



# Feedback Report: Nature Based Solutions Workshop

02 September 2022

## Background

The Ocean Innovation Africa July Stakeholder workshop series was held in honour of African Day of Oceans and Seas. The intention of the workshops was to facilitate action on some of the challenges and solutions raised during discussions at the annual Ocean Innovation Africa summit.

The “Marine & Coastal Nature Based Solutions” workshop focused on how to facilitate the development and adoption of marine and coastal nature based solutions (NbS) on the African continent. This report is a summary of points raised during that discussion and, as such, statements do not necessarily reflect consensus from the workshop participants, nor the viewpoint of Ocean Innovation Africa.

## Participants

- **Chair: Arthur Tuda**, Western Indian Ocean Marine Science Association (WIOMSA)
- **Co-chair: Josphat Mwamba Mtwana**, University of Nairobi
- **Babatunde Adeleke**, WildOceans
- **Marine Lecerf**, Ocean & Climate Platform
- **Melckzedek Osore**, Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute (KMFRI)
- **Jack Stuart**, Ocean Risk and Resilience Action Alliance (ORRAA)
- **Joan Nelima**, University of Nairobi

## Introduction

There is no global consensus on the definition of the term “Nature Based Solutions” (NbS). It is generally considered as the use of nature to address climate challenges – adaptation and mitigation – with resulting benefits to resilience and biodiversity. Further to this it can also be thought of as the use of nature for betterment of human lives and livelihoods, without negative effects on the environment or alteration of ecosystems. NbS works as a multi-purpose solution, building synergy between biodiversity and climate goals, based on science and indigenous knowledge.

## Issues with implementation and scaling

Despite how applicable such solutions are to the African context, there are few marine and coastal NbS projects on the continent that show potential to be replicated and scaled up to address climate and livelihood needs. This is attributable in part to a lack of understanding among coastal communities of the potential of Nature Based Solutions for long-term resilience and economic gains, and also to a lack of proper legal frameworks and incentives to facilitate development of NbS. Once NbS projects start to deliver benefits there is a risk that communities will seek to artificially expand/accelerate operations to increase profits, with detrimental effects on the environment. It is critical that NbS projects are guided by science and indigenous knowledge to ensure that benefits are sustained in the long term for both environment and communities. Access to and adoption of modern technologies and innovations will assist in developing the sector.

Feasibility of scale can be an issue for implementation of NbS projects. For example, Blue Carbon projects based on mangrove forests require vast areas of forest, making them unviable for countries like South Africa with only 1600 ha of mangroves. In addition, while NbS are a critical tool for long-term sustainability, SDG targets require outcomes within a much shorter timespan.

## Opportunities for Action

- Outreach and awareness around NbS opportunities for coastal communities
- Increased support for NbS entrepreneurs, researchers and communities to help surface more initiatives
- Development of adaptable tools to highlight the process of implementation step by step
- Development of a platform/database to document existing NbS in Africa - challenges, development systems to gather practical information on implementation

## Raising Awareness

Creating awareness of opportunities associated with NbS among communities is critical to successful development of the sector. Successful pilot projects can initiate a domino effect resulting in more widespread adoption of community-led NbS business models. Women, youth and marginalised groups in particular stand to benefit from outreach. Youth can carry the message home to their families, and in some instances youth groups are very active in resource management.

## Opportunities for Action

- Introduction of relevant information in school curriculums as means of disseminating to communities
- Adopt a “whole of society” approach, where local efforts inform policy and funding
- Informative capacity building and training, inclusive of youth and women

## Raising Awareness (cont.)

Translating the complexities of NbS science and policy is a large part of the work needed to raise community awareness. There is a disconnect between science, communities and policy makers. In part this is an issue with language – articulating science and policy in understandable terms – but also with incorporating indigenous knowledge systems in science and policy. Including community voices in policy planning will support successful implementation, as buy-in is far more likely if the community feels ownership over the policy and framework.

Scientists are often expected to transfer the knowledge generated through research to effect community benefits, but don't know how to communicate their knowledge at community level. Raising awareness extends to policy makers as well. At the moment there is little appreciation for blue carbon opportunities both at local and at national level in many areas.

Coastal cities also stand to benefit enormously from NbS, which are often less costly and more effective than hard engineering solutions, but municipalities tend to stick to the latter due to lack of awareness, lack of capacity and expertise within country to build a business case for NbS, and no set funding pathways for NbS solutions. The long-term vision needed for implementation of NbS can also be challenged by the frequent change of leadership in government departments.

### Opportunities for action

- Creation of community of practice to move beyond discussion to action
- Translation of indigenous knowledge for policy-makers – often occurs on a voluntary basis by stakeholders such as Dr Osore
- There needs to be a bridging role to fill this gap between scientists and communities, like agricultural extension officers.
- Blue Carbon ecosystems need to be integrated into Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) policies.
- Private companies could offer NbS solutions as products to governments

## Policy Frameworks

While global policies around development of NbS provide impressive scope for action, the action itself is not as forthcoming. Policies written at global level are often not practical to implement on the ground. Communities do not just need transfer of information from top-down but also the capacity and opportunity to express their perspective in global fora. Adaptive, tailored responses are needed, with community consultation at every level to insure, inclusive, equitable, legitimate policies.

This is true at national level as well. Often NbS is touted at policy planning level, but not included in or supported by associated legislation. When the mandate is shared between different ministries with limited communication between them, prerequisites for project approval for one ministry/department are often different from others, creating bureaucratic hurdles to get projects off the ground.

## Policy Frameworks (cont.)

Government departments are often overstretched, overwhelmed and under-capacitated to manage implementation of policy frameworks, but generally happy to accept help in doing so. NGOs can play a strong role in this by taking on neutral party/translator roles, often seen by both government and communities as being a credible and reliable source of guidance.

### Opportunities for action

- Identification and legitimate circumvention of bottlenecks to policy implementation

## Funding Obstacles

NbS projects have high start-up costs and need long-term financing and follow up to ensure that they do actually deliver benefits. Long-term support for innovative NbS projects will also demonstrate feasibility to communities and assist in reducing scepticism generated by previous failures.

There is a massive mismatch between the kinds of projects investors are looking for and what is available on the ground. Larger foreign investors are looking to invest \$20-100 million to meet ESG and policy requirements, and can't adjust their budgets to meet Africa's microfinancing needs.

### Opportunities for action

- Aggregation of community initiatives to access larger-scale funding is a potential solution (but carries with it the risk that community voices are lost) -> requires transparent guidelines and definitions to reduce complexity and decrease chances of excluding communities.
- Long-term funding and mentoring for NbS projects
- Community-sourced funding
- Continue to lobby international community to support action on the ground

Thank you to our fantastic workshop participants for getting this discussion going, we look forward to seeing you at the continuation!

