

SESSION DESCRIPTION

ID: T1

Title of session:

Rapid ecosystem services assessment tools in Africa: where are we now and where are we heading?

Hosts:

	Title	Name	Organisation	E-mail
Host:		Jean Hugé	ULB, VUB, University of Hasselt – Belgium	jean.huge@ulb.ac.be
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Abstract:

While the concept of ecosystem services is now widely known among scientists in Africa and beyond, its practical use in support of sustainable ecosystem management is still hampered by a lack of knowledge among some managers and much of the general public, and by the lack of data and/or of actual measurements of ecosystem services generated by a given ecosystem or reserve. Performing large-scale comprehensive ecosystem services assessments requires a substantial amount of time, skills and financial investment. Faced with the urgency to act to protect threatened ecosystems, the challenges regarding time and resource availability led to the development of a particular kind of tools. These so-called “rapid assessment tools” aim at providing comparable and verifiable information regarding ecosystem services, without having to perform full-scale, exhaustive and long-term investigations. Depending on the needs of the management bodies and on the existing knowledge regarding ecosystem services in a particular region, specific tools can be selected. In order to ensure a reliable and systematic tool selection process, this session aims at bringing together practitioners, scientists and policy-makers who have been developing, applying and comparing these tools. Participants will exchange best practices, and reflect on

the balancing act of quickly yielding management–relevant output while keeping scientific standards high. The organizers of this session are project promoters of the UNESCO and Belgian Science Policy–supported EVAMAB project (“Economic valuation of ecosystem services in Man and Biosphere reserves: testing effective rapid assessment methods in selected African MABs”).

Goals and objectives of the session:

To present and critically assess the diversity of experiences with rapid ecosystem services assessment tools, and to discuss the selection and the relevance of these tools in an African context.

Planned output / Deliverables:

- Overview of applied rapid ecosystem services assessment tools in Africa, with their pros and cons
- Input for the development of a decision tree outlining how to select a rapid ecosystem services assessment tool in a particular context
- Stimulate discussion among ES practitioners regarding the scientific and management–relevance of rapid ecosystem services assessment tools

Voluntary contributions accepted:

Yes, I allow voluntary contributions to be submitted to my session for review