

Final Project Narrative Report

Reporting Period: From *March 2025* to *November 2025*

| | |
|---|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;">Project Title & Number</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project Title: National Outlook on Indigenous and Local Knowledge of Biodiversity MPTF Office Project ID: 00141080 | <p style="text-align: center;">Country, Locality(s), Priority Area(s) / Strategic Results</p> <p><i>Country/Region:</i> Africa (Malawi and Namibia) and SIDS (Trinidad and Tobago)</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Participating Organization(s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) | <p><i>Priority area/ strategic results:</i> Strengthened the evidence base on Indigenous and local knowledge and enhanced national capacities for inclusive, multi-evidence policy formulation and decision-making</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Programme/Project Cost (US\$)</p> <p>Total approved budget as per project document: US\$ 300,000 MPTF /JP Contribution: N/A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> by Agency (if applicable) Agency Contribution: N/A by Agency (if applicable) <p>Government Contribution (if applicable)</p> <p>Other Contributions (donors) (if applicable)</p> <p>TOTAL: USD 300,000</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Implementing Partners</p> <p>Malawi:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources Environmental Affairs Department, Ministry of Natural Resources <p>Namibia:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Namibia Nature Foundation Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism <p>Trinidad and Tobago</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caribbean Natural Resources Institute Ministry of Planning, Economic Affairs and Development |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Project Assessment/Review/Mid-Term Eval.</p> <p>Evaluation Completed <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Date: <i>dd.mm.yyyy</i> Evaluation Report - Attached <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Date: <i>dd.mm.yyyy</i></p> | <p style="text-align: center;">Project Duration</p> <p>Overall Duration (8 months) Start Date (18. March .2025)</p> <p>Original End Date (15. November. 2025) Actual End date (19. November. 2025)</p> <p>Have agency(ies) operationally closed the Programme in its(their) system? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Expected Financial Closure date: 31.12.2025</p> |
| | <p style="text-align: center;">Report Submitted By</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name: Joseph Karanja Title: Project Officer Participating Organization (Lead): UNESCO Email address: j.karanja@unesco.org |

FINAL PROJECT REPORT FORMAT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Outlook on Indigenous and Local Knowledge of Biodiversity project, implemented across Malawi, Namibia, and Trinidad and Tobago provided an innovative approach to enhancing the integration of community knowledge into environmental policies and strengthening its links to effective custodianship. The results demonstrated the catalytic value of systematically assessing the state and documenting Indigenous and local knowledge (ILK) and mainstreaming it into national biodiversity governance. The project delivered a shift in thinking and engagement of Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs) that strengthened the enabling environment for ILK mainstreaming and enhanced national readiness for implementing the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), particularly Targets 21 and 22.

Through the production of three National ILK Outlook reports—the first of their kind in each country—the project established a robust evidence base on the state of ILK, its contributions to biodiversity stewardship, and the gaps and opportunities that persist. Developed through community-led processes aligned with Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) and involving 274 IPLCs, these reports now serve as foundational references for policy development, National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) revisions and implementation, and future biodiversity assessments.

Complementing this work, multi-stakeholder policy dialogues examined gaps in the recognition and inclusion of ILK within national policy frameworks. These dialogues generated actionable recommendations to strengthen ILK consideration in biodiversity strategies, legislation, and reporting processes, while supporting more equitable engagement with IPLC knowledge holders in national decision-making.

The project also built strong capacities for knowledge co-production and policy engagement through multistakeholder workshops involving 135 policymakers, scientists, civil society representatives, and IPLCs. These workshops strengthened understanding of ILK principles, biocultural rights, Indigenous data sovereignty, FPIC, and multiple evidence approaches—helping shift institutional mindsets and equipping national actors to meaningfully engage IPLCs in biodiversity decision-making.

As the catalytic phase concluded, momentum emerged—especially in Malawi and Namibia—to explore the establishment of national ILK frameworks or advisory bodies, which would institutionalize ILK mainstreaming across government sectors. UNESCO, through its Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS) Programme, will continue supporting governments by providing technical assistance, capacity strengthening, regional knowledge exchange, and ongoing dissemination through the ILK Outlook online portal. These measures ensure that the catalytic achievements of the project will continue to drive systemic, long-term integration of ILK in national and global biodiversity governance.

Acronyms

| | |
|---------|--|
| BES-Net | Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Network |
| CBD | Convention on Biological Diversity |
| FPIC | Free, Prior and Informed Consent |
| ILK | Indigenous and Local Knowledge |
| IPLCs | Indigenous Peoples and local communities |
| KMGBF | Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework |
| NBSAPs | National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans |
| LINKS | Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems |
| SB8j | Subsidiary Body on Article 8(j) |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation |

I. Purpose

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) calls for transformative and evidence-based approaches to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030. Central to this transformation is the recognition and effective inclusion of Indigenous and local knowledge (ILK) into biodiversity planning and implementation, as envisioned in the KMGBF Targets 21 and 22. Yet, despite growing global consensus on the importance of ILK, many countries continue to face challenges in systematically documenting, mainstreaming, and operationalizing ILK within their biodiversity policies, including their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs). In response to these gaps, and with support from the Kunming Biodiversity Fund, UNESCO launched a flagship initiative in 2025 titled “National Outlook on Indigenous and Local Knowledge of Biodiversity” (hereafter [National ILK Outlook](#)). Piloted in Malawi, Namibia, and Trinidad and Tobago, the initiative aims to enhance policymakers’ capacities and strengthen the mainstreaming of ILK into national biodiversity policy instruments, particularly NBSAPs.

