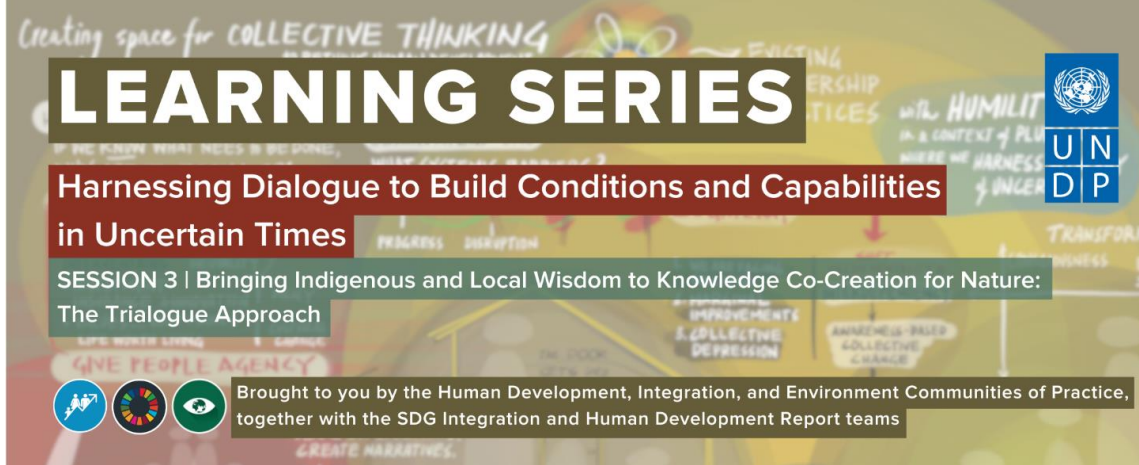




Bringing Indigenous and Local Wisdom to Knowledge Co-Creation for Nature: The Trialogue Approach (30 January 2024) *Event Learning Brief*

This learning webinar was an opportunity to delve into the intricate elements of the trialogue approach, its application in fostering multi-stakeholder engagement, navigating power dynamics, and integrating various knowledge systems. More information about the learning webinar is available [here](#).

SUMMARY

- **Bringing diverse perspectives for decision-making on nature:** Trialogues facilitated by the [Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Network \(BES-Net\)](#) are effective in fostering a rich tapestry of understanding by merging scientific research with practitioners' knowledge. This approach not only enriches the dialogue but also ensures that solutions are well-rounded, culturally sensitive, and more sustainable.
- **Learning from Indigenous wisdom on nature:** The [Multiple Evidence Based \(MEB\)](#) approach, as implemented successfully by the [Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services \(IPBES\)](#), underscores the vital importance of working with Indigenous and Local Knowledge (ILK) holders on conservation and sustainable management of biodiversity, further contributing to enhance the dialogue's inclusivity and richness.
- **Enhancing stakeholder engagement:** Participants learned about innovative strategies to dismantle the 'working in silos' approach. Trialogues serve as a catalyst for bringing together diverse viewpoints, facilitating a consensus-building process among different stakeholders that is both more meaningful and productive. The emphasis was on creating a dialogue environment where diverse opinions and experiences contribute to a unified, actionable way forward for biodiversity conservation and ecosystem management.
- **In Malawi,** the [National Trialogue](#) served as a beacon for integrating ILK into the national ecosystem assessment, showcasing the effectiveness of inclusive dialogue and comprehensive fieldwork in fostering community engagement and the co-creation of solutions.
- **In Colombia,** the experience with [Sub-national Trialogues](#) in the Nariño and Amazonía regions illustrated the dialogue's power to forge consensus and inform policy. By emphasizing the creation of safe spaces for discussion, the Trialogues exemplified how empathy and personal narratives can significantly enhance stakeholder engagement and policy development.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

A brief overview of the [learning series](#) was provided by **Sophia Robele**, SDG Integration team, Bureau for Policy and Programme Support, UNDP. An overview of BES-Net and Trialogues was provided by **Yuko Kurauchi**, BES-Net Coordinator, Programme Specialist, UNDP. This was followed by a dialogue session and interactive feedback exchange facilitated by **Pippa Heylings**, Founder and CEO, Talking Transformation featuring the following keynote speakers:



Closing remarks were provided by **Terence Hay-Edie**, Programme Manager, Local Action, Indigenous Peoples and Nature, UNDP.

KEY LEARNINGS AND TAKEAWAYS

The [Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Network \(BES-Net\)](#) facilitates [Dialogues](#) to bring together policy, practice, and science communities for regional and national dialogues on biodiversity conservation and sustainable ecosystem management. The Dialogues are inspired by [Theory U](#) principles, which support collaborative creation processes. Central to their methodology is the Multiple Evidence Base (MEB) approach, which emphasizes the importance of working collaboratively with holders of Indigenous and Local Knowledge (ILK).

Borne from a recognition that different sources of knowledge are equally important to understanding biodiversity and ecosystem services, the [Multiple Evidence Based \(MEB\) approach](#) offers a **systematic way to connect scientific, technical, Indigenous, and other local knowledge sources**. Demonstrating its efficacy within the [Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services \(IPBES\)](#) assessments, MEB isn't about merging or validating different kinds of knowledge against each other. Instead, it focuses on connecting dots across different ways of knowing that are equally valid.

