

Triialogue in National Ecosystem Assessments



WHAT IS A TRIALOGUE?

The Triologue is a methodology for the facilitation of multistakeholder engagement applied by the **Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Network (BES-Net)**. It goes beyond bridging the traditional science-policy gap and brings together the three communities of:



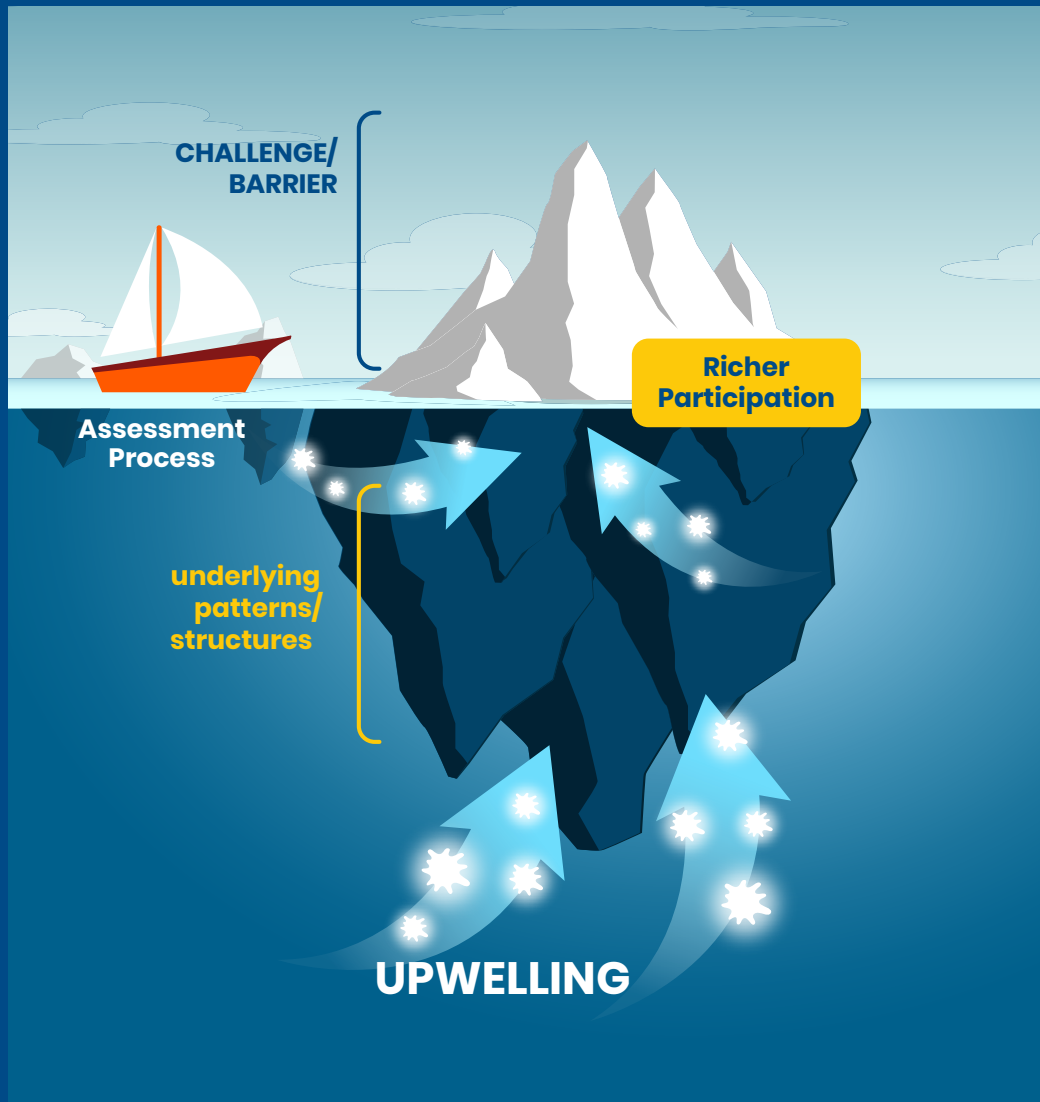
Including the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and indigenous and local knowledge holders.

Harnessing innovative facilitation techniques, the Triologue creates a space for knowledge holders and stakeholders with a diverse set of expertise and experience – and who do not commonly communicate or collaborate – to join forces in addressing biodiversity and ecosystem services issues. The Triologue enables knowledge-sharing, conflict management and joint decision-making. It is a gender-responsive and inclusive approach, fostering a constructive dialogue between, within and among stakeholder groups.

