



INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE

Societal participatory processes in the revision of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs)

January 2015

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Presentation

In 2014, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, IUCN, in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), with funding support from the Government of Japan, embarked in a project to facilitate the documentation and analysis of participatory processes within the ongoing revision processes of national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs).

The project was conducted in ten developing countries from different regions of the world: **Antigua & Barbuda, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Colombia, Fiji, Georgia, Guatemala, Iraq, Namibia, and the Philippines**. Research was carried out by a national researcher in each country. Over a period of three months (May-August 2014) these national researchers worked closely with national NBSAP teams, including the National Focal Point, to document and analyze societal participation in the process of NBSAP revision in their country.

Each national researcher received an indicative outline with a series of guiding questions to consider in the development of their country monographs. This and other guidance provided a common reference framework for the overall study. For two days in July 2014, a stock-taking and coordination workshop was held at the headquarters of the IUCN Asia Regional Office in Bangkok, Thailand. At that time, national researchers, a representative from the Secretariat of the CBD and the IUCN Team discussed on progress made in each individual study and further guidance was provided for the finalisation of the study.

Having received these country monographs, the IUCN Team has drawn from those individual studies to develop a section of this report which highlights the main elements of participation and analyses commonalities and differences among them.

Inputs from other countries were also sought. The governments of **Belgium, France, and Switzerland** voluntarily provided very valuable insights on how different societal actors in their countries participated in the NBSAPs process. These insights are included in one section of this document.

Finally, closing this report, a series of key messages, lessons learnt and possible recommendations for the future are presented, highlighting enabling factors. The intention is that this study will complement the limited guidance and support on biodiversity planning processes currently available to Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Executive Summary

National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) are the main vehicles of national implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). They are processes through which societies come together to make the difficult decisions of where, when, and how biodiversity and ecosystem services should be conserved, used sustainably, and the benefits of this use shared equitably. Most countries that are Parties to the Convention have already developed at least one NBSAP.

With the adoption of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its 20 Aichi Targets, the Parties to the CBD underlined the importance of meaningful NBSAPs and set themselves 2015 as the deadline to “*develop, adopt as a policy instrument, and commence implementing an effective, participatory and updated National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan*” (Aichi Target 17). Updated NBSAPs are fundamental in achieving the Aichi Targets and hence have to be revised by 2015 according to Target 17.

While many Parties have conducted participatory biodiversity planning processes, there is often insufficient process documentation to allow a genuine reflection on effectiveness and/or on the limitations of these processes; and the effects of this on the implementation and the overall effectiveness of NBSAPs themselves. As a consequence, the wealth of country experiences in this crucial area is not being shared, learned from, nor built upon.

This report documents and analyzes societal participation in the process of NBSAP revision in ten developing countries: **Antigua & Barbuda, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Colombia, Fiji, Georgia, Guatemala, Iraq, Namibia, and the Philippines**. Some insights on how different societal actors in **Belgium, France, and Switzerland** participated in their NBSAP process are also presented.

Decision IX/8 explicitly calls on Parties to establish or strengthen national institutional arrangements for the promotion, coordination and monitoring of the implementation of NBSAPs. Each country’s political context is different and so are the institutions that serve national interests, including the protection of the environment. The way these institutions are organized and structured to deliver on national and international priorities and obligations, including preparing National Reports to the CBD and developing or revising NBSAPs, influences the nature and implementation of these instruments.

In all the countries in this study, a variety of political and institutional arrangements were observed and each played a particular role in the NBSAP development and revision. The way national institutions are structured to revise NBSAPs also seems to have shaped the degree of participation of stakeholders in the process. It was seen that the lead agency for the NBSAP development and revision process is generally within the government, mostly the Ministry of Environment (or its equivalent). Usually, this lead agency also hosts the National Focal Point (NFP) to the CBD.

The ways in which responsibilities are assigned and tasks distributed among these lead institutions and other governmental (and non-governmental) agencies vary. Sometimes responsibility for the design and development of the NBSAP resides in this lead agency but its implementation does not. In some cases, overlaps and duplications are present among various governmental agencies and were considered challenging for the effective management of the NBSAP process. Even though the institutional set up varied in many of the countries nearly all seem to have established or relied on a steering committee of some sorts to manage the NBSAP development and revision process in addition to the lead agency. Certainly diverse levels of centralization or decentralization of the institutional structures put forward for the NBSAPs process can also be observed. In turn, the decision of

the official lead agency to conduct the NBSAP process through a more centralized or more decentralized way was often dependent on the national circumstances.

Participatory planning processes can require significant investments in their early stages in the effective identification and mobilization of all relevant stakeholders. The purpose of such mobilization is to assure that all potential participants in the process are informed of what is happening, are aware of factors that prompted the process, recognize the legitimacy of the people and organizations (lead agency) that have taken the initiative, and are encouraged to become involved. Nevertheless, before relevant stakeholders are effectively mobilized and engaged in a process such as the NBSAP development and revision one, the right communication channels need to be in place and used, and awareness about biodiversity in general and the process in particular needs to be raised.

Even though in the majority of the countries, a communications and awareness-raising strategy is reported to have been put in place to communicate to the general public on the NBSAP process nationally, there is no clear evidence to conclude that as a result, stakeholders were more committed and engaged to the NBSAP's implementation. Nevertheless, different means of communications were used and some seemed more effective than others in creating the necessary interest and buy-in by diverse societal groups. Sometimes these communication and public awareness tools relied on existing networks and platforms (Ministry's web pages and the Clearing House Mechanism for instance) and in some others new ways of reaching out to marginalized communities were devised (like radio programs in local languages). What is true is that the more these mechanisms were tailored and targeted to specific actors, the more they seemed to have triggered some positive outcome even if sometimes these outcomes were limited in their scope with regards to the NBSAP process itself.

The cases of the different countries analysed here do not only show that the institutional set up chosen to conduct the NBSAP process might differ, that roles and responsibilities of each of the actors vary according a myriad of circumstances, but also that the way in which stakeholders were identified and approached to participate also varies from country to country. A multitude of approaches were chosen to identify the key and most relevant stakeholders but in nearly all countries a conscious decision was made early on (at the planning phase) to do so. In other cases however, this process happened rather less planned and just naturally developed over time. A first step in identifying the stakeholders to participate was usually through the use of a matrix or list prepared by the lead agency.

