

CHAPTER 16

Policy Issues III: National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans

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INTRODUCTION

Article 6 of the Convention calls on Contracting Parties to develop national strategies and action plans aimed at integrating biodiversity management into sectoral policies and programmes. The Parties are also required to review and adapt existing strategies which reflect the provisions of the Convention. This Article creates an obligation for governments to prepare specific plans which reflect the objectives of the Convention. Countries are required to integrate imperatives of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of its components into existing conservation and development laws, policies and programmes. This implies that countries have to review their existing sectoral plans and policies to identify how and where to integrate the objectives of the Convention. The strategies, action plans and/or programmes should explicitly outline implementation measures.

The process of developing national strategies, action plans and/or programmes largely involves policy analysis. For countries to formulate realistic strategies, action plans and programmes they require specific policy analysis expertise and must organise their institutions in such a manner as to obtain institutional convergence and synergy. This is the challenge for African countries. Most of these countries lack expertise and appropriate institutional arrangements for developing such strategies, action plans and programmes. If these countries are to fulfil their obligations they will need to enhance the capacities of policy-makers in a number of government agencies and institutions to be able to deal with the requirements of Article 6 and other articles of the Convention.

The Convention sets out in Articles 7–19 a number of measures that the Contracting Parties need to implement. These measures include, among others: establishment and management of protected areas; formulating legislation for the protection of threatened species and populations; establishing measures to regulate, manage or control the risks associated with the use and release of living modified organisms resulting from biotechnology which are likely to have adverse environmental impacts; measures to respect, preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities; providing incentives; ensuring equitable sharing of the benefits arising from use of genetic resources; and

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establishing biosafety regulations. For African countries to effectively implement these provisions of the Convention they require expertise in policy research and analysis.

However, African countries lack the relevant policy analysis capacities to be able to formulate national policies and legal measures aimed at implementing the provisions. Policy-makers in these countries lack the relevant knowledge and information on issues of biodiversity, biosafety and protection of indigenous rights and practices. There is also a lack of biodiversity inventories and other vital information on the nature of habitats. Conservation and development policies are often designed and implemented using inadequate information, making it difficult to assess their impacts on biodiversity. In many cases, development projects are designed and implemented with heavy environmental costs, including degradation of biodiversity. The lack of information also constrains policy-making. In the absence of relevant information, countries are unable to formulate and implement realistic policy measures. They are not able to establish criteria for effective conservation and cannot target their limited resources to conserving highly-threatened species and/or ecosystems.

The need to formulate specific policy and institutional measures for implementing the Convention is crucial in African countries which have weak economies and where a significant percentage of the world's biodiversity is located. The countries face problems of scarce financial and human resources to invest in biodiversity management. Under frequent conditions of economic instability, it is difficult to invest their human resources and sustain institutions for biodiversity conservation. Furthermore, the countries are implementing structural adjustment policies promoted by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. These policies involve reduction of government expenditure, privatisation of certain public enterprises and cutting down the size of the civil service. Some of these measures are likely to have impacts on the abilities of the countries to engage in biodiversity management. It is therefore important that these reforms be sequenced and managed in a such manner that they do not erode the existing capabilities of national and local institutions. However, African countries have no option but to identify ways of directing their increasingly scarce resources to address biodiversity issues if they are to fulfil their obligations under the Convention.

NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGIES (NBS)

An NBS is a statement of the mission/vision, guiding principles and the overall goals and targets as well as analysis of the issues, opportunities and impacts

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different options and finally selection of priority actions and investment to achieve the desired goals.

Elements of the NBS

- Mission Statement (Vision) – strategic direction
- Overall Goals
- Specific Operational Objectives and Targets
- Guiding Principles: Principles are important tools which can be used to guide the selection of options and actions.
- Issues and Opportunities of Different Options – statement of factors likely to hinder realisation of the desired goals and objectives;
- Selection of Priority Actions or Investments (with clearly defined criteria for determining the priorities).

Approaches

- Identify and state clearly the conservation problems, issues, gaps etc.
- Articulate and debate the overall vision for conserving biodiversity.
- Determine goals and operational objectives to address the problems or gaps. The goals and objectives could be broken into component parts that give pragmatic direction for action. The objectives and articles of the CBD could provide the framework.
- State any principles that might be helpful in guiding the assigning of priorities and selection of options.
- Identify and analyse the opportunities and limitations of the different options to address the problem/gaps.
- Establish criteria and priorities to help in choosing from among the different options.
- Select the most feasible options (specific measures/actions) to close the gaps and address the most pressing problems, issues and un-utilised opportunities;
- Hold further consultations to reach acceptable targets and mechanisms/ approaches for action and investment strategies.

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- Match the actions and the goals/objectives to determine whether the selected tasks strategically meet the conservation vision and goals.
- Identify where and how the necessary resources (funds, equipment, etc.) can be obtained.

NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY ACTION PLANS (NBAP)

The NBAP spells out the specific steps that need to be undertaken to implement the selected strategies. It addresses the following questions, among others:

- (i) Who will undertake the selected actions?
- (ii) Over what time-frame?
- (iii) By what means and with what resources (human, financial, technical, facilities, etc.)?
- (iv) What will be the implementation schedule?
- (v) If any, what regional and international co-operation will be required and how will it be negotiated?

Approaches

- Outline the specific tasks to be undertaken (as determined in the Strategy);
- Describe and devise a worksheet indicating the roles and responsibilities of the different institutions/partners or stakeholders;
- Set a schedule for implementing each task;
- Develop a budget and resource requirements (personnel, equipment, physical facilities – buildings, transport, laboratories, etc; institutional requirements and operational funds).

Examples of action that could taken include: (i) formulation and implementation of specific field projects; (ii) policy reforms; (iii) enactment of new legislation; (iv) removal of perverse incentives; or (iv) capacity-building.

CONCLUSION

When developing NBSs and NBAPs, it is should be noted that it is not the content of these documents alone that is important but also the process by which they are

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developed. In line with the commitment made by governments during the UNCED to involve local communities in developing strategies and plans for sustainable development, it is important that local communities and other interested parties are fully involved in the process of developing the NBS and NBAP. This is imperative if local people are to identify with the formulated strategies and plans and implement them with long-term commitment. Failure to involve different stakeholders can result in a cursory "whitewash" of prevailing situations.

REFERENCES

Miller, Kenton and Stephen M. Lanou, 1995. *National Biodiversity Planning: Guidelines Based on Early Experiences around the World*, WRI, UNEP & IUCN