The **specific objectives** of the National ILK Outlook projects were:

- a. Examine the state of ILK of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the three selected countries and highlight ILK documentation gaps.
- b. Evaluate to what extent ILK is incorporated in the revised NBSAPs and national targets in line with KMGBF.
- c. Evaluate the degree of inclusion of ILK in biodiversity policies.
- d. Based on identified capacity gaps, organize tailored capacity building workshops and ILK knowledge exchange forums between Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IPLCs) and national policymakers, to strengthen mainstreaming of ILK into NBSAPs implementation and national reporting.

Building on these overarching objectives, the project focused on generating tangible, country-level results that strengthen the recognition, inclusion, and use of ILK within national biodiversity frameworks. To achieve this, one thematic outcome and two specific sub-outcomes were pursued, each designed to address a critical dimension of ILK mainstreaming - both the technical processes required to document and mainstream ILK, and the institutional capacities necessary for policymakers to engage effectively with IPLCs. These outcomes are outlined below.

Thematic Outcome 2: Biodiversity effectively mainstreamed into policies, regulations, planning and strategies.

- a. **Project Outcome 1.1:** Enhanced ILK documentation, integration and mainstreaming in national biodiversity strategies and policies across three selected countries.
- b. **Project Outcome 2.1:** Strengthened ILK awareness and policymakers’ capacity for the engagement of IPLCs in biodiversity decision making and policies formulation.

II. Assessment of Programme Results

i) Narrative reporting on results:

Thematic Outcome 2: Biodiversity Effectively Mainstreamed into Policies, Regulations, Planning and Strategies.

Across the three pilot countries (Malawi, Namibia and Trinidad and Tobago), the National ILK Outlook contributed to creating a stronger enabling environment for biodiversity mainstreaming within national policy and planning frameworks. The combination of systematic ILK documentation and multi-stakeholder policy dialogues generated new, credible evidence and deepened institutional understanding of ILK’s role in biodiversity governance. This will help governments integrate biocultural diversity considerations more

coherently across environmental policies, land use planning processes, and national development strategies, promoting a more holistic and inclusive approach to policy formulation.

Importantly, the momentum generated through the National ILK Outlook process has sparked growing interest in both Malawi and Namibia to explore the establishment of a national ILK framework or dedicated ILK body. Such institutional structures would represent a major step forward in formalizing ILK mainstreaming across sectoral policies and ministries, including environment, agriculture, forestry, education, and cultural heritage. These potential frameworks could help safeguard IPLC rights and uphold community protocols, support long-term ILK transmission, documentation and preservation, and institutionalize continuous ILK capacity building within government systems.

Beyond national policy impact, the emergence of ILK frameworks or advisory bodies would also strengthen countries' ability to engage meaningfully in international biodiversity processes such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), and other multilateral environmental forums. Over time, this is expected to enhance national negotiation positions, foster more equitable representation of IPLC knowledge and priorities, and increase the visibility of ILK contributions at the global level—ultimately reinforcing biodiversity mainstreaming across all levels of governance.

Outcome 1.1: Enhanced ILK Documentation, Integration and Mainstreaming in National Biodiversity Strategies and Policies Across Three Selected Countries.

Across the three participating countries, the project successfully deepened the national evidence base on ILK and proposed critical pathways for systematic ILK mainstreaming into biodiversity planning and policy frameworks for evidence-based decision making.

This Outcome had two outputs:

A. Output 1.1: Comprehensive Assessment Report on ILK Outlook

Under this outcome, the project successfully produced three National ILK Outlook reports ([Malawi](#), [Namibia](#), and [Trinidad and Tobago](#)), all peer-reviewed and published. These reports represent the first systematic national assessments of the state of ILK related to biodiversity and ecosystem services in each pilot country. These reports establish a critical evidence base that can now inform policy formulation, guide future research, and support ILK inclusive implementation of national biodiversity strategies.



Cover pages of the National ILK Outlook reports

As further elaborated in Output 1.2, each published National ILK Outlook includes a dedicated policy analysis chapter, assessing the extent to which ILK is mainstreamed in biodiversity policies and NBSAPs. This policy lens has generated concrete evidence to inform policy reform, strengthen ILK mainstreaming, and support implementation of the KMGBF.