Once stakeholders were identified and in some cases mapped out, generally at the planning phases of the process, their actual involvement in the NBSAP process happened from then on in different parts of the process and with varying degrees of engagement and responsibilities. While in some scenarios, stakeholders were included from the beginning (the planning phase) to the end of the process (the final decision making) in other cases, stakeholders were invited only to take part during specific stages of the process. Usually the level of participation reached its peak in the technical phase of the process where priorities were established and targets formulated.

Parties relied on various tools and mechanisms to engage stakeholders beyond the mere provision of information. In this respect, the favoured and most used tool to engage stakeholders, promote discussion, foster dialogue and get their views about key aspects and priorities for the NBSAP, was undoubtedly through workshops. Workshops were conducted on different topics and at different levels (local-regional-national) and used different approaches to interact with participants. In general, workshops targeted a good number of stakeholders at once who were identified through some sort of stakeholder "mapping". Workshops were used at different stages of the NBSAP development and revision process and were often well attended.

Despite the reliance on national or regional workshops, some Parties considered that it was necessary (and beneficial) to reach out to stakeholders in a more “direct” and personalized way. Besides in-person meetings, many countries also allowed stakeholders to participate in the consultations via email or through other online mechanisms. Consultations through these means were of different forms. Sometimes they were a mere follow-up to discussions that had previously taken place at a workshop or interview and in other instances they were used to extract important contributions from relevant actors.

Throughout the NBSAP development and revision process a lot of information is generated and collected. Stakeholders’ views, priorities, preferences and commitments need to be processed. Mechanisms to support the decision-making process need to be devised. In most countries, the stakeholder consultation workshops mentioned before operated under a consensus mechanisms. That meant that decisions taken on targets, actions, priorities, were usually not contested and could thus be used as building blocks for further steps in the process. In several cases their identification also followed a clear methodology, e.g. the pressure-state-benefits-framework.

Two main challenges are mentioned in the different case studies concerning the integration of contributions provided by stakeholders. The first challenge was that workshops were not always attended by people in a position to take decisions on behalf of the institutions they were representing which led to problems at the moment of selecting the inputs needed to feed into the draft NBSAP. The second challenge mentioned has to do with the fact that the outcomes of different workshops still needed to be brought together, streamlined and analysed from a political perspective and feasibility. That meant that the information and outcomes compiled were generally put together by a rapporteur or a consultant who then passed this on to a task force. These were entitled to process the information and it appears as if the choice of which inputs to take and which information to retain was left mostly for them to decide and was not always guided by a predefined methodology.

Nonetheless it is possible to identify four ways in which these challenges seemed to have been tackled. First, the most common “solution” used was simply to carry out additional consultations. Second, the trust in the expert judgement of the task force helped move the process forward. Third, the use of the Clearing House Mechanism (CHM), the internet and electronic consultations also helped to gather further inputs and communicate more effectively. And fourth, the assessment of feasibility of the actions proposed and the assignment of specific responsibilities to carry them forward.

In the last section of this document a series of key messages, findings, lessons learnt and recommendations for the future are presented based on the wealth of information gathered through the ten country monographs, the insights from three European countries and some further research. They are presented as a way of conclusion for this study. Yet, if one main conclusion can already be anticipated, it is that the development of national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) is a societal process and as such, is a dynamic, evolving and ever-changing route. The importance of participation in the collective construction and implementation of public policies cannot be overemphasized as can be observed through a scan of the literature available. In the case of NBSAPs, societal participation is becoming increasingly more important to ensure their buy-in and implementation.

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Section I. Introduction

National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) are the primary instruments for implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) at the national level as stated in Article 6 of the Convention. They lay down how a given country intends to fulfil the objectives of the Convention in light of its specific national circumstances.

Article 6 General Measures for Conservation and Sustainable Use

Each Contracting Party shall, in accordance with its particular conditions and capabilities:

- (a) Develop national strategies, plans or programmes for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity or adapt for this purpose existing strategies, plans or programmes which shall reflect, inter alia, the measures set out in this Convention relevant to the Contracting Party concerned; and
- (b) Integrate, as far as possible and as appropriate, the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity into relevant sectoral or cross-sectoral plans, programmes and policies.

In the process of elaborating their NBSAPs, Parties have to think about how best to address the threats to their biodiversity. NBSAPs are a living instrument that evolves and should be revised on a constant basis once new knowledge on conservation, sustainable use and on the status of national biodiversity is gained.

With the adoption of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its 20 Aichi Targets, the Parties to the CBD underlined the importance of meaningful NBSAPs and set themselves 2015 as the deadline to “*develop, adopt as a policy instrument, and commence implementing an effective, participatory and updated National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan*” (Aichi Target 17). Updated NBSAPs are fundamental in achieving the Aichi Targets and hence have to be revised by 2015 according to Target 17.

An important element brought forward by Target 17 is the fact that Parties have not only to revise and update their NBSAP but also adopt them as *policy instruments*, meaning that they have to be incorporated and integrated into national government planning instruments so that they are implemented alongside other national policies and priorities. In this regard, Target 17 is intended to “mainstream” biodiversity into all national sectors, including the economic planning sector.

Aichi Target 17

By 2015 each Party has developed, adopted as a policy instrument, and has commenced implementing an effective, participatory and updated national biodiversity strategy and action plan.

As of September 2014, 180 Parties (93% of Parties) have developed NBSAPs in line with Art. 6. Since the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CBD COP10) in 2010, the CBD Secretariat (SCBD), has received 29 NBSAPs (22 already revised, 7 first-time documents) with varying degrees of conformity with the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020.¹

COP10 in Decision X/2 urged Parties to review and update their NBSAPs in light of the new Strategic Plan and to develop national and regional targets. Decision X/2 also calls upon

¹ <https://www.cbd.int/nbsap/about/latest/default.shtml>

international organizations to help Parties in this process. COP11 Decision XI/2 stresses this message and further urges Parties to update and revise NBSAPs and to report on their progress by COP12. It further invites Parties to submit their NBSAPs to a voluntary peer review. The need to conduct this revision with the inclusion of all relevant stakeholders is underlined. Paragraph 9 of the decision reiterates an earlier request to the Executive Secretary, together with partner organizations, to facilitate the exchange of best practices and lessons learned.