WHY USE TRIALOGUES IN A NATIONAL ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT?

Effective decision-making for the sustainable use of biodiversity and ecosystem services requires cooperation between different stakeholders with complex power and interest dynamics. To achieve this, there would ideally be improved knowledge, information and data-sharing from multiple directions, including bottom-up and top-down systems.

The Triologue encourages the identification, analysis and development of approaches to address the patterns that can either hinder or provide opportunities for collaboration between stakeholders involved in a national ecosystem assessment.



The iceberg metaphor acts as an analogy to the stakeholder engagement approach applied during the Triologue event.

The national ecosystem assessment may be considered a sailing expedition to build an understanding of the oceans (i.e. knowledge).

In this process, it is important not to damage the boat (i.e. the national ecosystem assessment) on the issues hidden below the surface of the water and to be aware of any underlying forces or processes that could impact the boat.

The Triologue helps people on the boat (i.e. the assessment team) navigate a safe and productive passage through the icebergs while leveraging the benefits of the upwelling, bringing to the surface the opportunities for meaningful engagement of stakeholders.







It creates a trusted space for those with divergent views, cultures and interests to actively listen to each other and generate options that can overcome underlying conflicts. These options (e.g. policy options in the assessment) act like marine upwellings that provide nutrient-rich opportunities for finding common ground and new ways forward.

HOW DO TRIALOGUES STRENGTHEN STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT?

The structure of a Trialogue depends on the type of engagement, which can vary based on the engagement’s objectives and expected outcomes. It also depends on the number and type of participants, their expectations, and the event’s format (e.g. in-person, virtual or hybrid).

The table below illustrates different levels of stakeholder engagement.

All the levels add value yet the Trialogues are best suited to the last three columns:

	Inform	Consult	Involve in Knowledge Sharing	Collaboration	Empower
	 Stakeholders are informed about key aspects of the assessment	 Stakeholders are consulted for feedback	 Stakeholders provide expertise and share knowledge to identify and address challenges collectively	 Stakeholders collaborate in the conception, co-design and execution of activities	 Stakeholders are actively engaged in the decision-making process and ownership through participatory activities
Trialogue participant’s expectations	To receive reliable information and increase the understanding of the national ecosystem assessment	To be given the possibility to share feedback on the received information	To be engaged in an exchange of in-depth knowledge, information and data that is key to delivering an assessment that is relevant for decision-making processes and respects diverse worldviews and backgrounds	To share a unique set of experience and expertise that will contribute to formulating the content of the assessment	To be part of the decision-making process on the assessment
Pledge to the Trialogue participants	Stakeholders have been promised to receive regular updates	Stakeholder’s feedback is valuable as it contributes to the relevance and legitimacy of the assessment	Stakeholders and knowledge holders will be actively involved in the identification of challenges, opportunities and knowledge sources. Their input will be reflected in the assessment in respect of their unique expertise	Stakeholders and knowledge holders will be asked for advice on the formulation of the content. They will be provided with equal opportunities to contribute with recommendations and to co-develop the content, which will be incorporated into the assessment to the maximum extent possible	The decision of the stakeholders and/or contribution of the knowledge holders will be part of the assessment

[Download the table here](#)

Trialogues are most beneficial where the ecosystem assessment:

1. Needs the **framing of key policy questions from different stakeholders** (i.e. ministries, non-governmental organizations, private sector, academia, indigenous peoples and local communities) to ensure they are policy-relevant.
2. Can be enriched through the **collaboration of stakeholders and knowledge holders** who have different cultures, views and ways of understanding and engaging with biodiversity and ecosystem services. They bring in different types of knowledge, information and data. Through the Multiple Evidence Base approach, it is important to give a voice to those who may not be regularly heard or given a seat at the decision-making table (e.g. indigenous peoples and local communities, women and businesses), as their unique insights can contribute to innovative solutions and widen perspectives.
3. Gains legitimacy by reaching a certain level of **agreement and a common agenda for action**.

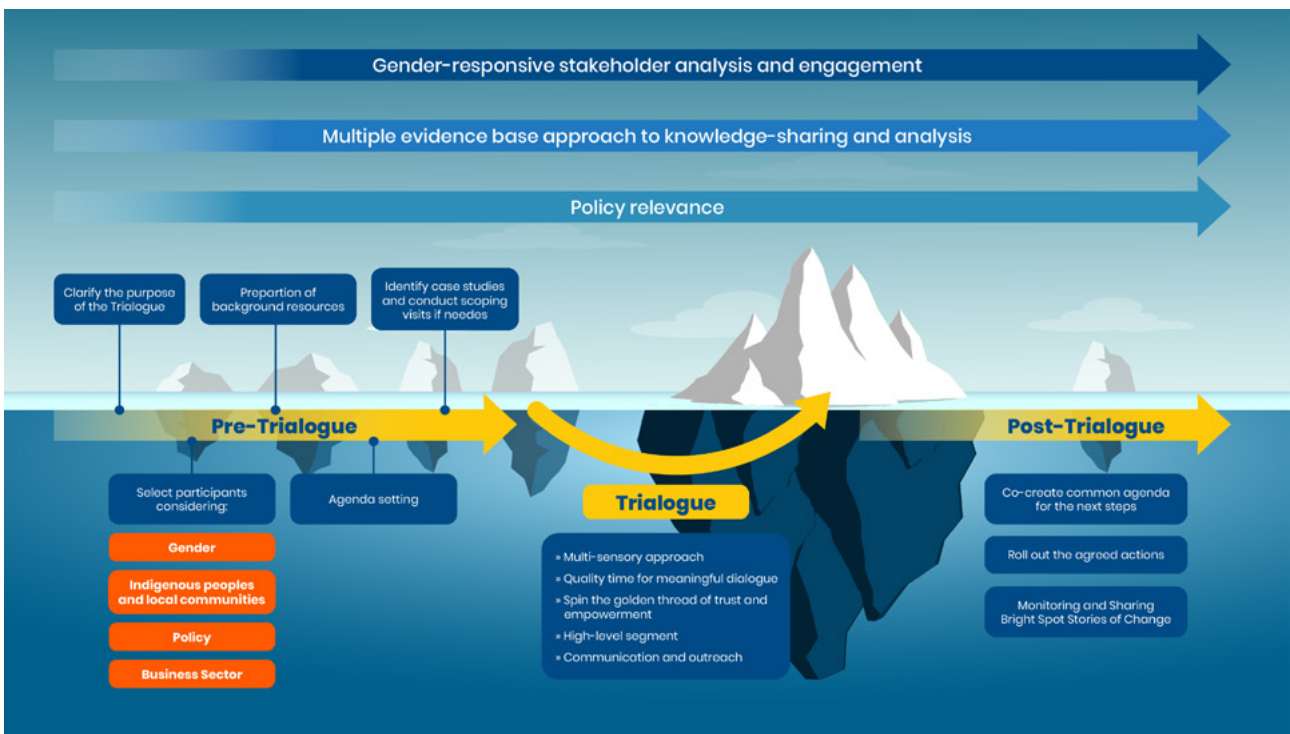
HOW TO ORGANIZE AN EFFECTIVE TRIALOGUE?

It is recommended to [analyse the strategically appropriate moments to hold a Triologue](#) at the beginning of the assessment to ensure the most effective planning with the support of the key resource persons. An impactful Triologue hinges on the steps listed below.

TOP TIP

The **Multiple Evidence Base** approach is the golden thread of the Triologue. It supports mobilizing, translating, negotiating and synthesizing different types of knowledge, world views and experience to bring to the dialogue: natural sciences, social sciences, local and traditional knowledge.

For more information, read [Practical Guidelines on working with Indigenous Peoples and Local Knowledge in national ecosystems assessment](#).



Download the visual summary of the steps



Define the purpose of the Triologue, setting its objectives and expected outcomes.

This will help determine the most pertinent time in the assessment to hold the Triologue event. The desired outcomes of the Triologue are not only for the assessment team but also for the participants.

Example: A Triologue could take place during the scoping stage to define, review or validate key policy questions.

Identify the key entry points in the national ecosystem assessment

where key stakeholders and knowledge holders need to be engaged.

Example: A Triologue could happen at the approval stage to validate the assessment's findings.



Produce a background briefing document

that sets out the context regarding knowledge on the issues to be addressed in the Triologue to ensure equal access to preliminary information for all participants.

This process also allows for the identification of opportunities and contentious issues that need to be addressed and the voices that need to be heard during the Triologue.

Design a purpose-led, context-sensitive agenda

that supports the creation of approaches that enhance and ensure multistakeholder dialogue and help address any power imbalances.

Example: A session on the site visit, storytelling and/or case studies can be organized in the earlier part of the agenda to first make space for those who have local knowledge.



Conduct gender-responsive stakeholder analysis.