Key features of the Dialogue include:

- Proactive engagement of all stakeholders from the start: from **co-creating the space to address the challenge** to **co-designing the process** itself.
- Adaptability of the Dialogue process: No **single Dialogue process is designed in a fixed way** – it instead draws from a menu of tools that can be adapted to the context.
- Emphasis on connecting diverse knowledge systems, recognizing the validity of each without attempting to integrate or validate one against the other.
- **Investment in preparatory work is crucial**, including circulating background documents in advance, obtaining consent, and facilitating early participant interactions to ensure a common understanding and readiness for the dialogue.
- **Encouragement of the use of various senses and experiential knowledge**, for instance, incorporating taste or smell in discussions about pollinators by bringing tangible items into the conversation.
- Integration of **High-Level Government and/or Dialogue** to incentivize participation of leaders, aligning Dialogue activities with their strategic interests and facilitating direct engagement with researchers, scientists, and community representatives.
- **Co-creation of Action Plan/Common Agenda** as a culminating activity, encouraging final co-creation of actionable plans or brainstorming prototype innovations, ensuring that the Dialogue's outcomes are tangible and directly applicable to stakeholders' contexts.

In **Malawi**, the [National Dialogue](#) took place in 2023. It was the culmination of a comprehensive preparatory process of work with ILK holders in the collection of knowledge and data to include in the national ecosystem assessment aiming to inform decisions on nature. Aspects of the process included: Conducting field visits to all districts; holding framing workshops **facilitated by representatives of local communities**;

securing Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) from ILK holders at the start; using Trialogues to **bring together typically siloed discussions** among scientists, policymakers, and communities on biodiversity trends.

In **Colombia**, subnational Trialogues were held in [Nariño](#) and [Amazonía](#) regions. While the national ecosystem assessment had been conducted for several years with good insights, the calls for action had been hard to implement. A moment of political juncture provided an opportunity to convene academia, civil society organizations and institutions in new ways to build consensus on priorities for the coming years. Key lessons included:

- **Creating a safe space** for all participants was key – this was not only about good facilitation but also about the preparatory work before the dialogues (well-tailored invitations, identification of leaders, understanding of potential needs and barriers to participation, etc.)
- Useful to incorporate methods to **make the dialogue feel personal**, including inviting people to share their life stories and reasons for being there.
- Good to **reach out to local universities and experts** as opposed to relying on national institutes to frame the discussions.
- To **combat distrust that all voices would be heard**, the facilitators worked to connect people to their own candidates, as well as convey that the discussions would directly inform proposals for upcoming development plans.

Strengthening recognition of the value of different knowledge is a long-term process, which includes overcoming the **challenge of including ILK into assessment frameworks originally built on scientific knowledge**.

- With the early 2000s push to bring more cultural and spiritual values into biodiversity efforts and the birth of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) in 2012, among other conventions drawing attention to traditional knowledge, emerged more institutional processes aimed at braiding Indigenous and local wisdom with other data sources on nature.
- A key question for us now: **How can we, as UN/DP, harness these different initiatives in ways that reduce the burden on Indigenous peoples and local knowledge holders to deal with multiple siloed structures and processes of the UN?**

KEY RESOURCES

Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Network (BES-Net) and Trialogues:

- [General webpage on the BES-Net Trialogues](#)
- [Video on Trialogues](#), also in [French](#) and [Spanish](#)
- [Guidance Document on Trialogues in National Ecosystem Assessments](#)

SwedBio:

- [Multiple Evidence Base approach \(MEB\)](#)
- Special focus on “Apply”: [Practical Guide on working with Indigenous and Local Knowledge \(ILK\)](#)
- [Guiding principles for knowledge collaborations](#)

Malawi:

- Dedicated page on the [BES-Net website](#) with a focus on the National Trialogue, which was held in 2023 and played a role in engaging the Indigenous Peoples and local communities of Malawi in the co-creation of knowledge at the early stages of the assessment work.
- [Malawi National Trialogue](#) page
- [Story about the Malawi Trialogue](#), which includes Lilian's audio recording and some feedback from the team
- [Five Insights from Malawi's National Trialogue for the National Ecosystem Assessment](#)

- [Weaving Indigenous and Local Knowledge in the Scoping Process of the National Ecosystem Assessment of Malawi](#)

Colombia:

- Dedicated page on the [BES-Net website](#)
- Trialogues in [Nariño](#) and [Amazonía](#)
- [Video link](#) on YouTube of the Trialogues

Other useful links shared during the webinar:

- [Cultural and Spiritual Values of Biodiversity](#) by Darrell Posey
- [Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants](#) by Robin Wall Kimmerer
- [International Society of Ethnobiology \(ISE\) Code of Ethics](#)

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- Reach out to yuko.kurauchi@undp.org and alexandra.postrigan@undp.org



For further information on this event, please contact the [Integration](#), [Human Development](#) and [Environment](#) CoP Managers [Nadine Ravaud](#), [Mariam Soomro](#) and [Martin Cadena](#).

This session was curated by the Human Development, Environment and Integration Communities of Practice (CoP) and the SDG Integration and Human Development Report teams.