

## CHAPTER 17

### **Integrating Biodiversity into Sectoral and Cross-Sectoral Policies, Plans and Programmes**

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#### **INTRODUCTION**

Biodiversity is an old concept which has gained prominence in recent years due to its rapid loss and the need for urgent action to halt its loss. It recognised that biodiversity has been around and used by man to meet his various needs. However, in a bid to satisfy his basic need, coupled with population increase, inconsistent and inflexible policies and break down of law and order, biodiversity has been squandered, misused, overused and abused with varying consequences.

This paper reviews policies for the conservation of biodiversity, and outlines some of the guiding principles for and practices to achieve integration of biodiversity into sectoral and cross-sectoral policies, plans and programmes. It also examines some of the challenges likely to be faced in integrating biodiversity into other sectors.

***Key features of Biodiversity:*** Biodiversity is characterised by two main features: inter-dependence and multiplicity. First, inter-dependence is expressed in the various food webs and food chains. The existence of one organism depends on the existence of others. Secondly, it is characterised by the multiplicity of habitats. Ecosystems are by nature varied through the differences in communities of plants and animals.

***Why Integration?*** Many reasons are advanced for integrating biodiversity into sectoral policies. Chief among these is the fact that biodiversity is one resource with many interests and its conservation requires the concerted efforts of all interested “parties”. As such, biodiversity is the concern of several institutions and its conservation and management is the responsibility of several sectors. Moreover, in most cases there are no specific policies for biodiversity conservation and attempts to develop such policies are usually branded as a “duplication of efforts”. Integration is necessary because of the following:

***The need to harmonise sectoral interests.*** Natural resources are managed by sectors quite similar to boxes and there are very few vertical or horizontal linkages. For example, until recently in Uganda, wildlife was managed by National Parks and the Game Department. Due to lack of integration, when an animal left the national park and entered a game reserve it was almost treated as vermin. This situation has

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changed as the two have merged to form the Uganda Wildlife Authority. The other example is with Forest Department and National Parks which hustle over the management of forested areas where until recently, the forest department was more interested in harvesting of timber with very little attention to conservation of fauna, to the extent that some of the trees (especially mature ones) are the ones preferred for timber, yet they are also preferred by hornbills for breeding or chimpanzees for feeding.

***The need to mobilise sectoral support.*** Different sectors managing biodiversity receive different levels of government support. For example, in Uganda's 1997/98 budget, emphasis has been placed on agriculture as a priority with very little attention or even mention of the environment sector with biodiversity conservation *per se* receiving the least.

Most conventional conservation efforts have advocated resource protection without human use, conversely, modern agricultural systems have emphasised production without conservation. Therefore there is need for integration so as to ensure that human needs are met in ways that are less destructive to the environment. There is need to broaden the focus on preserving endemism (genetic) and genetic resources to include increasing emphasis on conserving ecological systems as a whole.

### **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

- (i) Biodiversity in a multi-sectoral resource and its management should consider the interest of all the stakeholders.
- (ii) There is need to change the attitude towards biodiversity as not hindering development but as a resource which facilitates development.
- (iii) All biological resources must be treated fairly and equitably be they algae or Mvule tree, or be they bacteria or the African elephant.
- (iv) Appropriate incentives are needed to encourage participation of all stakeholders.

### **How to Integrate**

Review sectoral policies to harmonise sectoral interests with biodiversity conservation and to ensure that biodiversity conservation is reflected in sectoral policies and plans. Ultimately, it is necessary to develop specific policies on

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biodiversity, either separately or as part of wider environmental policies. This will help to focus attention on biodiversity as an important natural resource and not as a political gimmick. There is need to harmonise sectors that manage wildlife, be it plants or animals, with the best scenario being a protected areas system approach that combines forests and wildlife sectors.

***Develop cross-sectoral linkages through delegation*** or management agreements where, for example, the Uganda Wildlife Authority enters into a management agreement with the Forest Department for the management of Mt. Elgon National Park which is largely a forest reserve. A matrix correlating policies at the microeconomic, macroeconomic, socio, legal and research/training levels is necessary.

***Education and awareness*** is necessary to illustrate ways in which conservation of biodiversity is of direct interest to our society and stimulates the creation of appropriate interest groups and the development of channels of communication on biodiversity conservation for decision-makers.

***Institutional reforms*** For biodiversity conservation to be integrated into sectoral policies requires some level of institutional reform to remove areas of overlap and inconsistency. Actions may range from inclusion of biodiversity into sectoral mandates to restructuring of institutions with responsibilities for biodiversity conservation.

***Stakeholder consultation*** This is important because it provides an opportunity for sectoral institutions to provide inputs into the design of a biodiversity conservation strategy and ensures that the responsibility for their implementation is shared with the relevant stakeholders.

***Training*** There is need to update training in sectors that deal with natural resource management so that they can reflect biodiversity conservation in their curricula. Already, efforts are being made towards including environmental issues into the curriculum at primary school level. It is necessary to produce materials relevant to biodiversity conservation to support the environment education curriculum.

***Land-use planning*** One way to integrate biodiversity into sectoral policies and plans is through land-use planning. Unfortunately, several countries do not have comprehensive land-use policies.

## CHALLENGES

There are several challenges which can make the integration mission difficult or even impossible. These include, but are not necessarily limited, to the following:

***Sectoral interests/policies*** – breaking the barriers without harming biodiversity or its protectors. There is also the issue of sectoral mandates which are sometimes rigid and even influence the type of training that is offered at different levels.

***Lack of alternatives*** Quite often, biodiversity is lost or degraded because there are no feasible alternatives. However, this is short-term view to provide long-term solutions and in most cases hastens the problem of trying to find long-term solutions as it closes off options. The case in point is the reclamation of wetlands in Kabale district to create more agricultural land. This happened as government policy in the 1950s and 1960s. However, thirty years on the problem of land shortage in Kabale has not been solved and even the wetlands which were drained cannot provide high yields any more.

***Commercialisation*** The demands of modernisation and commercialisation of agriculture with the subsequent breakdown of traditional farming systems which makes it difficult to integrate with biodiversity conservation.

***Inappropriate valuation of biodiversity*** Alternative methods for national income accounts fully reflecting the costs of resource depletion are not yet well developed. Therefore, while the cost of cleaning environmental damage is normally accounted for as a benefit economically, the cost of the damage itself never appears in national accounts.

***Political will*** In general, domestic constituencies for biodiversity are lacking and sometimes conservation is seen as an intellectual or a *Mzungu* affair imposed on developing countries.

In addition, land pressures, the need to balance foreign exchange transaction (balance of trade and payments), and high levels of poverty are major barriers to the conservation of biodiversity and its integration into sectoral policies. Decision-makers may look favourably on natural resource exploitation even at the expense of biodiversity, if this reduces demand for jobs. Shifting cultivators who open up forested areas for agriculture or charcoal-burners can be seen as self-employed and their initiative welcomed by governments that are hard pressed to cope with economic crises.

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Decision-makers' attitudes to conservation are sometimes ambiguous, encouraging development projects while restraints in natural resource exploitation may be viewed as "anti-development".

**CONCLUSION**

A lot of effort has been made in trying to conserve biodiversity but some of these efforts have been frustrated by sectoral inconsistencies and interests where biodiversity has always been treated as second. We should take advantage of the existing international goodwill to press ahead with biodiversity conservation, including integration into sectoral policies and plans. The task ahead is enormous but we must make a start.