



Opportunities for ECRs with IPBES

By Franziska Fischer, 13 December 2023

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[Cambridge Global Food Security IRC](#)

FOR BIODIVERSITY AND NATURE'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO PEOPLE

The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services ([IPBES](#)) is 'the IPCC for biodiversity.' It is one of the world's largest and most high-profile initiatives providing scientific evidence for policy. Its publications respond to questions posed by its 145 member governments: a direct link to policymakers.

The platform is best-known for its [reports](#), perhaps most famously its 2019 Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. It has also addressed individual regions, specific themes such as invasive alien species, and methodological questions such as the valuation of nature. In 2021, IPBES and IPCC worked together on their [Co-Sponsored Workshop](#) on Biodiversity and Climate Change; in 2022, they jointly won the Gulbenkian Prize for Humanity.

Alongside its reports, IPBES builds capacity, promotes the generation of knowledge and the management of data, supports policy, and engages with stakeholders. The platform runs on the volunteer contributions of thousands of researchers, practitioners, holders of indigenous and local knowledge, and policy experts.

The University of Cambridge is an IPBES Observer organisation.

IPBES is interdisciplinary, and seeks to include a wide range of diverse voices. As an early career researcher, you are most welcome: here are a few ideas on how you can contribute your expertise and benefit from IPBES.

Title photograph by [Gregoire Dubois](#): Great Mormon Swallowtail (*Papilio memnon*), Danum valley, Borneo, Malaysia.

[This image](#) and many more are available among the virtual backgrounds for video conferences curated by IPBES — a simple and beautiful way to show your support.

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Tenth session of the IPBES Plenary, Bonn, Germany, 2023 (Anastasia Rodopoulou/IISD/ENB)

BECOME A REVIEWER

Like research papers, IPBES assessment reports are peer-reviewed. IPBES invites all qualified experts, including researchers, decision makers, practitioners and other knowledge holders to participate. Peer-reviewing is an excellent opportunity to get to know the platform's work while contributing your expertise. As an expert reviewer, you are acknowledged in the final report.

You will first need to [register](#) on the IPBES website. Then, you can respond to IPBES notifications calling for expert review. Individual reviewers do not normally comment on the complete draft report: IPBES is most interested in your perspective on the topics in which you have the most expertise.

Right now, two IPBES reports are under review:

- The **Nexus Assessment** is a thematic assessment of the interlinkages between biodiversity, water, food and health. As a member of the Cambridge Global Food Security IRC, it likely addresses your field: it “will examine the interlinkages among the sustainable development goals related to food and water security, health for all, protecting biodiversity on land and in the oceans and combating climate change.” For a more detailed outline see the [scoping report](#).

This assessment is open for review until **14 January 2024**. For instructions how to join — including hints for newcomers — see [this article](#).

- The **Transformative change Assessment** is a thematic assessment of the underlying causes of biodiversity loss, determinants of transformative change and options for

achieving the 2050 vision for biodiversity. It seeks “to understand and identify factors in human society at both the individual and collective levels, including behavioural, social, cultural, economic, institutional, technical and technological dimensions”; these factors “may be leveraged to bring about transformative change for the conservation, restoration and wise use of biodiversity, while taking into account broader social and economic goals in the context of sustainable development.” For a more detailed outline see the [scoping report](#).

This report stands out for its unusual approach, and its wide-ranging comparison of visions, scenarios, and practical options: you are encouraged to join in a spirit of exploration. The assessment is open for review until **31 January 2024**. For instructions how to join — including hints for newcomers — see [this article](#).

Serving as a reviewer allows you to try working with IPBES, with a view to further engagement. Perhaps for the upcoming second global assessment and for an assessment on biodiversity-inclusive spatial planning and ecological connectivity; IPBES will recruit further experts for both projects.

Vanessa Rodríguez Osuna is the Net Zero Sector Track Lead at UNEP Finance Initiative and a Senior Technical Adviser at GIZ. She has been serving as an IPBES Expert since 2014; following her most recent work as a scoping expert for the Nexus Assessment, she is currently working as a Coordinating Lead Author on the Business and Biodiversity Assessment.

“I like to contribute to the valuable work of IPBES because I believe that a strong scientific and policy-relevant basis contributes to better decision making by policy makers and leaders and can foster a transition towards a net zero and nature positive world.

I also love the collaboration with great scientists and experts from a wide range of disciplines and across the world that jointly work on very complex topics and understand the need of making this work scientifically sound, policy-relevant, and useful for decision makers.”



Vanessa Rodríguez Osuna speaking as an IPBES Expert at the Global Crop Diversity Summit, Berlin, Germany, 2023 (Crop Trust/MIKA-fotografie)

BECOME A FELLOW

The [IPBES Fellowship Programme](#) is designed for early-career individuals. It encourages young contributors — normally up to the age of 35 — and builds a pool of future experts and ambassadors for IPBES and its work. As a fellow, you

- gain hands-on experience in major scientific assessments, systematic reviewing and the science–policy interface at a high level;
- receive dedicated training in international workshops;
- work with leading experts in your field, including a personal mentor;
- expand your social and professional network globally and
- get the opportunity to participate in joint projects and publications.

Fellows develop sections or parts of their assigned IPBES assessment, and are expected to participate in author meetings and training workshops; they are prominently listed in the final report.

Pradeep Kumar Dubey is a Program Manager at the World Resources Institute India. As an IPBES Fellow, he is working on Chapter 2 of the IPBES Nexus Assessment. The programme has already taken him to Germany, Kruger National Park in South Africa, and the United Nations office in Nairobi, Kenya; he is now looking forward to meeting fellows, experts, and other stakeholders in Japan and Nepal.