At this juncture, when Parties to the Convention are reviewing progress made towards the achievement of the Aichi Targets mid-way through the UN Decade on Biodiversity and the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, most countries should now be entering into a phase where they advance in the update and revision of their NBSAPs to reach Target 17 in 2015. COP 12 was thus expected to call on Parties to pursue the process of revision and implementation of NBSAPs, and where necessary to accelerate it, in order to contribute towards the mission, goals and targets of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020.

As reported in the fourth edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook (GBO4), the degree to which countries are implementing their updated strategies and action plans varies significantly and thus at the current pace, Target 17 will not be met by 2015 in all its components. A key recommendation from GBO4, alongside other actions, is to ensure that NBSAPs are developed **through an open, consultative and participatory process involving a wide range of rights-holders and stakeholders from across the country, including indigenous and local communities.**

Section II. Global Situation Analysis

With the momentum provided by the adoption of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Targets, Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity are in the process of revising or updating their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) to reflect the Aichi Targets. Parties have set 2015 as the deadline to have finished preparation and adoption, and commence implementation. Target 17 can be considered an “enabling target”, meaning that its achievement will constitute an important step forward in creating the right conditions at the national level to allow for the attainment of all the other Aichi Targets.

As reported in the Global Biodiversity Outlook 4 (GBO4)², current trends in the development and revision of NBSAPs at the national level are seemingly on track and allow us to conclude that at least the first part of Target 17 will be met by the deadline of 2015.

Aichi Target 17

By 2015 each Party has developed, adopted as a policy instrument, and has commenced implementing an effective, participatory and updated national biodiversity strategy and action plan.

However, the level of association (or alignment) of available updated NBSAPs with the guidance set by the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Convention varies significantly. “The degree to which countries are implementing their updated strategies and action plans is also variable, suggesting that, while progress can be reported on these components of the target, they will not be achieved by 2015.”³

The first action recommended in the GBO4 to tackle this situation, alongside other key actions, in order to enhance progress towards meeting Aichi Target 17 in its entirety, is to ensure that **“the NBSAP is developed through an open, consultative and participatory process involving a wide range of rights-holders and stakeholders from across the country, including indigenous and local communities.”**

Why is an open, consultative and participatory process that essential? In other words, why is participation of relevant actors in society important for public policy-making? How is participation understood? Who are the most relevant stakeholders and actors? How many constitutes a wide range of right-holders?

In trying to address these and other questions, this section will first look at the theory of participation and highlight key elements of this theoretical framework (distinctive traits) that will help in better understanding the processes that took place, or are taking place, as countries develop and revise their NBSAPs in accordance with Aichi Target 17. Then a brief account of the NBSAPs process before 2010 is presented pointing at the possible reasons for their limited implementation. Finally, a short global overview of the participatory processes reported in the post-Nagoya NBSAPs that have been submitted to the Secretariat thus far is presented.

² Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (2014) *Global Biodiversity Outlook 4*. Advance copy. Montréal, 155 pages. Pages 110-112.

³ Ibid.

1 The theory behind participatory processes

Natural resource governance is shaped by the norms, institutions and processes that determine how power and responsibilities over the resource are exercised, how decisions are taken, and how citizens – men and women – participate in the management of natural resources, voice their concerns and views about biodiversity conservation and thus participate in environmental decision-making processes. The quality of these decision-making processes is one of the singular most important determinants as to the contribution ecosystems make to human well-being and the long-term prospects for successful biodiversity conservation. Sharing power, responsibility and benefits in natural resource management, as well as strengthening governance arrangements, including legal entitlements and policies, to make decisions more transparent, inclusive and equitable, are good for both people and biodiversity. This is the basis of a just world that is capable of valuing and conserving nature.

Natural resource governance theory has emphasized the rights of people to participate in environmental decision-making processes, policies and plans put forward by their governments when these may affect them directly or indirectly. This emphasis on public participation is at the basis of democratic theory and has not been strange to environmental policy-making. Indeed, this principle is embedded in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development adopted at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, and can be found in a growing number of global and regional environmental agreements including the Convention on Biological Diversity itself.

Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration

Environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the national level, each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, including information on hazardous materials and activities in their communities, and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available. Effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy, shall be provided.

Within the context of the CBD, the Conference of Parties has provided guidance on stakeholder involvement in the NBSAP process at numerous occasions as summarized in the table below.

COP Decisions: NBSAP Revision Process and Stakeholder Involvement

National reporting; Monitoring	X/10 para 9(b); XI/3 para 6
Clearing-House Mechanism (CHM) (funding)	X/15 para 2(c)
Business engagement	X/21 para 1(e) and (g)
Subnational Governments, Cities and Other Local Authorities	X/22 para 2; XI/8 A para 4
Children and youth	XI/8 B paras 1, 2
Civil society	XI/8 C paras 1, 2
Indigenous and local communities	XI/14 B para 17
Cooperation with other conventions, international organizations, and initiatives	XI/6 paras 10 and 11

1.1 Multiple benefits

Public participation, under its various names, including stakeholder engagement or community involvement, plays a pivotal role in environmental management as it increases the substantive and procedural quality of decisions taken and thus has a positive impact on the quality and collective implementation of those decisions.

Optimism in academic circles around public participation has come about as it has been seen as contributing to reaching overarching societal goals and aspirations including incorporating public values into decision-making, resolving conflicts among competing or divergent interests, or restoring confidence and trust in governmental authorities and public agencies. “These positive findings are tempered somewhat by lingering questions about how well the social goals are realized beyond the small group of people actually participating in the planning process.”⁴

Public participation materializes in various ways.. Different actors of society have different perceptions, assumptions and preferences with respect to the environment that surrounds them. They have different values and understand and value nature in a different way. The role they play in advancing these values will be weighed against other actors’ perceptions, assumptions and preferences when they all get together to take decisions on how to go about this or that environmental “problem”. It is thus important to understand who is effectively present in a given decision-making process, who is represented and who is not.

Although public participation is known to take time, be costly, and complex, it also brings numerous benefits to biodiversity planning making it more meaningful and effective. These benefits can include:⁵

a) *Linking planning and implementation by ensuring greater support, ownership and shared responsibility of the policy product*⁶: National biodiversity planning involves not only planning but also implementation. It is not enough to make a biodiversity plan if it is not going to be implemented. Ensuring the participation of stakeholders and other groups in the planning exercise increases the chances of the resulting plan being implemented. In other words, participation acts as the “glue” between planning and implementation as interested parties will be loyal to a policy because they feel committed to something they contributed to and participated in.

b) *Accessing a full range of knowledge and information and increasing democracy*: It is evident that a usually small group of government officials, expert biodiversity planners (or designers), let alone a consultant, will never have the wealth of information, understanding, experience and knowledge to be able to effectively tackle all the various issues that will arise in the planning, development and implementation of a such a broad instrument as an NBSAP. If only the information and knowledge coming from a small group of experts is taken into consideration, the resulting policy and plan will inevitably be a theoretical, top-down policy instrument which will prove ineffective, and will most likely be shelved. Participatory public policy-making leads to better quality instruments as presumably the knowledge and expertise of all participating actors is used in the public policy. And when a participatory process is put forward, different stakeholders, actors and citizens are better educated in policy-making and are up-to-date with the issues at hand.

c) *Raising awareness and building consensus*: Indeed, much of the theory behind participatory environmental planning has focused on the issue of conflict resolution, portraying deliberations and consultations as means to reach an agreement over a perceived (common) problem. However, participatory processes can also be valued for the advantages that they bring in helping different actors understand the goals and perspectives

⁴ Beierle, Thomas C. and Konisky, David M. Values, Conflict and Trust in Participatory Environmental Planning. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, Vol.19, No.4, 587-602 (2000), p. 588.

⁵ Based on and adapted from Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (2012) NBSAP training modules, Version 2 – Module B-5. Ensuring Inclusive Societal Engagement in the Development, Implementation and Updating of NBSAPs. Montreal, July 2012 (revised).

⁶ Edelenbos, Jurrien. “Design and Management of Participatory Public Policy Making”. *Public Management: an international journal of research and theory*. Vol1, Issue 4 (1999), p.569-578.

of others, learning from one another, fostering communication and building relationships that, in turn, can improve biodiversity management in the medium and long term.

d) *Maximizing policy coherence and efficiency*: An NBSAP is not only a national environmental policy and a plan of action; ideally, it is also policy stemming from different economic sectors, interest groups and government agencies. “The participation of the public and of policy-makers from these different sectors and tiers of government in the NBSAP process is critical if there is to be coherence and mutual reinforcement between biodiversity and policies at different levels of government, and between biodiversity and other policy areas.”⁷

1.2 Understanding the process

A focus on understanding public policy-making by looking at the process of public policy formation (instead of only the content) has been prominent in the literature.⁸ Even if not always evident, the way a participatory public policy-making process is designed will have a considerable impact on the overall effectiveness of the process itself and the resulting public policy. Important elements in every process design include:

- the organization of the process (description of roles, positions, tasks and responsibilities of the different actors as well as the way the information will be shared and presented);
- the conditions or limits to the process (deadlines for instance);
- the rules of the game (how actors will debate, interact in the decision-making process, use of information, etc);
- mobilization (or consultation) plan (how to get representation of different views and values as well as possible solutions); and
- decision-making rules (determining who and how will take the final decision be taken- Minister’s approval vs. Majority or consensus).⁹

It is no secret that these days more and more public officials are confronted with decreasing levels of public support and trust. Some will argue that this drop in public confidence is a healthy public scepticism in view of numerous government scandals and higher public scrutiny. But with this decrease in trust in public institutions that are responsible for solving complex environmental problems, the chances of effectively resolving those issues for the benefit of all, also decreases dramatically. Having greater public control over environmental problems and their solutions through higher involvement and shared responsibility can significantly reverse this lack of trust in public authorities. In other words, as long as different actors of society take part, share their views and beliefs, and participate in environmental decision-making processes alongside public authorities, the chances of restoring trust in them are higher and also the higher the likelihood of the resulting decisions, policies and plans of being fully implemented.

Another aspect that has been highlighted in the participation literature over the last decade has been the need for understanding participatory processes as two-way interactions between “decision-makers” and the “public” and which include deliberation, discussion or dialogue among participants. It is important to emphasize here that in theory deliberation involves careful and serious weighing of reasons for and against some proposition and as such goes beyond merely discussing issues. Deliberation thus demands the presence of

⁷ Opcit. SCBD Module p.7-8.

⁸ Edelenbos, Jurrien. “Design and Management of Participatory Public Policy Making”. Public Management: an international journal of research and theory. Vol1, Issue 4 (1999).

⁹ Opcit. Edelenbos

active and engaged participants (and with comparable levels of knowledge about the subject matter of deliberation). Indeed, information and knowledge can constitute sources of power and thus enable actors to deliberate (and participate) more actively. In addition, there is certainly widespread support for the basic elements of deliberation and its focus on improving and resulting in greater accountability, legitimacy, responsiveness and ownership of decisions taken, policies and plans adopted.¹⁰

1.3 How participatory?

Four components stand out as being part of any evaluation of a deliberative, consultative or participatory process. These are:

- representation;
- structure of the process (procedures);
- information used in the process; and
- the outcomes and decisions arising from the process.¹¹

Evaluating the degree of representation implies looking at the different types or levels of representation that can be achieved like geographical, demographical or political. One can evaluate how representative a deliberative or participatory process has been by looking at how much it managed to cover a good proportion of the national territory, or by analysing the degree in which it involved a wide range of societal groups or only a few, or by looking at political ascription of those that participated in the process. Further, if we measure societal participatory processes along a continuum towards more inclusiveness, integration, and deliberation of and with various representative actors, where presumably the higher the level of these attributes the better the end result is, it becomes apparent that mapping out (and understanding) who these actors are, is critical. Questions like: who consults who, who is consulted, who initiates a public consultation, as well as, what is being asked and how are questions being asked should be considered.¹²

Looking at the structure or the procedural aspects of the process entails analysing and evaluating things like how legitimate, reasonable, responsive or fair the actual procedure has been. For instance, one could look at when the opinion of the public (other actors) was sought, why and through which means (how), what exactly was put to public scrutiny and consultation (an almost final policy, plan or product or a draft with loose elements of what would become a policy, plan or product), how much time for public deliberation and consultation was allocated, how much were participants able to challenge the information they were provided with, etc.

Evaluating the process by means of the information that is selected, presented and finally included in the agreed course of action is also important. Accessibility, availability, degree of complexity, adequacy and timing of information about the process and about the more technical aspects of the subject matter as well as the tools used to communicate and convey that information can have a significant impact on the quality of the resulting policy, plan or decision, and of the process itself. It is also important to look at who transmits which information and to whom.

¹⁰ Abelson, Julia et al. "Deliberations about deliberative methods: issues in the design and evaluation of public participation processes". *Social Science & Medicine* 57 (2003), p. 239-251.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ballamingie, Patricia (2009) "Democratizing Public Consultation Processes: Some Critical Insights." *Journal of Public Deliberation*: Vol.5: Iss.1, Article 11.

In turn, evaluating a participatory process by means of its outcomes means looking at things like the extent to which public inputs were taken into consideration and integrated in the final outcomes or decisions, what was incorporated and what was not and why, the level of public communication and disclosure of the decisions taken, and the degree of satisfaction of the different actors and participants about the end result.

In sum, there are many ways of understanding societal participation and what it implies. Participation takes place when different parts of society (actors) come together to formulate a policy or agree on a course of action for a given common problem. These different actors take a conscious decision to carry the participatory process forward. Participation can also involve public deliberations where group discussions (for instance, at workshops, meetings or hearings) take place. Others will refer to societal participation as designing public policy cooperatively, meaning there is no room for a “winner-takes-it-all” approach. Nevertheless, the observance of a participatory process does not mean absence of leadership or anarchy; on the contrary, actors have different roles and responsibilities and these include leading, contributing, engaging in or simply observing the process.. In order for a participatory process to lead to the most beneficial results it needs to be planned carefully from the beginning, including the details and steps of the process, and not just take place at random as this would certainly have consequences on the eventual outcomes.

Understanding public policy participatory processes: Key issues to consider

Defining and communicating *the problem* to be solved from the outset

Fulfilment of so-called *democratic principles*

Understanding the plurality of standpoints

Interactions of different actors and setting priorities for action

Process-oriented policy-making vs. Content-oriented

Mapping different actors and their interests

Reaching out to “others” (and defining them)

Coming up with agreed (or at least not contested) solutions

2 Societal participation in pre-2010 NBSAPs

The elaboration of NBSAPs started shortly after the entry into force of the Convention and by the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP10) in Nagoya, Japan, most countries had adopted at least one NBSAP while some had already developed at least a revised version. As the key implementing mechanism of the Convention, much hope was directed towards this instrument and its potential to significantly contribute to addressing, and reversing, the main drivers of biodiversity loss. However, the “first-generation” of NBSAPs prepared between 1996 and 2003 saw important shortcomings in their implementation in terms of the process and its design. Of the various obstacles to implementation pointed out by various analyses, several are directly linked to the (lack of) participation, involvement or engagement of the different societal actors and their views in the process of development or revision of the NBSAP.

According to the UNU-IAS study on NBSAPs conducted in 2010¹³, these instruments are unlikely to be effectively implemented if they have been poorly prepared and designed, and the shortcomings in this respect in many first-generation NBSAPs may be the biggest obstacle to implementation. The authors outline seven main obstacles to the implementation of those early NBSAPs, three of which are linked directly or indirectly to societal participation. First, Prip et al. point to shortcomings in terms of the NBSAP preparation. They point out to the crucial importance of involving stakeholders in the preparation phase of the NBSAP and argue that while nearly all (first-generation) NBSAPs were prepared through a consultative process, important stakeholders such as local authorities, indigenous and local communities, women and the private sector were in many cases largely absent. They also observe that the process was often too short to obtain genuine ownership, and the momentum from the preparatory phase was often lost in the implementation phase.

Second, lack of ownership is also mentioned as one important challenge to implementation of early NBSAPs. They observed that most of these NBSAPs were not 'owned' at the appropriate political level, implying that mainstreaming across sectors did not take place even if that was an expectation of the NBSAP. Lack of ownership can be attributed to lack of proper inclusion, consultation and integration of diverse societal groups' and sectors' views and preferences. Or conversely, "ownership and buy-in are likely to result in initiative and action on the part of the public. This may mean that a particular economic sector sees its own benefit in conservation action and agrees, for example, to finance the establishment of a marine protected area, to lobby for the removal of biodiversity damaging subsidies, to change the laws relating to the practice of tourism, or to take on any other action in favour of the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity."¹⁴

A third challenge to implementation mentioned in the UNU-IAS study which is related to participation of societal actors is thus mainstreaming. In general, many NBSAPs dealt with the integration of biodiversity concerns within sectoral and cross-sectoral plans and policies in very vague terms, often with no identification of the lead agency responsible for each activity in the action plan. As a result, these first-generation NBSAPs were not used by sectors to reorient their policies and effectively integrate biodiversity concerns in their practices, policies and plans.

Consequently, when considering these and other shortcomings in implementation of first-generation NBSAPs, the resulting assessment is quite pessimistic. Encouragingly, however, Prip et al. report that the information obtained during the pre-Nagoya years, especially through the regional and sub-regional workshops and through the fourth national reports, portrayed a more nuanced picture and a more optimistic trend.

By September 2010, 171 countries (89 % of the CBD Parties) had adopted their NBSAPs or equivalent instruments. Many of these so called second-generation NBSAPs (from 2003-2010) were quite comprehensive in scope, and the way in which they were prepared, by adopting a participatory process, represented a major step forward.

