Strathmore University
Center for Biodiversity Information
Development (BID-C)

GBIF | Global Biodiversity Information Facility

Capacity development for mobilization and use of Biodiversity Information Development (BID) data on endangered bird species in Kenya |BID-AF2020-014-NAC

Policy-relevant biodiversity data

Ref: http://biodiversityadvisor.sanbi.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Toolkit_29Jan2016.pdf

a. Biodiversity data mobilization

Biodiversity data mobilization is the process by which information about biodiversity is captured, digitized, and published to become globally discoverable, freely accessible, and easily consumable.
Consumable: policy applications for conservation decision-making, science paper publishing, routine conservation management process.

Box 1.
Targets for mobilizing policy-relevant data.
    i.   Free and open access to biodiversity data
    ii.   Mobilizing data with policy or decision-making relevance
    iii.   More strategic and purpose-driven manner, geared towards informing important policy decisions (either directly or via further analyses).
    iv.   Addressing knowledge gaps and informing policy formulation

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b. Policy relevant data

Q 1. Why Policy-relevant data? (**Discussion 1-bridging the gap between science and policy**)
Policy: *A course of action proposed by the government to solve real-world problems)*

Background: Building the relationship between policymakers and scientists.
Policymakers work in very different environments. The careers of policymakers are dependent on advancing policies and programmes that reflect the broader manifesto of the government.
The criticism between policymakers and scientists: Scientists are accused of being out of touch, irrelevant and impractical; whereas policymakers are accused of "ignoring, under-utilizing or misinterpreting research findings when formulating or implementing policy."

Q 2. What are the real biodiversity problems in Kenya that need policy-relevant data?
Q 3. What should characterize our research/ biodiversity data to enhance the relationship?
Q 4. What are the key conservation issues in the conservation of birds in Kenya?

Box 2.
Why policy-relevant biodiversity data?
Biodiversity data records have been mobilized in recent years, the nature of these efforts has been predominantly opportunistic, focusing on low-hanging fruits that can be readily published, rather than data of strategic importance to research, policy, and decision-making.

Ensuring policy-relevance and strategic value of data mobilization activities will increase the potential for attracting financial and human resources to support further data mobilization activities.
Biodiversity data is essential for evidence-based policy and decision-making.

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c. Modeling the collaboration of key primary users of biodiversity data

Biodiversity scientists and researchers at all levels, conservation managers, policymakers.
Policymakers influence the allocation of political, institutional, and financial support to biodiversity conservation, hence need to identify priority areas.
The model enhances the interplay of data, science, and policy.
Policy-relevant data- "the degree of applicability and practicality of science data for decision-makers and recommendations to policymaking processes, taking into consideration national, regional and global priorities.

d. Policy-relevant biodiversity data (Making biodiversity data relevant to policy-Discussion 2)

Address data gaps and needs (e.g., indications of species, habitats, ecosystems, and geographical areas that are of special national concern)-data aligned to Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), Red List reports, conservation management plans. The special concern might include threatened, endangered, or endemic species; harvested species.
Address data needs-Biodiversity and ecosystem services that underpin human well-being and are therefore of relevance to all policy areas.

Policies may have significant intended and unintended consequences for biodiversity: increasing agricultural production may result in elevated levels of agrochemical pollution and the conversion of natural habitat into farmland; expanding road infrastructure may fragment habitats. biodiversity is connected to a broad spectrum of policy areas, directly and indirectly. Biodiversity data plays an important role in helping us to identify and understand these connections to support informed evidence-based policymaking and implementation.

Examining national policy goals and understanding their connection with the environment, one can 'work backward' to identify the type of biodiversity data that is most relevant to the concerned goal(s). If changes in the diversity, distribution, and abundance of the biodiversity concerned would have significant implications for the policy area or vice versa, then data on that biodiversity is 'policy-relevant.

National Development Plans (or equivalent), sector-specific development strategies, and political manifestos. Additionally, it may be useful to examine a country's regional and international commitments for important clues on policy-relevant biodiversity data.

e. How can scientists engage policymakers? (Discussion 3)

The task of improving engagement between policymakers and scientists has received much attention.

Box 3.
Engage and consult policy stakeholders to determine and verify policy-relevance.

Scientists, who engage with policymakers, may gain insights into the priorities of government, constraints on policymaking, and forthcoming policies, and thereby be able to anticipate and verify research requirements and data needs.

Collaborative relationships. Make presentations, communicating science to policy makers, stakeholder engagement (talk to people who are going to be affected by, or care about, the problems they are addressing. Engage diverse stakeholders in the scientific process and data collection.

Exercise 1: A framework for collecting policy-relevant biodiversity data.

Work in 3s (I early career, I graduate student, 1 conservancy manager) to develop a framework to collecting policy-relevant biodiversity data that will inform bird conservation in Kenya.

Ref features

Box 4.

Problem co-definition: Most scientific questions are asked by scientists themselves. However, if one wants to deliver useful, policy-relevant science, one ought to ask potential stakeholder constituencies and policymakers what science(problem) might be useful to them- (in this case conservancy managers)

Specific: Policymakers and other stakeholders want specific information that is useful to them whereas most scientists are trained to generalize. Place-based, organism-based, and time-specific research that pragmatically addresses issues on the ground will likely be more policy-relevant.

Trans-disciplinary: It is important to understand the psychology of what motivates people to change, their reward systems and incentives, the economics and policy framework, human dynamics, technology change.

Post research engagement: Policy-relevant science requires stakeholder engagement before, during and after the research is conducted. It takes time for research to be interpreted into policy.

Personal relationships: Successful stakeholder engagement depends on personal relationships build up over time and through informal and formal contacts. How do you plan to involve community that claim ownership of the conservation area?

Actively disseminate information: be proactive in promoting their research findings, which may entail phoning policymakers, setting up meetings and working groups, and arranging field days and tours. Lay the proper plan for dissemination.

Communicate effectively: clear and concise, to present options, to relate any recommendations to policies.

Science-policy conferences: Providing scientists and policymakers an opportunity to come together in an authoritative venue may allow for constructive debates on policy issues and the joint identification of research and data needs.

Exercise 2: Developing a policy brief and identifying where to publish.

(Your policy brief is based on your research work on birds in Kenya working with the project supervisors and the conservancy manager).

A policy brief is a concise summary of information that helps policymakers and stakeholders understand the research problem, suggest possible policy options, or go even further and argue for courses of action to influence decision-making regarding the problem.

(Your scientific paper in the peer review journal is for the scientific community, your policy brief is for the policymakers).

What to consider: **The problem**; an effective policy brief must propose a solution to a well-defined problem to be addressed at the policy level. **The audience**-whom are you targeting with the brief (mostly policymakers or stakeholders with a direct stake in the issue that you are discussing. **Language and terminology**: simple, direct, non-specialized language, any specialized term used must be explained. **Purpose:** focus on communicating the practical implications of research to a specific audience to help policymakers or stakeholders decide what they should do.

Box 5.
Sample structure of a policy brief:
Title: brief and memorable way.
Executive Summary: one to two paragraphs about the problem and the proposed policy action.
The Scope of Problem: the importance of the problem and justification for the policy action.
Policy Alternatives: highlight the current policy approach and accurately explain the proposed options.
Policy Recommendations: detailed explanation of the concrete steps to be taken to address the policy issue.
Appendices: any further supporting materials.
Reference list: consulted sources.