and in many cases might be more broadly described as 'assessment', whilst recognising that biodiversity assessments are value-laden; we will sometimes use the term 'participatory biodiversity assessment' as an umbrella term to cover the range of relevant activities that have been indicated by participants;
- 'participatory' means either non-scientists are doing the biodiversity assessment OR non-scientists and scientists are doing the assessment together and sharing results;
- 'biodiversity' refers to the diversity of genes, species and ecosystems, plus the resulting functions and processes.

### **What is participatory monitoring and evaluation of biodiversity?**

Participatory assessment, monitoring and evaluation of biodiversity involves non-scientists in observing, measuring or assessing biodiversity or its components. It is often understood to mean assessment by rural communities, but can also involve other stakeholders, such as students, policy makers, conservationists, volunteers, etc. It can refer to scientists and local people working together to assess bio-diversity. This can help to understand each other's perspectives better, so that scientists support local people in managing biodiversity, or local people contribute to national biodiversity monitoring processes.

'Participatory monitoring and evaluation' is often used as a single phrase (PM&E) but in the biodiversity context, it may be useful to distinguish between monitoring, which requires agreement between stakeholders to measure according to scientific or other standards; and evaluation, which is value-laden and stakeholder-differentiated.

### **What does this have to do with policy?**

Countries which have ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) are committed to the identification and monitoring of biodiversity (article 7), to respect and conserve relevant indigenous knowledge (article 8 (j)) and to the sustainable use of components of biological diversity (article 10). They are developing national strategies and policies to make this possible.

Fulfilling these commitments requires large amounts of information. Participatory monitoring can contribute to these strategies if research and practice are synthesised and communicated to policy-makers. The workshop took place in the preparatory stage of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Rio +10).

### **Geographical focus**

We believe the issues of communicating about biodiversity perception, addressing institutional gaps and providing policy support, are universal. The focus is definitely not limited to the tropics. The workshop specifically intended, and succeeded, in attracting 'northern' initiatives and people working with wildlife, to help us address our own '(sub)tropical forest' bias.

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Lawrence, A., A. Wells, S. Gillett, J. van Rijsoort, **PAMEB: a briefing paper for planners, policy makers and advisers**, 2003, [PPT \(1,2 Mb\)](#) or [pdf \(689 kb\)](#)

Anna Lawrence, **Thematic analysis of the EFRN email discussion** 7-25 January 2002, 23 p., [Word \(141 kb\)](#) or [pdf \(180 kb\)](#)

**Policy implications of participatory biodiversity assessment, summary report from the one-day seminar**, DFID, UK, 31 p., [Word \(490 kb\)](#) or [pdf \(129 kb\)](#)

[Resumen en español](#)

### **One-page summary: results of the EFRN e-workshop**

Participatory biodiversity assessment (PBA) provides a way of reconciling the need for national assessment, monitoring and reporting; with the increasing focus on involvement of all relevant stakeholders and particularly indigenous / local communities. PBA, i.e. biodiversity assessment by and with non-scientists can provide short-cuts to scientific assessments; provide data which is useful to local resource managers in a way which scientific assessment is not; link in to scientific information which is relevant to local needs; enhance inclusivity of decision-making.

The workshop sought to elucidate: the ways in which values affect the assessment process; approaches and methods in relation to objectives and information needs; the costs and benefits; and priorities for institutional / policy change to create an enabling environment. 300 Participants from 55 countries included the CBD secretariat, international donors and NGOs, universities, grassroots organisations.

All have different reasons for PBA, and varying information needs. Most national or regional decision makers expect information in quantitative spatially comparable forms. Participatory processes may not supply this so readily (or efforts to quantify may distort local perceptions) but may provide qualitative information of different and complementary value. It is very important to match objectives with methods and stakeholders, rather than apply a blanket set of recommendations to all situations which appear to need a participatory approach.

Assessment is affected by value judgements, regardless of who is conducting the assessment. It is often assumed that local people value only useful species; but research reveals spiritual, cultural and ethical values; and that species or habitats with non-material values may be at least as important as those with uses.

In documenting methods, the main debate was between those who sought local knowledge to develop wider-scale quantitative measures of change, and those who emphasised the importance of strengthening community capacity to make decisions about resource management, which in turn enhances their motivation to conserve. It appears that methods linking local and scientific assessments or values are scarce, and more work still needs to be done on the analysis and communication of results.

Participatory approaches take more time and different skills compared with scientific surveys, but there are benefits that are worth this cost. The potential for real synergy between different actors depends not only on good communication, but also on realistic understanding of the costs and benefits of involving different actors in such assessments, and above all ensuring that local people can take part in analysis and decision-making. The process of negotiating, observing and analysing indicators may bring about more change than the data gathered itself, and in particular can enhance benefit-sharing, as well as be more sustainable than externally led processes. However to achieve this, changes in education, training of scientists, and institutional networking are needed.

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