For instance, Germany's NBSAP was developed through a highly participatory process with strong political support from parliament and government. The document that was adopted by Cabinet in November 2007 contains 330 concrete targets with deadlines for most of them, and about 430 measures, which call upon the various governmental and non-governmental

¹³ Prip, C; Gross, T; Johnston, S; Vierros, M (2010). *Biodiversity Planning: an assessment of national biodiversity strategies and action plans*. United Nations University Institute of Advanced Studies, Yokohama, Japan.

¹⁴ Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (2012) NBSAP training modules, Version 2 – Module B-5. Ensuring Inclusive Societal Engagement in the Development, Implementation and Updating of NBSAPs. Montreal, July 2012 (revised).

actors to take action (including actions involving the other biodiversity-related conventions and agreements).¹⁵

Equally encouraging is the fact that these second-generation NBSAPs – including both revised and newly developed NBSAPs – were usually closer to the intended content and structure of NBSAPs as depicted through the myriad of decisions of the Conferences of the Parties to the Convention and the subsequent NBSAPs guidance and tools. Also, these NBSAPs commonly revealed a stronger emphasis on mainstreaming and aimed at including more societal actors and sectors in their development and implementation.

3 Societal participation in post-2010 NBSAPs and 5th National Reports to date

An important element brought forward by Aichi Target 17 is that Parties need to *adopt NBSAPs as policy instruments*, facilitating their incorporation and integration into national government planning instruments so that they are implemented alongside other national policies and priorities. In this regard, Target 17 is intended to “mainstream” biodiversity into all national sectors, including the economic planning sector.

By September 2014, 180 Parties (93% of Parties) have developed NBSAPs in line with Art. 6. Since the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (CBD COP10) in 2010, the CBD Secretariat (SCBD), has received 29 NBSAPs (22 already revised, 7 first-time documents) with varying degrees of conformity with the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020.¹⁶ To date, 84 fifth national reports have been submitted to the Convention. In addition, 31 countries have sent advanced draft reports.¹⁷

While in the first generation most NBSAPs were merely approved at ministerial level or administrative level, only few were adopted as “whole-of-government” policies. Recent analysis seems to suggest that since the second revisions and especially when looking at the current set of revised NBSAPs, more countries have favoured the adoption of their NBSAP as a policy document for the entire government. Examples include the NBSAP of Spain which has been adopted as a Royal Decree; the NBSAP of Japan, Myanmar and Tuvalu which were adopted or endorsed by Cabinet; and the NBSAP of Belarus which was approved by the Council of Ministers.¹⁸

In addition, only a few of the recently submitted and revised NBSAPs seem to serve as guidance or framework documents. For instance Belgium’s NBSAP was adopted as a framework and guidance document by the Inter-ministerial Conference for the Environment; El Salvador’s NBSAP provides a framework and specific guidance on actions related to environment; and the NBSAP of Timor-Leste is a guiding policy framework for district and sub-district authorities, civil society and the private sector in their approaches to biodiversity conservation and ecosystems management. The remaining NBSAPs (around 40% of the submissions to the CBD) do not provide sufficient information to know if they have been adopted as a policy instrument and if they have been what type of instruments they are.

Regarding process documentation on stakeholders’ participation in the newly revised NBSAPs as well as the fifth national reports received to date by the Secretariat, most Parties reported the involvement of a range of stakeholders in the NBSAP revision process. The

¹⁵ <https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/de/de-nbsap-01-en.pdf>

¹⁶ From CBD Website: <https://www.cbd.int/nbsap/about/latest/default.shtml>

¹⁷ UNEP/CBD/COP/12/10 p. 4.

¹⁸ From Technical Series 78, Progress Towards the Aichi Biodiversity Targets: An assessment of biodiversity trends, policy scenarios and key action, Chapter 17 – National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (Target 17) pp. 395-406, available at: <http://www.cbd.int/doc/publications/cbd-ts-78-en.pdf>.

government ministries that were more commonly involved in the NBSAP revision were: Agriculture, Fisheries, Forestry, Education, as well as Development and Planning. Other Ministries involved included: Economy, Finance, Trade & Industry, Tourism, Culture, Transportation, Social Affairs/Welfare, Health, Sports, and Science.

Parties also reported the involvement of other stakeholders in the revision process. These include indigenous and local communities, NGOs and civil society, including women, the private sector, and academia. For instance, Tuvalu's first NBSAP (2012-2016) has emphasized the need for broad stakeholder engagement with a view to building ownership of the NBSAP by all nationals. The document reports on a wide stakeholders' consultation process which culminated in the Stakeholders National Workshop (April 2010), which in turn resulted in the confirmation of the priority focus areas for the Tuvalu NBSAP.

The Dominican Republic's NBSAP 2011-2020 is the country's first NBSAP. Women as well as the business sector are reported as having been highly involved in the NBSAP development process. Venezuela's new National Strategy for the Conservation of Biological Diversity (2010-2020) was formulated with the participation of a wide variety of sectors within society (academia, government and community-based organizations), in several workshops that took place over a period of 18 months. Overall, over 1600 people participated throughout the country, actively engaging in the discussions and making their different points of view heard. This collective construction ensured that participants were involved in the entire process of preparing the Strategy.

In their fifth national reports, Parties have also reported on stakeholder participation under various sections and covering a range of actions. For instance, in Dominica, stakeholders participated in the assessment of previous NBSAPs. In Estonia, experts from universities and the business sector are explicitly mentioned and also interest groups are reported to have taken part in the drafting of the NBSAP. In Finland, the Aichi Targets were introduced to the public through civil society discussions organised without a predefined structure or content plan. Citizens were openly asked to provide their views for the development of the revised NBSAP and on the national implementation of the Aichi Targets. The feedback received in this way was ample and insightful. In Myanmar, multi-stakeholder consultation workshops and thematic working group meetings took place including government departments, NGOs and academic institutions. In China, a range of stakeholders has been reported to take part in working meetings, consultations with twenty central government departments and thirty-one provincial governments. In Nepal, gender-balanced and socially inclusive consultations with stakeholders took place at national, regional, district and community levels.

4 As a way of early conclusion

In a few words, this overview has presented a brief theoretical background to participatory approaches in public policy-making (and implementation) focusing on the ongoing revision processes of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) under the Convention on Biological Diversity. Using various sources of information – including NBSAPs and National Reports to the Convention -, this section presented a brief situation analysis on the extent to which Parties have opted for and embarked on societal participatory processes in the revision of their NBSAPs and have reported doing so. Even if the data is still slim, this brief overview has pointed out the importance of engaging all relevant actors who have a stake in the resulting NBSAPs.

In the next sections, we will look more closely at the “participatory processes” that have recently taken place in ten countries: **Antigua & Barbuda, Bhutan, Burkina Faso,**

Colombia, Fiji, Georgia, Guatemala, Iraq, Namibia, and the Philippines. Then, more succinctly, we will present some highlights of three additional countries: **Belgium, France and Switzerland.** In all these countries a participatory process of some sort has occurred as part of the revision of their NBSAPs (or their first development as is the case of Iraq). While differences among the various processes are highlighted, the aim is not to make one approach stand out over another.

Section III. Insights from ten country studies

One of the major reasons for shortfalls in implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) is inadequate stakeholders' participation in biodiversity planning. Numerous decisions and guidance of the Conference of the Parties, as well as a solid body of research on public policy have stressed the need for- and importance of participation in order to ensure societal actors' ownership, and hence, commitment of human, financial and other resources necessary to implement the actions.

In all the countries that form part of this study, a participatory process has taken place as part of the revision/development of NBSAPs. However, regional and national particularities lead to a great variety of ways in which the processes were carried out and of the stakeholders that were effectively involved at different stages of the process.

In this section, this range of participatory processes observed in the course of the development and revision of NBSAPs in the ten countries covered in this study are presented. This chapter thus contains a short introduction and overview of each of the countries' NBSAP process, followed by a summary of common elements and traits as well as differences of these diverse national contexts and participatory approaches.

The analysis is based on the ten individual national monographs that were developed for this study. As such, only extracts of those individual studies were used to develop this section. Nevertheless, country monographs as submitted by the national researchers and endorsed by the National Focal Points are available [online](#)¹⁹.

¹⁹ http://iucn.org/news_homepage/events/cbd/work/revision_of_nbsaps/participatory_processes/

5 Ten countries, ten different stories

5.1 Antigua & Barbuda

Antigua and Barbuda is an archipelagic state located in the Caribbean Sea. The two main islands of Antigua and Barbuda are characterized by different topography and geology. Major ecosystems include wetlands, coastal zones as well as mangrove forests. Tourism and fisheries are important sectors in Antigua and Barbuda. The country is a constitutional monarchy with a British-style parliamentary system of government. Antigua and Barbuda became a party to the CBD in 1993 and developed its first NBSAP in 2001 which was unfortunately never approved by the Cabinet. The study focuses on the revision of this first NBSAP that began in late 2012.

5.2 Bhutan

The Kingdom of Bhutan is a small landlocked country located in the eastern Himalayas in South Asia. In spite of its size, Bhutan is richly endowed with both renewable and non-renewable natural resources. Bhutan is primarily an agrarian society with nearly 70% of the population still engaging in subsistence agriculture and forestry. Bhutan's political system transitioned from absolute monarchy to parliamentary democracy in 2008. The major sources of revenue for the government are earnings from hydropower exports and tourism supplemented by mineral based industries. Today, the country is known for its proactive approach to modern development characterized by its emphasis on environmental preservation in development and more recently the pursuit and promotion of Gross National Happiness (GNH) as an alternative measure of development. Bhutan became a signatory to the CBD in 1992 and since then has developed three NBSAPs (1997, 2002, 2009) known in the country as Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs). This study looks at these BAP processes with a focus on the NBSAP revision that started with the BAP IV process in 2010.

5.3 Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso is a landlocked country in the heart of West Africa. Its tropical weather alternates between a long dry season and a short rainy one. Agriculture is very important for the country's economy and occupies the majority of its population. Burkina Faso ratified the CBD in 1993. While Burkina Faso's Biodiversity Strategy (2001) covers a 25-year period, its Action Plan is revised every five years. The Biodiversity Action Plan (2011-2015) is currently under implementation and is analysed here.

5.4 Colombia

Colombia is located in the northern-most part of South America and is the only South American country with coasts on both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. A constitutional democracy, Colombia is known for its natural richness, and is one of the mega-diverse countries in the world. Colombia signed the CBD in 1992 and has since then prepared five National Reports (1998, 2005, 2006, 2010 and 2014) and a National Policy (submitted 2012). The Action Plan to that National Policy is being developed at the moment and is the subject of this study.

5.5 Fiji

Fiji is an island country comprising an archipelago of more than 332 islands of which 110 are permanently inhabited by close to 900,000 people. The majority of Fiji's islands are volcanic and mountainous and covered with thick tropical forests. The two main islands are Viti Levu and Vanua Levu on which 87% of Fiji's population resides. Fiji is governed under a constitution adopted in 2013. Fiji ratified the CBD in 1993 and in 1997 started its NBSAP development process. This was completed in 1999 and endorsed in Cabinet in 2003 to be finally launched in 2007. In 2010 an Implementation Framework (2010-2014) was devised to accompany the NBSAP. This study mostly looks at the process of revision of the NBSAP since 2003.

5.6 Georgia

Georgia is a country in the South Caucasus region between the Black and Caspian Seas. It has a diverse landscape made up of mountains, lowland plains with a relatively humid subtropical climate in the west and a drier climate in the east. Georgia has remarkably rich and diverse flora in comparison to other temperate countries. Being not particularly rich in minerals or fossil fuel, Georgia's importance is mainly related to its role as a transit country for crude oil from east to west. Georgia is a republic where the executive power is shared between the President, Head of State and the Prime Minister, Head of Government. Georgia's first NBSAP was adopted in 2005 and this study focuses on its revision and the development of its second NBSAP.

5.7 Guatemala

Considered a mega-diverse country, Guatemala is located in Central America with access to both Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Traditionally its development has been based mostly on the exploitation of renewable and non-renewable natural resources. Even now, more than fifty percent of the export products come from agriculture. More than half of the population are poor and come from indigenous and/or rural origins. Party to the CBD since 1995, Guatemala adopted in 2011 the National Biodiversity Policy and the revised NBSAP (2012-2022) is the main instrument for its implementation.