Participatory and ethical ILK documentation

The assessment and documentation processes were guided by the principles of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) to ensure the effective and meaningful participation of IPLCs. To promote co-production of knowledge, the project purposefully elevated the role of IPLCs as knowledge holders throughout the project phase process.

Across Malawi, Namibia, and Trinidad and Tobago, a total of 274 IPLC members participated in research activities, dialogues, and policy review processes. This inclusive approach ensured that community knowledge, perspectives, and worldviews were accurately reflected in the National ILK Outlook reports and the resulting policy recommendations. The process also strengthened trust and collaboration among communities, government institutions, and research partners.



(a) ILK data gathering in the North-East Tobago Biosphere Reserve (b) Community dialogue in Nkhata Bay District, Malawi

Key findings from National ILK Outlook reports

The National ILK Outlook revealed that IPLCs are central to biodiversity stewardship. For instance, in Malawi, traditional practices such as grove protection, seasonal fishing closures, traditional soil management, and the application of community-by laws play a crucial role in conserving local biodiversity.

Across the three Outlooks, several cross-cutting themes emerged: First, although ILK documentation has increased over the last two decades, it remains unevenly documented across domains. Strong documentation exists in ethnobotanical knowledge, particularly use of medicinal plants, in Namibia and Trinidad and Tobago. In terms of ecosystems, there has been a strong focus on terrestrial ecosystems with less documentation in agroecosystems, marine, wetlands and climate-related knowledge across the three countries.

Secondly, National ILK Outlook reports reveal that ILK is increasingly under threat due to several converging factors, including limited ILK documentation, weakening intergenerational knowledge transfer, the absence of ILK in the formal school curricula, and growing socio-economic and environmental pressures. Together, these challenges contribute to the gradual erosion of ILK systems, underscoring the urgent need for strengthened measures and more consistent ILK mainstreaming into formal and informal education structures.



Furthermore, even where ILK documentation is strong, methodological challenge remain – particularly the tendency of scientific frameworks to attempt to validate ILK systems, rather than recognizing ILK as a standalone, context-specific and valid knowledge system. This reinforces the need for methodological approaches that respect ILK epistemologies and avoid imposing external validation criteria. To address this challenge, capacity building initiatives in Output 2.1 addressed this systematic methodological issue.

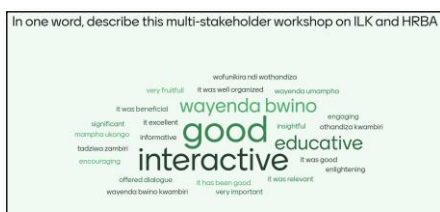
B. Output 1.2: Evaluation Report on Policy Options of ILK Inclusion in NBSAPs and Biodiversity Policies

As part of the National ILK Outlook process, each country report included a dedicated policy chapter that systematically assessed the extent to which ILK is integrated into existing environmental and biodiversity policies, including NBSAPs. This analysis provided an evidence base for understanding current levels of ILK inclusion and identifying where strengthening is needed to support more inclusive biodiversity governance. The policy chapters served not only as diagnostic tools but also as strategic guidance for governments seeking to enhance ILK mainstreaming within policy and planning frameworks.

The broader review of national legislation and policy frameworks revealed that, although ILK is increasingly referenced in environmental policies, its operationalization remains limited. In many cases, ILK is acknowledged symbolically, without the mechanisms, resources, or institutional arrangements needed to translate these references into practice. The policy dialogue process helped validate these findings and created space for policymakers and ILK holders to jointly explore solutions and pathways for more meaningful implementation.



In addition to the policy analysis, the project carried out a multi-stakeholder ILK policy dialogue in each country. These dialogues brought together policymakers, scientists, IPLCs, civil society representatives, and national biodiversity authorities (Malawi 45, Namibia 36, and 54 in Trinidad and Tobago) to jointly examine existing policy gaps, opportunities, and concrete entry points for strengthened ILK mainstreaming into environmental related policies. Through these dialogues, stakeholders were able to discuss the barriers to ILK uptake, identify strategic areas for reform, and build a shared understanding of how ILK can more effectively contribute to national biodiversity goals. This process proved instrumental in bridging communication between government institutions and IPLCs, ensuring that policy analysis was both inclusive and grounded in lived realities. Through evaluation surveys ([Malawi](#), [Namibia](#) and [Trinidad and Tobago](#)), participants described the multi-stakeholder dialogue workshops as informative, interactive, engaging, good, educative, and enlightening.



Malawi Workshop (Oct, 2025)



Namibia Workshop (Nov, 2025)



Trinidad and Tobago Workshop (Oct, 2025)

Throughout the project, close coordination with the NBSAP revision teams in Malawi, Namibia, and Trinidad and Tobago enabled the consideration and inclusion of ILK in the revision of NBSAP III – thereby strengthening ILK-related targets and indicators in the revised NBSAPs. This collaborative approach not only improved the quality of the policy analysis but also ensured that the resulting recommendations were directly aligned with national priorities and implementation processes.

