Mobilizing Africa’s policy-relevant biodiversity data

Information & data management to underpin natural capital assessments & ecosystem resilience

Midrand, 27 May 2014

Russell Galt
Biodiversity data can help to address Africa’s policy conundrums

PUBLIC HEALTH
- Pathogens & disease vectors
- Aquatic bio-indicators
- Urban vegetation
- Marine phytoplankton

FOOD SECURITY
- Bush meat
- Pollinators
- Wild land races
- Fisheries
- Pests & diseases

ENERGY
- Endangered species and habitats to inform planning
- Birds and bats at risk of collision
- Biofuel crops
- Catadromous and anadromous fish
- Traditional fuel e.g. certain tree species

TOURISM
- Large charismatic megafauna
- Aesthetic plants
- Recreational sport fish
- Urban vegetation
- Iconic species & habitats

ECONOMY
- Cash crops
- Fish stocks
- Bioprospecting subjects
- Non-timber forest products
- Pet trade

MEDICINE
- Medicinal plants

ENERGY
- Traditional fuel e.g. certain tree species

Biodiversity data is essential for effective policymaking.
Data-science-policy value chain

- Identify priority group
- Data capture
- Digitize
- Data publishing
- Data use via research
- Knowledge generation
- Policy making

→ Without data, convictions triumph over evidence
How much policy-relevant biodiversity data is currently accessible?

→ Strategic focus should be placed on mobilizing policy-relevant biodiversity data
African policymakers need better data

11/11/09  Africa facing climate data shortage

22/03/10  Poor internet links mar Africa's satellite data access

18/08/10  African policymakers urged to make use of space data

16/05/11  Africa 'must embrace geospatial information'

21/02/13  Scientists strive to make global disease data more useful

25/02/13  African policymakers 'lack environmental data'

12/04/13  Data dearth impeding fight against desertification

21/05/13  African countries must improve livestock data

→ African policymakers need better data
Virtuous vs Vicious

Biodiversity data mobilization

Perceived by donors as **good** value for money

Clear policy-relevance and strategic value?

Virtuous cycle

Vicious cycle

Perceived by donors as **bad** value for money

Outcomes

Strong support

Weak support
Mobilizing Africa’s policy and decision-making relevant biodiversity data

Aims:

- Develop an African strategy for data mobilization
- Enhance regional capacity in biodiversity informatics
- Strengthen regional engagement and collaboration

Donor: JRS Biodiversity Foundation

Timeframe: October 2014 to March 2015 (18 months)

Budget: USD 250,000
Objectives

1. Define policy-relevant biodiversity data;
2. Conduct a gap analysis of priority data;
3. Identify key sources and repositories of data;
4. Enable data sharing (institutional arrangements);
5. Fashion on-line tools tailored to the African context;
6. Share lessons through training and academia.
Achievements to date

- Technical workshops organized;
- Expanded network;
- Webpages created;
- Toolkit for mobilizing policy-relevant biodiversity data underway;
- Initiated setting of national priorities for data mobilization & mapping of institutional landscapes;
- Capacity constraints and training needs identified.
Achievements to date

✓ Technical workshops organized;
✓ Expanded network;
✓ Webpages created;
✓ Toolkit for mobilizing policy-relevant biodiversity data underway;
✓ Initiated setting of national priorities for data mobilization & mapping of institutional landscapes;
✓ Capacity constraints and training needs identified.
Technical workshop & expanded network
Achievements to date

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Website established: http://biodiversityadvisor.sanbi.org/
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Toolkit underway

Toolkit for mobilizing policy and decision-making relevant biodiversity data

Section A: Determining policy-relevant biodiversity data

Section B: Managing & disseminating biodiversity data

Section C: Academic curricular materials
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Setting priorities for data mobilization & mapping institutional landscapes

- Aquatic biodiversity in Guinean Highlands
- Edible insects in Zimbabwe
- GMOs in Malawi
- Poached species in Botswana
- Mountain biodiversity products in Madagascar
- Medicinal plants in Tanzania
- Fisheries data in Mauritania
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 ✓ Constraints

Ownership concerns and weak incentives

Faulty systems & lack of data management skills

Insufficient financial & human resources; unfavorable government budgeting

No compensation for data sharing!

Poor communication & unclear rationale

The data is still in analogue form
I need help with:
- Data management
- Data capture
- Data digitization
- Data quality
- Data publishing
- Data modeling

I require training on:
- Project management
- Communicating BI
- Scientific writing
- Proposal writing

We also need training on:
- Negotiation & diplomacy
- Lobbying for data sharing
- Stakeholder engagement
High impact biodiversity data mobilization model

Areas of Engagement

- Strategic intent
- Value proposition
- Interpersonal skills
- Communication
- Institutional agreement
- Capacity enhancement
- Data Sharing tools
- Data mngt
- Data Quality
- Data standards
- Tech infrastructure
- Available data
Planned activities

- Update toolkit in light of feedback;
- Report on national data priorities and key sources and repositories (institutional landscape);
- Meet with GBIF Science Committee in Benin;
- Fashion online tools for African context;
- Implement a training programme to alleviate identified capacity constraints;
- Create an online hub of useful materials;
- Organize data-science-policy conference in March 2015;
- Fundraise additional enabling resources.
Project Coordinator: Russell Galt (r.galt@sanbi.org.za)

Project website: https://biodiversityadvisor.sanbi.org