SESSION DESCRIPTION

ID: T6b

Title of session:
Understanding nexus of ecosystems and human health to achieve SDGs in Africa

Hosts:

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Abstract:
Emerging evidence establish that human health is also determined by the resilience and health of ecosystems. Forest, fresh water, coast ecosystems provide, support and reinforce the different constituents of human health (physical and mental) through their multiple services. This relationship of human and ecosystems health has shown correlation with varying degrees at different spatial scale and need further research and scientific exploration. What is of importance here is that the sustainable development goals (SDGs) which are universal and interlinked through 169 targets manifested in 17 goals offer unique opportunity to use interdisciplinary evidence based scientific knowledge to measure the degree and direction of this relationship. A recent WHO 2015 report provides a comprehensive state of knowledge review covering all facets of this nexus, while a number of biodiversity organizations have devoted attention to the importance of biodiversity and human health. For example, the pattern of many infections transmitted by arthropod vectors have changed over the past 30 years in response to climatic, environmental and ecological changes. Diseases such as dengue and malaria are expanding their geographic ranges and are becoming prevalent where previously they were not recognised as endemic and are moving in different urban settings (in the case of dengue) or at higher altitude (in the case of malaria in East Africa). Other vector–borne infections such as West Nile virus, Rift Valley Fever and Chikungunya have been classified as emerging diseases. Currently, about

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2 Notably the Co-operation on Health and Biodiversity (http://www.cohabnet.org/), the EcoHealth Alliance (http://www.ecohealthalliance.org), the Health & Ecosystems: Analysis of Linkages (HEAL–http://www.wcs-heal.org/) and The International Association for Ecology and Health (EcoHealth)–http://www.ecohealth.net/).
1/6th of the world’s population, located in low and middle income countries, live in areas endemic for vector-borne infections that cause an estimated 4.5 million deaths per annum. It is evident that resilient ecosystems have direct implications for the people especially marginal poor. Ecosystems restoration especially in Africa would provide better health security to marginal poor, therefore goals 1 and 2, 13, 14 and 15 would be achieved in Africa if this intricate relationship is understood and effective response policies are designed at global and national level.

Goals and objectives of the session:

The session will seek to address the questions:
1. What does current evidence say about how environmental change impacts human health and well-being?
2. Is human health negatively as well as positively determined by the condition of ecosystems and biodiversity? What are some exemplars from the ground?
3. Do ecosystems or site-specific studies corroborate with generic nature of relationship between state of ecosystems and health? How do mediating factors such as gender equity, equitable access to care, prioritizing non-communicable diseases, and understanding behavioral correlates of health and environmental change get factored in?

Planned output / Deliverables:

A Scientific paper / Policy Brief and a special issue in Ecosystem Services / current opinion in Environmental Sustainability / Ecological Economics

Voluntary contributions accepted: