



KEY LESSONS LEARNED



Ecosystem-based Adaptation: Upscaling Local Success

In the face of increasing climate change impacts, Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA) is a pivotal approach. Relatively low costs, decentralized implementation options and multiple potential co-benefits (economical, ecological, social, health-related) make EbA measures attractive especially for highly vulnerable regions and marginalized communities. Recognizing the link between ecosystem health and

the well-being of communities is crucial. Prioritizing EbA at local level not only safeguards biodiversity but also fosters community resilience and organization, laying the groundwork for a sustainable future. However, fully realizing these potentials requires careful planning, balancing of different needs and expectations, as well as knowledge of legal and financial frameworks.

In the GreenWatersheds-project, OroVerde and its partner organizations in Mesoamerica and the Caribbean have identified three key lessons:

1 Participation = Trust + Ownership = Sustainability

Many communities have had disappointing or mixed experiences with development cooperation. Trust cannot be taken for granted but needs to be earned. GreenWatersheds involved the participating communities in every step of the way, from diagnostics to prioritization of specific EbA measures to implementation. This put the communities in control, improved their self-organization and build up confidence in their own capacities as well as experience in engaging outside actors, resulting in a high level of ownership and numerous examples of replication of measures without support from the project.

2 Capacity Building, Local Promoters and Knowledge Networks

GreenWatersheds also focused from the beginning on training project participants as local EbA promoters. These local experts assist other families in implementing EbA measures but also continue to apply them on their own land plots. A similar approach was used within the consortium of partner organizations: Instead of concentrating protagonism at OroVerde, component leads with the respective clout in decision-making, responsibilities and representative functions were distributed among all partners. The combination of training, shared protagonism, knowledge exchange, practical experience, opportunities to witness results first-hand and promotion of community relationships has proven very fruitful for the adaptation of techniques to local contexts, replication outside of the project itself, local capacity building, empowerment, strengthening of regional knowledge networks and positioning of project personnel as experts of national renown.

3 Leveraging Local Success into Improving Legal Frameworks

Being aware of its own limited timeframe as an international cooperation project, GreenWatersheds from the start aimed to leverage local examples of success into inclusion of EbA in public planning processes and improvement of legal and financial frameworks. Strong ownership shown by the project communities, compelling data on effectiveness and efficiency produced by a robust monitoring system, and shared visions and theories of change all proved valuable for engaging political actors.



Success Stories for EbA-Implementation & -Upscaling

EBA-BASED AGROECOLOGY

Within GreenWatersheds, **more than 400 EbA-based agroforestry systems and other agroecological modules** were created. These production units contribute simultaneously to the improvement and diversification of income sources for the involved families, higher resiliency in the face of climate change and the conservation and regeneration of biodiversity.

EBA KNOWLEDGE NETWORKS

By focusing strongly on capacity building both on the community and the project team level, the exchange of experiences and knowledge among the partner organizations and the positioning of project team members as EbA experts, GreenWatersheds helped to foster **knowledge networks and collaboration between the different partner countries**. For example, team members from the University of Guantánamo, Cuba, independently from the project were invited as trainers for a seminar on the economic valuation of ecosystem services in the Dominican Republic while the former project component lead for EbA went on to coordinate the National Round Table on EbA in Guatemala.

EBA IN PUBLIC PLANNING

In **Mexico**, the EbA-Plan developed by GreenWatersheds for the **Sierra de Guadalupe State Park** was integrated into the official **protected area management plan**. In **Cuba's Alejandro de Humboldt National Park**, the GreenWatersheds-team achieved the same for its EbA-Plan for the Jaguaní watershed.

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