The National ILK Outlook also contributed to the implementation of the KMGBF, particularly Targets 21 and 22. By advancing a multiple evidence approach that brings ILK and scientific knowledge together, the National ILK Outlook strengthened national capacity to design, monitor, and report on ILK inclusive biodiversity actions. The increased involvement of IPLCs in science-policy processes, facilitated through field engagement and multistakeholder dialogues, ensured that community knowledge and priorities are now

more effectively reflected in national biodiversity planning and reporting. This marks an important step toward more equitable and effective biodiversity governance and reinforces the central role of ILK in achieving global biodiversity commitments.

Outcome 2.2: Strengthened ILK Awareness and Policymakers Capacity for the Engagement of IPLCs in Biodiversity Decision Making and Policies Formulation.

The National ILK Outlook significantly strengthened institutional understanding and enhanced the technical capacity of national stakeholders to engage IPLCs in biodiversity governance. Through targeted capacity building interventions and multistakeholder dialogues, the project helped policymakers, scientists, and civil society actors to develop a deeper appreciation of the value of ILK and acquire the skills necessary to effectively work with and meaningfully engage IPLCs.

This outcome was achieved through one primary output.

C. Output 2.1: ILK Capacity Building Workshops and Knowledge Exchange Forum

Capacity building

The capacity building interventions under Output 2.1 were intentionally designed to promote knowledge co-production between policymakers, scientists, and ILK holders. Rather than following a traditional training model, the workshops created shared learning spaces where participants could jointly explore how ILK and scientific knowledge complement each other in biodiversity governance.

Across Malawi, Namibia, and Trinidad and Tobago, the project convened multi-stakeholder workshops that brought together a combined total of 135 participants, including government officials, researchers, civil society representatives, and ILK custodians. Through participatory dialogue, case studies, and field-based experiential learning, participants examined real examples of ILK contributions to biodiversity stewardship and reflected on how this knowledge can be meaningfully integrated into environmental policies and planning.

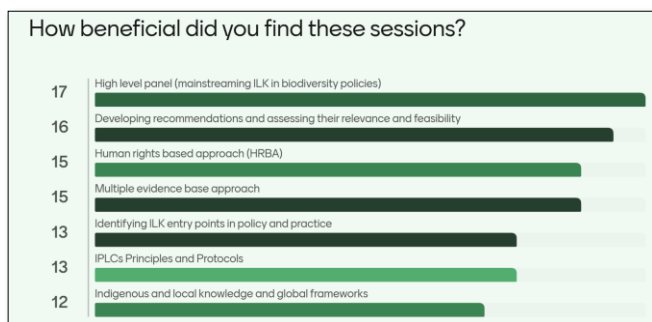


Namibia ILK Dialogue Workshop in Windhoek (Nov, 2025) Trinidad and Tobago ILK Dialogue Workshop in Tobago (Oct, 2025)

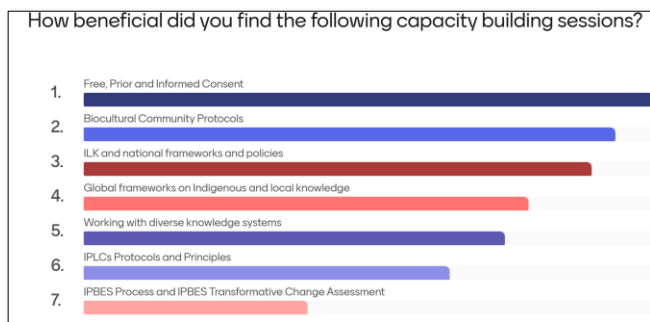
Central to the knowledge co-production were training sessions on IPLCs engagement principles and protocols, biocultural rights, Indigenous data sovereignty, FPIC, and the multiple evidence approach. These discussions enabled policymakers and scientists to understand not only what ILK is, but how it should be respectfully accessed, interpreted, validated, and used. ILK holders played an active role as co-facilitators and knowledge contributors—reinforcing the recognition of ILK as a legitimate and equally valuable knowledge system.

This co-production dynamic helped shift mindsets among policymakers and technical actors, building confidence in their ability to work collaboratively with IPLCs and paving the way for stronger ILK mainstreaming in NBSAP revisions and biodiversity decision-making processes.

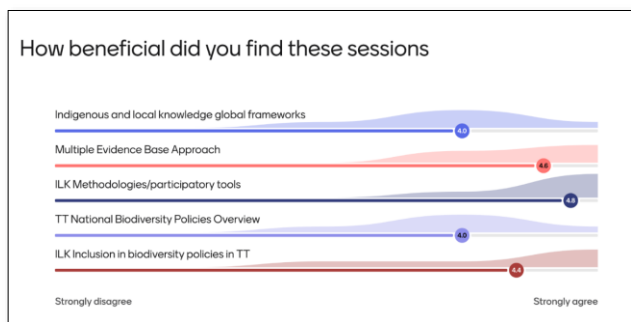
Based on evaluation surveys conducted in [Malawi](#), [Namibia](#) and [Trinidad and Tobago](#), participants across all countries reported strong benefits from the training sessions delivered. The surveys focused specifically on the usefulness of the sessions. Participants in Malawi highlighted high value of the sessions on *strategies for mainstreaming ILK into national policies* and *assessing their relevance and feasibility* within local governance systems. In Namibia, participants particularly appreciated the modules on *IPLC principles and protocols*, noting their importance for strengthening respectful engagement and knowledge-sharing practices. Meanwhile, participants in Trinidad and Tobago found the discussions on *international frameworks* and the *multiple evidence base approach* especially beneficial, emphasizing how these tools can support more inclusive, knowledge-rich decision-making processes. Overall, the evaluation results underscore the relevance of the capacity building efforts and reflect participants’ growing confidence in applying ILK-related concepts within their respective national contexts.



Malawi ILK Dialogue Workshop (Oct, 2025)



Namibia ILK Dialogue Workshop (Nov, 2025)



Trinidad and Tobago ILK Dialogue Workshop

The survey results indicate that policymakers, scientists and practitioners experienced a substantial increase in their understanding of ILK concepts and processes, along with enhanced readiness to engage IPLCs meaningfully in biodiversity decision-making. The workshops also contributed to strengthening coordination and trust between government institutions and IPLCs, helping to establish a strong foundation for deeper ILK mainstreaming in future biodiversity policy cycles.

Dissemination of findings and awareness raising

The dissemination of findings was closely integrated with the ILK dialogue workshops, ensuring that emerging insights from the National ILK Outlooks were shared widely among policymakers, researchers, civil society, and IPLC representatives. By presenting findings directly within these multi-stakeholder forums, the project helped foster collective ownership of the ILK evidence base and stimulated dialogue on the implications for national policy and practice.

Beyond the workshops, the project undertook a series of communication and outreach initiatives that substantially increased the visibility of ILK within national and global biodiversity discourse. A dedicated UNESCO National ILK Outlook [webpage](#) was created as a central hub for knowledge products, publications, and project updates. National implementing partners complemented this through their own communication platforms, contributing to a broader public understanding of the importance of ILK in biodiversity governance.

Following the completion of the project, UNESCO published the three country reports ([Malawi](#), [Namibia](#), and [Trinidad and Tobago](#)) in its library (UNESDOC) and released a [news article](#) to promote published reports and disseminate their key findings to a wider audience.

Media engagement further amplified the reach of the project and helped raise national awareness of the importance of ILK in biodiversity governance. In Malawi, the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation featured the project in televised programme [segments](#), providing national visibility for ILK and spotlighting the perspectives of community knowledge holders. Additional two news articles ([1](#) and [2](#)) were published in national outlets, highlighting community experiences and illustrating how ILK contributes to biodiversity conservation and local environmental management.



Malawian newspaper

In Namibia, UNESCO published an [article](#) showcasing the ILK dialogue workshop, while the Namibia Nature Foundation released an in-depth [feature](#) on the National ILK Outlook process and its key findings, contributing to broader public understanding of ILK's role.

In Trinidad and Tobago, the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute developed a dedicated [project webpage](#), documenting national experiences, lessons learned, and early results, and providing an accessible platform for stakeholders to engage with ILK insights. Together, these media and communication efforts significantly enhanced visibility, expanded outreach beyond direct project participants, and promoted public recognition of ILK as a vital component of biodiversity policy and practice. The visibility generated through media coverage, communication products, and online platforms not only supported national awareness raising but also reinforced the value of ILK in advancing inclusive biodiversity policy and practice.

South–South learning for global biodiversity action

The National ILK Outlook played a catalytic role in advancing global and regional policy dialogue on ILK. During the first meeting of the CBD Subsidiary Body on Article 8(j) (SB8j-01), UNESCO convened an [official side event](#) showcasing how National ILK Outlooks can directly contribute to NBSAP implementation and help countries accelerate progress toward the KMGBF. By sharing early results and practical experiences, the event positioned the participating countries as early leaders in operationalising ILK-related commitments under the CBD, demonstrating their capacity and commitments to mainstreaming ILK into national biodiversity strategies, monitoring, and reporting.



