

4 SUPPORTING GOOD POLICIES

For governments to promote the conservation and sustainable use of living resources, a **credible policy environment** is required, i.e. one in which the planning, regulatory and advisory services provided by the government are understood and accepted by the majority of stakeholders. This is best achieved by involving stakeholders in the policy-development process, by steadily adapting policies in response to feedback from stakeholders, and by reviewing policy effectiveness on a regular basis.

Credible policies on biodiversity conservation are required within all levels and sectors of government, and outside government where industries, firms, and communities also have a responsibility to reduce environmental impacts and protect (or sustainably use) living resources. The important parallel between national and local levels, or governmental, private and non-governmental sectors, is that policy-development is an inclusive, participatory activity, depending on high-quality and objective information for success. In this way, decision-making processes are not only made more transparent, **they are also shared**.

Several models have been proposed for biodiversity planning — the development of policies, legislation, strategies and action plans for conservation and sustainable use of living resources (e.g. UNEP 1993, Miller and Lanou 1995). Good information management is assumed in these models, but its precise role, for instance in delivering efficiency gains and cost savings, is not always elaborated. Figure 3 illustrates a generic management ‘loop’ comprising four processes: **plan, implement, monitor** and **review**. By making extensive use of information, the four processes enable policy goals to be achieved in a progressive manner through successive iterations of the loop.

Joining the loop at the implementation stage, activities are underway to meet agreed targets for conservation and sustainable use, set out in the planning stage. The loop proceeds to monitor the performance of the policy by, for example, obtaining data directly from the environment or with respect to the achievement of policy targets. Performance is then reviewed, leading to the production of clear and concise recommendations for policy-makers on how the policy should be refined in future. Finally, the loop is ‘closed’ for another cycle by planning how the recommendations will be implemented, in terms of objectives, targets, roles and responsibilities. It should be noted that monitoring, review and planning activities would very often proceed in parallel with implementation. This enables continuous, rather than intermittent, feedback and policy-refinement.

Figure 3 Management loop for policy-development

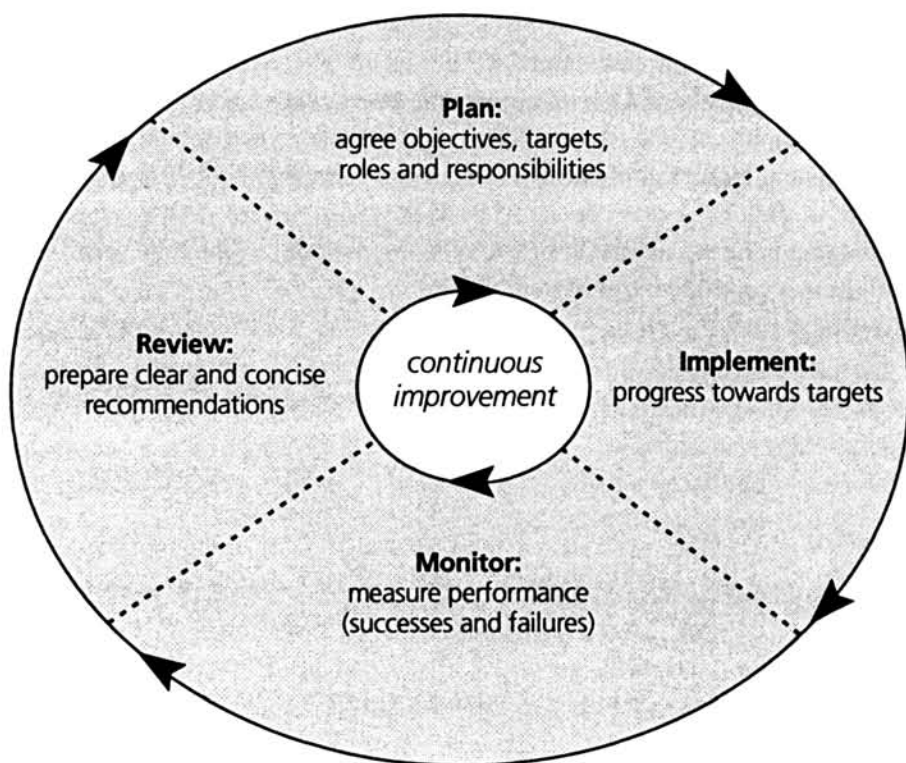


Figure 3 simplifies what, in reality, is a complex, many-faceted process. For instance, the policy being developed may address an issue of national importance, such as the loss of crop genetic variability in an important agricultural zone, or a local concern, such as the restoration of a single eroded hillside. In both cases successful implementation depends on maintaining a steady course around the management loop so that the four components flow into one another. To achieve this it is necessary to concentrate on the core objectives of the policy at all stages and to make sure that **all** actions contribute to these in some way.

An open, participatory approach encourages stakeholders from different levels and sectors of society to involve themselves in implementing the management loop. For instance, policy goals may be developed by consensus at fora established for this purpose; community groups or industry representatives can be asked to help monitor

policy performance; and the success or failure of policies, plus options for future refinement, can be determined as a group.

When stakeholder perspectives differ greatly, participation may not always be easy to manage. In such cases considerable effort is needed to keep stakeholders focused on policy goals, and not let implementation be diffused. Common constraints on implementation include lack of financial resources, expertise and time, political interference and lack of political will. Clearly, the management loop is not an easy approach to follow, but it does offer a powerful means for developing and implementing policies capable of effectively responding to changing environmental conditions in a controlled, transparent fashion.