Example: The [snowballing technique](#) is used to identify participants that may not be easily accessible, such as indigenous peoples and local communities, and particularly women leaders.



Ensure proportionate representation from communities of policy, science and practice to enhance the provision of all perspectives.

Example: Fair representation may be considered in the number of participants when engaging speakers of the sessions, defining the list of participants, deciding on the division into groups for the breakout sessions, etc. If the Triologue is taking place virtually, identify case studies to find success stories and bright spot examples of the indigenous and local community and/or private sector-led initiatives that shine a light on the theme of the Triologue.

DURING THE TRIALOGUE EVENT

Create a trusting and hospitable space for engagement.

Example: Consider changing the room layout if possible, applying a “carousel” type table allocation and a multisensory approach to learning by stimulating people’s five senses of sight, smell, taste, touch and hearing through music, stories, themed food and site visits/demonstrations (if the budget allows). People have the opportunity to bond and become champions for change when their emotions and a sense of purpose are engaged.

Apply innovative event facilitation tools and practices to safeguard quality time for meaningful dialogue.

Example: To this end, tools like [OpenSpace Technology](#), [World Café](#), [Visualisation](#), [Theory U](#), joint problem-solving and governance mapping could be applied. These techniques can be used in face-to-face events and adapted to virtual settings through multimedia tools, including [Mentimeter](#) and [virtual whiteboard](#).

Run as a high-level event designed and advertized to attract senior policymakers, donors and the private sector. Prepare a policy brief, as this is a key tool for influencing decision-makers.

Example: This segment of the event could support the validation of the technical report and the Summary for Policymakers of the national ecosystem assessment.

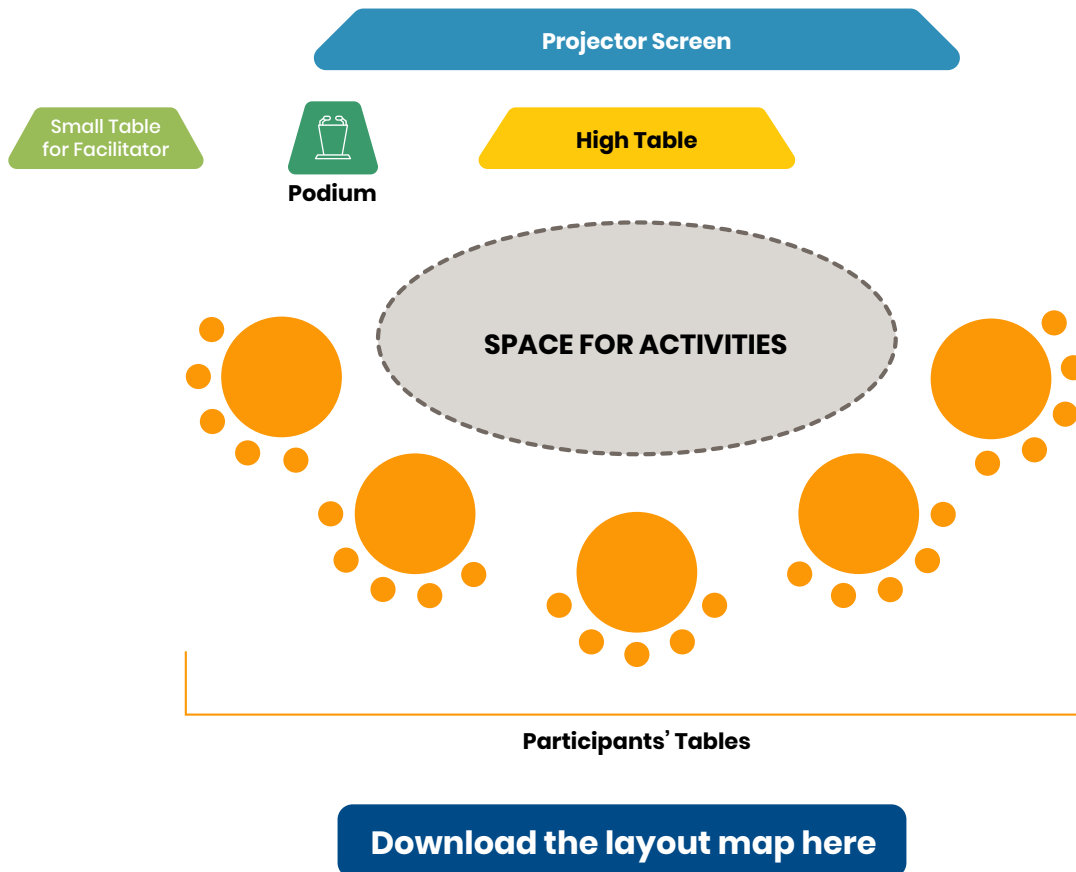
Connect the comments and results of the sessions through the course of the Triologue.

The facilitator could show participants how a collective narrative is constructed, mapping out convergences and divergences as the conversations progress, providing shape for the report on the outcomes of the Triologue and the actions needed going forward.

Example: The participants co-create and agree on the common agenda for the way forward with the assessment to ensure continuity in interaction and follow-up.

TOP TIP

The Triologue helps to address divergent views and interests to enable collaboration and knowledge-sharing. It supports other activities, such as those described in the Communication Strategy.



AFTER THE TRIALOGUE EVENT

Monitor and share bright spot stories of change as a result of the Triologue and post-Triologue actions.

Example: Bright spots of change include the evidence of behavioural change or the broader impact of the assessment on communities or policies. Human-interest stories sharing the personal feedback and experiences of the Triologue can effectively communicate this change.

WHO CAN HELP ORGANIZE THE TRIALOGUE?

The country assessment team is the body defining when a Triologue should take place. Planning a Triologue would ideally occur from the onset of the assessment and be reviewed throughout the assessment. The UNDP BES-Net team’s expertise can support the planning, methodological designing, training/support of local facilitators and on-site/virtual facilitation of Trialogues.

WHEN SHOULD THE TRIALOGUE BE APPLIED IN A NATIONAL ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT?

The Triologue can take place at any stage of the assessment. It is useful to consider Trialogues as a stakeholder engagement methodology from the onset of an assessment and revisit its need and relevance throughout the assessment, particularly at the start of each stage (Scoping, Evaluation, Validation/Approval). It is also important to be mindful of the different stakeholders and the knowledge holders’ context, needs, interests and influence.

At the beginning of the assessment, it is recommended to analyse the spectrum of engagement appropriate for different types of stakeholders as a means to identify the purpose and objectives of different key moments of stakeholder engagement, which can be supported by a Triologue or other approaches.

The Triologue Matrix below provides the indicative list of strategic moments in which Triologue events can be organized in the national ecosystem assessment process.





The spectrum of Stakeholder Engagement	The expected result of the Triologue in the SCOPING PHASE	The expected result of the Triologue in the EVALUATION PHASE AND BEYOND
<p>Involve in Knowledge-Sharing</p> <p><i>Stakeholders provide expertise and share knowledge to identify and address challenges collectively</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Analysis of stakeholders and levels of engagement ■ Identification of key policy questions from sectoral Ministries and different levels of government, as well as business, NGOs and indigenous and local knowledge ■ MEB Knowledge sharing/gathering meetings with the experts for the identification of the key policy questions ■ MEB Formation of the assessment team (inc. co-chairs, lead/contributing authors, fellows, experts, indigenous and local knowledge task force) to discuss the assessment conceptual framework and roadmap ■ Public Launch of Assessment Process with the opportunity to feed into conclusions of scoping report 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Multi-stakeholder dialogue to mobilise and synthesise knowledge using the MEB approach with different knowledge holders (e.g. natural science, social science, indigenous knowledge, local knowledge, practitioner's knowledge, business economics etc.) ■ Participatory ILK action research ■ Finding a common agenda and joint action planning with the potential assessment users
<p>Collaborate</p> <p><i>Stakeholders collaborate in the conception, co-design and execution of activities</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Definition of key policy questions and development of scoping report by the assessment team with key stakeholders and knowledge holders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Negotiation between authors for integration of the different chapters and review of how finding and key messages align with IPBES conceptual framework and national context ■ Policy buy-in into the assessment process ■ Formal validation of assessment's first order draft & second order draft by the national platform ■ Multi-stakeholder discussions to inform and support key messages and policy-making/reform based on the assessment results and messages ■ Co-production of knowledge and engagement of different knowledge holders as in the assessment team (e.g. recognition as contributing authors, creation of a chapter, inclusion of boxes and case studies, etc.)
<p>Empower</p> <p><i>Stakeholders are actively engaged in the decision-making process and ownership through participatory activities</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Validation of assessment's scoping report by the National Biodiversity Platform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Final and Formal Adoption of the Assessment Results by National Platform and uptake by sectoral Ministries

[Download the matrix here](#)

[Click here to learn more about BES-Net's Triologues!](#)