Flyer for the CBD SB8j-01 side event

The project also created meaningful opportunities for regional exchange. Through the National ILK Outlook initiative, Trinidad and Tobago was able to present its experience at the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Network (BES-Net) Second Caribbean Regional Trialogue, generating strong South-South learning among Caribbean countries. This knowledge sharing inspired other countries in the region to explore similar approaches for mainstreaming ILK into biodiversity policy and planning. The visibility and quality of the National ILK Outlook process were further amplified through its inclusion in the Trialogue's [background document](#) and [article](#), extending the project's influence beyond the pilot countries.

ii) Indicator Based Performance Assessment:

It should be noted that the National ILK Outlook initiative was designed and implemented as a catalyst project, intended to generate foundational knowledge, pilot approaches, and stimulate early momentum for longer term ILK integration in biodiversity policy. As such, the original Project Document did not include a formal set of performance indicators. For this reason, indicator based targets were not defined at design stage. Nonetheless, the project applied qualitative monitoring, documentation of stakeholder participation, and narrative progress reporting to capture achievements and demonstrate catalytic impact and achievements against set outcomes and outputs as indicated below.

| | <u>Achieved</u> Indicator Targets | Reasons for Variance with Planned Target (if any) | Source of Verification |
|---|--|--|--|
| Outcome 1¹: Enhanced ILK documentation, integration and mainstreaming in national biodiversity strategies and policies across three selected countries Indicator: N/A Baseline: N/A Planned Target: N/A | Deepened national evidence base on ILK and proposed critical pathways for systematic ILK mainstreaming into biodiversity planning and policy frameworks in three countries | | a. Malawi National ILK Outlook report b. Namibia National Outlook report c. Trinidad and Tobago National ILK Outlook report |
| Output 1.1: Comprehensive assessment report on ILK outlook Indicator 1.1.1: N/A Baseline: N/A Planned Target: N/A | 3 reports completed: Each country developed and published a comprehensive National ILK Outlook of Biodiversity report that examined the status of ILK in the country | | a. Malawi National ILK Outlook report b. Namibia National Outlook report c. Trinidad and Tobago National ILK Outlook report |
| Output 1.2: Evaluation report on policy options for ILK inclusion in NBSAPs and biodiversity policies Indicator 1.2.1: N/A Baseline: N/A Planned Target: N/A | 3 reports completed: Each report had a dedicated chapter that evaluated the level of ILK inclusion in biodiversity policies, including NBSAPs | | a. Malawi National ILK Outlook report b. Namibia National Outlook report c. Trinidad and Tobago National ILK Outlook report Mentimeter results (Malawi , Namibia and Trinidad and Tobago) |

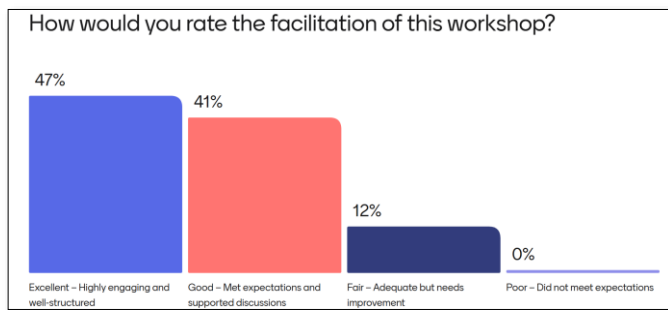
¹ Note: Outcomes, outputs, indicators and targets should be **as outlines in the Project Document** so that you report on your **actual achievements against planned targets**. Add rows as required for Outcome 2, 3 etc.

| | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| <p>Outcome 2: Strengthened ILK awareness and policymakers' capacity for the engagement of IPLCs in biodiversity decision making and policies formulation</p> <p>Indicator: Baseline: Planned Target:</p> | <p>Policymakers and stakeholders appreciated delivered ILK capacity building sessions as beneficial and relevant.</p> | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentimeter results (Malawi, Namibia and Trinidad and Tobago) |
| <p>Output 2.1: ILK capacity building workshops and knowledge exchange forum</p> <p>Indicator 1.1.1: N/A Baseline: N/A Planned Target: N/A</p> | <p>6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 joint multi-stakeholder ILK-policy dialogue workshop and capacity building workshops organised. • 1 official project side event organised during CBD SB8j-01. • 1 knowledge-sharing contribution by Trinidad and Tobago at the the BES-Net Second Caribbean Regional Trialogue | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentimeter results (Malawi, Namibia and Trinidad and Tobago) • Media links: Malawi, Namibia, and Trinidad and Tobago • CBD SB8j-01 event link • BES-Net Second Caribbean Regional Trialogue background document and news article. |

iii) Evaluation, Best Practices and Lessons Learned

As the National ILK Outlook initiative was designed as a catalyst project, its primary purpose was to establish foundational processes, pilot methodologies, and generate early momentum for ILK mainstreaming into biodiversity governance. For this reason, no formal end of project evaluation was conducted. However, several internal assessments and reflection sessions were undertaken throughout implementation to support continuous learning and adaptation.

For instance, the workshop level assessments ([Malawi](#), [Namibia](#) and [Trinidad and Tobago](#)) provided valuable insights into the project’s performance, relevance, and stakeholder perceptions. As summarized below, the workshops received consistently high ratings for both organization and facilitation. Notably, 80% of respondents in Namibia rated the ILK policy dialogue workshop as “very relevant,” underscoring the importance and timeliness of the discussions within the national biodiversity policy context. This strong positive feedback indicates that the catalytic objectives of the initiative—testing approaches, building engagement, and strengthening ILK-policy interfaces - were effectively met. These internal assessments were used to refine engagement processes, strengthen ILK documentation methods, and ensure alignment with national reporting needs.



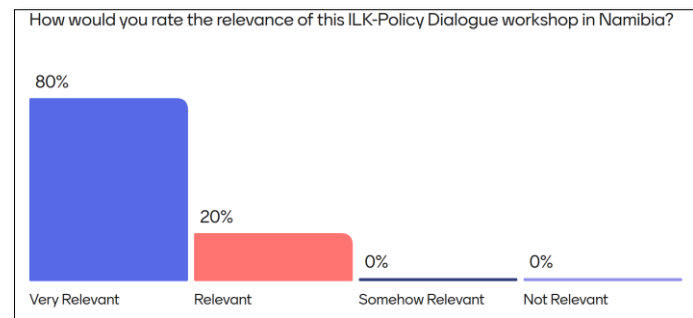
Namibia Workshop Evaluation Survey



Malawi Workshop Evaluation Survey



Trinidad and Tobago Evaluation Workshop Survey



Relevance of ILK-Policy Dialogue Workshop in Namibia

Challenges experienced

The catalyst project had only eight months of implementation, commencing immediately after the disbursement of funds by the Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) Office. Both ILK documentation and community engagement require time, trust building, and cultural sensitivity, and the accelerated timeline created significant pressure to balance speed with quality. To mitigate this risk and to fast-track implementation while safeguarding quality, UNESCO strategically selected three pilot countries that were already beneficiaries of the complementary [BES-Net](#) project. These countries had: an existing high level of interest in ILK; and pre-established trust and working relationships with IPLCs. Furthermore, tasks were prioritised based on feasibility and expected impact, ILK documentation processes were carefully sequenced around community availability, and national partners adopted flexible scheduling to accommodate cultural protocols and community rhythms.

To further mitigate the pressure created by the short implementation window, the UNESCO LINKS team mobilized additional backstopping and coordination support from UNESCO Field Offices, which provided direct technical support to the implementation of the project. This helped accelerate implementation, maintain quality, and ensure timely delivery of project outputs.

Concerns also emerged regarding how ILK would be shared, used, and safeguarded. To address this, the project strictly adhered to FPIC principles and upheld Indigenous data sovereignty throughout all stages of ILK documentation. A multistakeholder co-validation process was used to review and agree on results before finalization. These measures strengthened trust among IPLCs and ensured that ILK was documented and used ethically, in full alignment with community protocols and cultural expectations.

Overall, while constraints influenced pacing, they did not compromise the achievement of key outcomes.

Lessons learned

- The National ILK Outlook is a powerful tool for mainstreaming ILK into biodiversity policy processes: The development and use of National ILK Outlooks demonstrated strong potential to inform and strengthen ILK integration within national biodiversity strategies, including NBSAP updates and related policy frameworks. By presenting ILK in a structured, policy relevant format, the Outlooks help governments better recognize, utilize, and institutionalize ILK in decision-making and implementation.
- Co-production strengthens legitimacy and uptake: Bringing policymakers, scientists, and ILK holders together in joint learning and co-production processes created shared ownership of results. This collective engagement significantly increased the likelihood of long-term institutional adoption of ILK inclusive approaches.
- High willingness of community knowledge holders to contribute to policy processes: The project demonstrated strong enthusiasm among ILK holders to engage in national biodiversity decision-making when respectful engagement, FPIC, and clear communication are ensured. This willingness is a major asset for future policy design and implementation.

Seeing with Multiple Lens: Malawi Success Story

Challenge

For many years in Malawi, national biodiversity planning relied almost entirely on scientific assessments and technical data. ILK was often viewed as anecdotal, resulting in policies shaped by only one knowledge system. This sidelined rich community-based observations and early warning signals, leaving invaluable knowledge invisible and leading to missed opportunities for multi-evidence decision-making.

Intervention

The National ILK Outlook created a structured pathway for policymakers and scientists to strengthen their ILK understanding and capacity, including on IPLCs engagement principles and protocols. Key interventions included: Learning directly from ILK holders through field visits; dedicated ILK multistakeholder capacity building workshop; co-production and co-validation of Malawi National ILK Outlook report, with 144 IPLCs engaged. Furthermore, two mainstream media houses were engaged throughout the project to disseminate the findings and amplify the voices of IPLCs.

Results

The National ILK Outlook process led to a significant shift in attitudes, understanding, and behaviour among policymakers and scientists. As one government official reflected: “We realised that science and ILK are two lenses that help us see our biodiversity more clearly.” Recognizing the value of ILK, national authorities engaged ILK experts directly in the NBSAP III revision and in preparing the 7th National Biodiversity

Report. The project also sparked momentum for establishing a dedicated ILK advisory body to support implementation of CBD Article 8(j) and uptake of the National ILK Outlook's recommendations.