"I have been actively working on the indigenous and local knowledge (ILK) portion of the chapter and have contributed to the [figures and tables]. We also take part in annual in-person fellow workshops and have received support for capacity-building from the Technical Support Unit (TSU). It's an amazing opportunity to connect with people and see incredible locations, cultures, and food, in addition to getting together. Interestingly, the mentorship program for fellows gave me the chance to meet Prof. Pete Smith in person for the first time. Receiving his guidance for tasks related to the assessment and beyond has been incredible. I've had an amazing experience overall, and I'm trying to interact with people in ways apart from assessment. Lastly, it's a great opportunity to meet people, take up new skills, and take part in group activities."



IPBES Fellow Pradeep Kumar Dubey (personal photograph)

Selection for the IPBES Fellowship Programme is competitive. In addition to your application, you need to be nominated by a government or institution.

- To be nominated by the UK Government, you will either need to be a British National, or working in a British institution; for further details see the [JNCC website](#). To be nominated by another government — for example your home country as an international student — check with your [IPBES National Focal Point](#).
- Cambridge University is an IPBES Observer organisation, but institutions do not need to have any particular status with IPBES to nominate fellows.

For more details on the programme and the selection process, see the [official website](#). Right now, there are two opportunities to become an IPBES Fellow; the deadline for your application is **19 December 2023** and the deadline for nominations is **6 January 2024**.

IPBES is seeking fellows for

- the Monitoring Assessment, a methodological assessment on monitoring biodiversity and nature's contributions to people. For details, see the [official call](#).
- the Task Force on Scenarios and Models. For details, see the [official call](#).

ACCESS IPBES OUTPUTS FOR YOUR TEACHING AND RESEARCH

Whether or not you contribute to IPBES, the platform's products are available for your teaching and research, for free on the [official website](#).

IPBES assessment reports provide deep insights into their topics, produced following a [systematic process](#). In each you will find carefully cross-referenced key messages, summaries, and in-depth reviews — illustrated with examples, infographics, and data tables. Each report also comes with curated bibliographies; notably, IPBES assessments draw on peer-reviewed research, grey literature, and local and indigenous knowledge.

IPBES publishes a summary of each assessment report. Designed for policymakers, these include key messages, described and laid out in a way that is accessible to lay readers. While the full reports are compiled independently by the experts, the summaries for policymakers are produced in consultation with member governments at an IPBES plenary session. Plain-text versions of these summaries are translated into all six UN languages. Sometimes, a summary for policymakers will be further distilled into a factsheet, giving a brief overview of a theme.

IPBES products can provide you with introductions to new topics, a rich set of references and datasets, as well as inspiration. You may also be interested in the knowledge gaps identified by the reports, and in mining the extensive assessment reports themselves.

The structured layouts, and colourful illustrations and infographics are excellent teaching resources; making high-quality research and the latest information on biodiversity accessible to students. IPBES stakeholders report the popularity of these materials at several levels of higher education.



While full IPBES reports span hundreds of pages, the summaries for policymakers provide an introduction and key findings for newcomers (Franziska Fischer)

Opportunities for engagement:

- IPBES supports uptake events, i.e., workshops, seminars, or other formats that introduce new audiences to IPBES's work. The IPBES Secretariat can provide you with hardcopies of summaries for policymakers and other materials; they can also put you in touch with suitable IPBES experts. [Contact the Secretariat](#) to find out more.

- While IPBES supports uptake events for all its products, there are currently two especially timely opportunities:

The uptake of the latest report, the Invasive Alien Species Assessment. Relevant activities [submitted](#) by **30 June 2024** will be reported to the IPBES plenary.

[Workshops on scenarios and models](#), including those that test the Nature Futures Framework.

- You can publish your impact or contribution to capacity-building with IPBES. If you have successfully used an IPBES product for decision-making or research, then you

can record, document and share your impact in the IPBES Impact Tracking Database ([TRACK](#)). Similarly, IPBES collects and publishes [capacity-building relevant to its work](#).

- For more extensive work on a particular topic relevant to IPBES, including knowledge gaps, you can form a community of practice: "self-organizing groups of experts, policymakers and/or practitioners who work to increase access to expertise and information on a specific topic or focus area." For more details, see the [leaflet](#).

JOIN AN IPBES STAKEHOLDER NETWORK

Whether you have further questions or are keen to join now (it's simple and free of charge), the two IPBES stakeholder networks are here for you:

[International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services \(IIFBES\)](#)

[Open-ended Network of IPBES Stakeholders \(ONet\)](#)

At ONet, we welcome [individuals](#) and [organisations](#). Since we are a global network, we mainly engage virtually: through our website, newsletter, and online events. We will keep you up to date, help you find your way around IPBES, and support your projects.



Participants in the #IPBES10 Stakeholder Day, Bonn, Germany, 2023
(Anastasia Rodopoulou/IISD/ENB)

Once a year, prior to each IPBES plenary, we collaborate with the IPBES Secretariat on Stakeholder Day, an international conference dedicated to stakeholder engagement with IPBES: for a taster, see the agenda and the recording of the 2023 [#IPBES10 Stakeholder Day](#). See you there in 2024!

The author, Cambridge Global Food Security IRC member Franziska Fischer, serves IPBES stakeholder engagement on the ONet facilitation team. In 2023, she gave the stakeholder opening statement at the tenth session of the IPBES Plenary, on behalf of IPBES stakeholders who had jointly drafted it; she was backed by Cambridge Global Food Security IRC and Cambridge Zero.



Franziska Fischer at the tenth session of the IPBES Plenary, Bonn, Germany, 2023 (Laure Denos)