

Bridging the science-policy gap: mainstreaming blue carbon stock assessments into national development plans at the example of Lamu, Kenya

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Mangrove forests are one of the Earth's most climate resilient, productive and biodiverse ecosystems. Next to livelihood provision they play an important role in coastal protection and store significant amounts of carbon. Mangroves are thus relevant for Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) regarding climate change adaptation and mitigation. However, many coastal countries in tropical regions, such as Kenya, haven't included blue carbon in their first NDCs (2015). This talk will present a recent project (2018-19) investing in scientific carbon stock assessment of Kenya's previously uncharted largest mangrove cover (Lamu) that bridged the science-policy gap by also engaging in policy advocacy, influencing the inclusion of mangroves in the 2020 NDC revision. The project's three work packages and their main results will be presented: (1) The spatio-temporal mangrove mapping showed that between 1992 and 2019 Lamu lost about 5% of its mangrove cover due to anthropogenic activities. Combined with the results of (2) carbon stock assessment it was shown that the estimated annual cost of avoided emission in Lamu alone is USD 1.3 M, and (3) ongoing policy influencing achieved prominent inclusion of mangroves in the country's National Climate Change Action Plan. The project's final workshop doubled as dissemination of results to a range of stakeholders including local communities and was also a national mangrove conference including high-level policy makers from relevant ministries, aimed at the elaboration of a roadmap towards NDC inclusion. It can be expected that by the time this symposium takes place (August 2020) Kenya's NDC revision will have been submitted and will include mangroves. This lighthouse project appears to have achieved its aimed for long-term result, that mangroves in Kenya are valued and incorporated into Kenya's national-level strategies for climate change adaptation and mitigation and may well serve as a blueprint for future efforts to bridge the science-policy gap.