Lessons Learned

- Exposure drives transformation: Direct interaction with ILK holders in the field is far more effective than theoretical training in shifting perceptions about ILK.
- Institutional change requires individual change: Policy shifts begin with changes in mindset among key government officials and stakeholders.



Ingoma traditional dance by the Ngoni cultural heritage with the project team, Mzimba District

Sustainability

The National ILK Outlook project, despite its short catalytic duration, has laid a strong foundation for the long-term mainstreaming of ILK in biodiversity governance. Its design prioritised the establishment of processes, capacities, and institutional pathways that will continue delivering impact well beyond the project's lifespan. Multistakeholder collaboration and co-production processes created shared ownership of results, encouraged national uptake, and sparked early institutional interest in formalising ILK mechanisms within government systems.

In Malawi and Namibia, the project has already generated momentum toward exploring the creation of a national ILK framework or dedicated ILK advisory body. Such structures have significant potential to ensure long-term sustainability by providing institutional leadership on ILK, safeguarding community protocols, supporting ongoing ILK documentation and intergenerational knowledge transfer, and embedding ILK across sectoral policies.

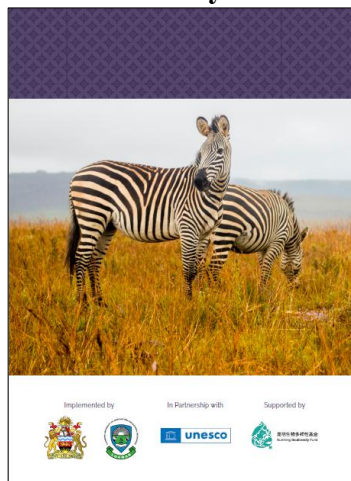
Looking ahead, UNESCO will continue working closely with the target countries to sustain and deepen the catalytic gains achieved through the project. Through its [LINKS](#) Programme, UNESCO will maintain technical support, policy guidance, and capacity-strengthening efforts to help countries operationalise ILK-inclusive approaches. This includes ongoing support to UNESCO site-based initiatives and tailored capacity building for national authorities as they embed National ILK Outlook findings into NBSAP implementation, national monitoring frameworks, and reporting obligations under the KMGBF.

To maintain and deepen the momentum created through the National ILK Outlook, UNESCO will continue serving as a platform for South-South learning, fostering exchange between Malawi, Namibia, Trinidad and Tobago, and other countries committed to ILK mainstreaming into biodiversity policies. Continued participation in global policy events—including CBD's Conference of Parties (COPs), SB8(j), and relevant UNESCO global forums—will help elevate national experiences, disseminate lessons learned, and reinforce recognition of ILK contributions in international biodiversity arenas. For example, UNESCO will share experiences and lessons from the National ILK Outlook during the [CO-OP4CBD training](#) on traditional knowledge for civil society, scheduled for April 2026 in Paris, France.

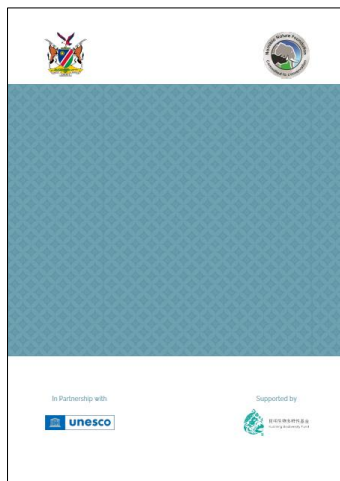
UNESCO will also ensure long-term accessibility and visibility of ILK knowledge products. This includes ongoing revamping and maintenance of the National ILK Outlook [online portal](#), continued dissemination of communication materials, and support for national level outreach and awareness raising efforts. Such sustained visibility will help keep ILK on national policy agendas and ensure that the knowledge generated continues to inform future research, national planning, and community-led conservation initiatives.

Through this integrated approach—combining institutional support, policy engagement, capacity strengthening, South-South cooperation, and long-term knowledge management—UNESCO will help ensure that the catalytic investments made through the National ILK Outlook project translate into lasting, systemic ILK mainstreaming and continue to generate meaningful impact well into the future.

Donor Visibility



Backpage Malawi ILK Outlook report



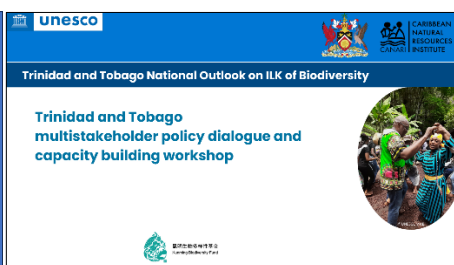
Backpage Namibia ILK Outlook report



Backpage TT ILK Outlook report



Inner page-Namibia ILK Outlook report



Slide banners for the Multi-Stakeholder ILK Workshops



Flyer for CBD SB8j-01 side event



Video acknowledgement section