ValuES Training Course – Principles of Ecosystem Services Assessments for Policy Impacts

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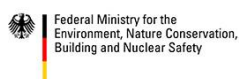
Background: During the last decades and especially after the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2005) and the commitments of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Strategy Plan 2010-2020, practitioners and policy makers are more frequently confronted with a set of multifaceted challenges regarding the identification, assessment, integration and reporting of ecosystem services in different management areas and sector strategies. Recognizing the links between ecosystem services (ES) and human well-being can help to increase the environmental sustainability of development and economic activities. Understanding the links between ecosystems and society, and communicating the importance of ecosystem services to relevant stakeholders is a primary goal of ecosystem services assessments and valuation (ESAVs).

An improved ability to identify, assess and describe benefits of ecosystem services by conducting ESAVs allows decision-makers to better understand how their actions depend on and might change the natural environment. It provides decision-makers with the necessary information to consider potential trade-offs among different options and allows them to choose policies that contribute to the maintenance, restoration and sustainable use of ecosystems.

The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) developed a guide for development planners and policymakers on integrating ecosystem services into development planning. This guide advocates a stepwise approach ('Six-Step Approach', www.aboutvalues.net/six-steps) that allows recognizing, demonstrating and capturing the value of biodiversity and ecosystem services for development planning. Based on this approach, the GIZ developed a Training Course on 'Integrating Ecosystem Services into Development Planning' (IES Training) that aims at building capacities for the application of the Six-Step Approach in development planning. With increasing implementation of the Six-Step Approach in many countries, demand is rising for a better understanding of basic concepts, methods and tools for conducting ESAVs and integrating their results in decision-making.

Rationale of the training: Assessing ecosystem services is often regarded as a key argument to increase awareness and deliver well-founded arguments to protect the environment. However, oftentimes the results of ESAVs are not adequately taken into consideration when formulating management strategies or weighing policy options. We would like to contribute to change this situation by offering a training that builds capacities to support assessment processes that are relevant, legitimate and purpose oriented. Furthermore, the training is aligned to current developments in conservation efforts as its design is closely related to the rationale of the Intergovernmental science-policy platform on biodiversity and ecosystem services (IPBES). IPBES was established to strengthen the science-policy interface for the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services and is administered by the United Nations Environment Programme.

Objective: As part of the training, participants will

- receive a good understanding of the main characteristics of ecosystem services and management challenges

- Identify the necessary steps and elements of ESAVs to achieve policy impacts, stressing the links between nature and well being

- learn about specific methods and decision-making tools, and when to use them

- learn about effective communication and influencing skills

Content:

1. Introduction to basic ecosystem services concepts (time, space, joint production, multiple benefits, trade-offs, ...)

2. Overview of some basics elements and properties of ESAVs (processes, steps, analysis, use and application of results, ...)

3. Identification of entry points, policy and research questions appropriate for ESAVs, policy design, assessment purposes and embedding them into the policy framework

4. Basic elements and principles of ecosystem services indicators

5. Basic elements and principles of ecosystem services mapping

6. Overview of different ecosystem service assessment methods, tools and case studies

7. Application of some ecosystem service assessment methods and tools specifically tailored to policy processes

8. Elements of actor mapping, stakeholder analysis, effective communication and influencing skills

Methodology: The training is composed of input lectures, interactive group exercises and reflections in plenary discussions. The exercises are based on the Harvard Case Methodology, which conveys teaching messages mainly through interactive practical work by participants. The training exercises deal primarily with the fictitious country of Bakul, a situation closely related to conditions and challenges that can be found in many real life scenarios.
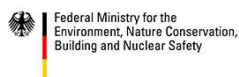
Participants and Duration: A maximum number of 20 to 25 participants is recommended for the training course. The course can be adjusted to the needs of the group and may last between 2 to 5 days. The training is designed to be suitable to staff from GIZ projects and programmes, to researchers and scientists, to central and local government officers, policy makers and decision-makers from both conservation and development sectors, as well as environmental and development practitioners from local communities or NGOs.

Contact:

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