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Insights into monitoring intergenerational equity and youth engagement

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Section C of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) takes a significant step toward social-ecological justice by including intergenerational equity as an important cross-cutting principle for biodiversity planning, implementation and monitoring.

In the GBF, the concept of intergenerational equity is understood in two important dimensions. First, it is about ensuring that we meet the needs of the present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Second, it is about ensuring the meaningful participation of younger generations in decision-making processes at all levels.

How do we measure intergenerational equity and meaningful youth participation with respect to biodiversity? As with other aspects which have been undervalued by prevailing monitoring systems, this remains a gap that needs to be closed.

Monitoring intergenerational equity, while potentially complex, could be approached in different ways. One key way is by collecting age-disaggregated data, to make visible any differentiated impacts for different ages. Another would be monitoring aspects of sustainability and the integrity of nature and nature's contributions to people, which can indicate whether levels of degradation are compromising future generations' right to live in a clean and healthy environment.

Monitoring the implementation of the precautionary principle can also promote intergenerational equity and long-term thinking.

With regard to measuring younger generations' participation and contributions, some dimensions or potential indicators include those on participation in decision-making, youth engagement in the monitoring process, financial resources mobilized, non-financial support including capacity building and formal and informal education, and availability of information.

As highlighted in the guidance in section C from the AHTEG on Monitoring, intergenerational equity can be applied to indicators, the monitoring process, and in strengthening monitoring systems. We urge support for the youth-led efforts to address gaps in monitoring intergenerational equity and meaningful youth participation in the GBF, and for Parties to include youth indicators and other relevant indicators in their NBSAPs as national indicators.

Young people are already monitoring on the ground, but we need support to truly unlock the impact of including youth contributions for biodiversity.

Biodiversity protection: let's stop betting on techno fixes and focus on the root causes of the crisis

Charlotte Labauge, POLLINIS

The most recent technological developments in synthetic biology reveal alarming applications with regards to biodiversity protection. The horizon scanning of its main trends and issues performed by the multidisciplinary Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on Synthetic Biology mentions among others self-limiting insects developed to reduce species population sizes, engineered gene drives applications aiming at altering certain properties in a population or species; or self-spreading vaccines for wildlife.

This research actually shows the same old underlying mechanism at work. It all starts with an unproven promise, theoretically interesting, such as controlling invasive species, improving wildlife conservation, or preventing zoonotic spillover into human populations. Then it is deliberately developed into industrial products commercialized for economic purposes rather than for the common good.

And then, effectively, comes its share of negative and irreversible effects on the environment, including for instance biological invasion, unintended species extinction, reduction or disruption of genetic diversity, disruption of ecosystems… It is important to understand that all of these potential consequences would once again threaten biodiversity, at a time when it is already declining at an unprecedented and alarming rate.

It is obvious that the risks associated with such technologies could lead to consequences that directly conflict with the initial purpose of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which is nature and wildlife protection.

Despite the fact that this alarming conclusion comes in the context of an unprecedented biodiversity crisis, negotiations on synthetic biology continue to consider that the supposed benefits equal the risks, and do not question the overall need and desirability of going further with these technologies, all the way to deliberately spreading them in nature.

Recognizing the likely extent of these irreversible and dramatic impacts on life on earth, we call for the precautionary approach to be strictly applied to synthetic biology with regard to biodiversity protection. We consider it of the utmost importance to address the root causes of biodiversity extinction rather than adding new stressors, such as technofixes provided by synthetic biology applications, that could jeopardize nature's equilibrium and accelerate species decline and extinction.