5.8 Iraq

The republic of Iraq is a country in south western Asia. The landscape is characterized by mountain ranges, deserts, and fertile land along the major rivers of the country. The protection of the environment is part of the Constitution of Iraq (2005) according to which *“every individual has the right to live in safe environmental conditions”* and *“the State shall undertake the protection and preservation of the environment and its biological diversity”*. Iraq acceded to the CBD in 2009 and therefore the participatory process covered in this study is the one regarding the development of the country's first NBSAP. It is the only country in this study where no previous NBSAP had been established and no existing process could be built upon. Despite this difference, no distinction will be made in analysing this NBSAP process and those of the other countries in the study.

5.9 Namibia

Namibia is located in southern Africa with the Atlantic Ocean as its western border. The country has a population of 2.1 million people and is the world's 34th largest country. Therefore Namibia is one of the least densely populated countries in the world and it hosts the arid Namib Desert. The country has a stable multi-party parliamentary democracy and its economy is built on mining, agriculture and tourism. The protection of natural resources has been included in the Constitution of the country. Namibia ratified the CBD in 1997 and developed its first NBSAP in 2001. The present study thus covers the participatory process in the revision of the first NBSAP to develop the country's second NBSAP.

5.10 Philippines

The Philippines, one of the world's largest archipelago nations is situated in the Western Pacific Ocean. It is one of 17 megadiverse countries. The Philippines also ranks among the ten countries with the largest number of threatened species. The Philippines has vast natural resources that are a source of food, water, shelter and livelihood for its rapidly growing population. It is also a culturally diverse country with indigenous peoples and cultural communities spread across the different ecological territories and ancestral domain titles exist. The Philippines is a republic and was one of the first thirty one countries to ratify the CBD. In 1998 the Philippines developed its first NBSAP and revisited it in 2002. The study reports on the revision of the NBSAP that started in 2013.

6 Common elements in the NBSAPs participatory processes

6.1 NBSAPs coordination and institutional structure

CBD COP decision IX/8 explicitly calls on Parties to establish or strengthen national institutional arrangements for the promotion, coordination and monitoring of the implementation of NBSAPs. Each country's political context is different and so are the institutions that serve national interests, including the protection of the environment. The way these institutions are organized and structured to deliver on national and international priorities and obligations, including preparing National Reports to the CBD and developing or revising NBSAPs, influences the nature and implementation of these instruments.

In the ten countries in this study a variety of political and institutional arrangements were observed and each played a particular role in the NBSAP development and revision. The way national institutions are structured to revise NBSAPs also seems to have shaped the degree of participation of stakeholders in the process.

6.1.1 Lead agency

In all ten countries, the lead agency for the NBSAP development and revision process is generally within the government, mostly the Ministry of Environment (or its equivalent). Usually, this lead agency also hosts the National Focal Point (NFP) to the CBD. The specific ways those responsibilities are assigned and tasks distributed between these lead institutions and other governmental (and non-governmental) agencies vary. In some cases, responsibility for the design and development of the NBSAP resides in this lead agency but its implementation does not. In other cases, there were overlaps and duplications among various governmental agencies responsible for the NBSAP and these were considered challenging for the effective management of the NBSAP process.

The Ministry of Environment is officially the lead agency in Iraq; the actual management of the NBSAP development process is conducted by the office of the National Focal Point (NFP) to the CBD in the country. In the Philippines the process was led by the Biodiversity Management Bureau, in Namibia by the Department of Environment Affairs of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, in Georgia by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resource Protection (MoENRP) and in Antigua and Barbuda by the Environment Division, the CBD National Focal Point.

The responsibilities of the lead agencies greatly varied which was also due to the way the process was run as will be explained in more detail below. In Antigua and Barbuda for example, the lead agency deliberately limited its involvement to that of a facilitator given that it lacked the legal authority to implement most of the targets discussed and understood the need for stakeholder buy-in to achieve an implementable plan. Thus a multi-stakeholder entity, the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) formulated the content.

In turn, the lead agency championing the NBSAP process in Fiji is the Department of Environment where the CBD and NBSAP Focal Points reside. In Bhutan, the National Environment Commission (NEC) is the highest decision making body on all matters relating to the environment and its management in the country. The NEC is an inter-ministerial agency with the representation from civil society and the private sector. Even though the NEC Secretariat acts as the CBD NFP other institutions were in charge of the three Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) the country has had as the NEC does not have a defined institutional mechanism to decide on environmental priorities. For example BAP IV is being led by the National Biodiversity Centre (NBC).

The NBSAP process in Burkina Faso is coordinated by the Permanent Secretariat of the National Council for the Environment and Sustainable Development (SP/CONEDD) ascribed

to the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MEDD).²⁰ The CBD NFP for Burkina Faso is also part of the SP/CONEDD. In Colombia and Guatemala the institutional structures supporting the NBSAP development and/or revision are quite complex. While in Colombia, the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MADS) is the designated government institution responsible for the implementation the NBSAP project (funded by the Global Environment Facility), the Alexander von Humboldt Institute of Research on Biological Resources (IAvH) also plays a key role and leads on the technical aspects of the NBSAP.

Created in 1989, the National Council for Protected Areas (CONAP) in Guatemala reports directly to the President and hosts the National Technical Office of Biodiversity (OTECBIO) that acts as the NFP. In 2000, the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARN) was created, independently of CONAP, with responsibility on all the matters related to environment and natural resources including protected areas and biodiversity - an evident overlap in institutional functions and responsibilities.

The above reflects the “official” leads of the process in the different countries. However, because of the broad nature of NBSAPs, some of these lead agencies chose to share their responsibilities with others, using different models and arrangements. Different layers of responsibilities for the NBSAPs development and revision process were observed and range from managerial oversight to direct day-to-day management of specific parts of the process such as public consultations and workshops.

6.1.2 Multi-stakeholder arrangements

Even though the institutional set up varied from country to country, with the exception of Iraq, all seem to have established or relied on a steering committee of some sorts to manage the NBSAP development and revision process. Despite the variety in names, the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) in Antigua and Barbuda, NBSAP Steering Committee in Namibia, the NBSAP Revision Coordination Committee in Georgia, the National Project Steering Committee in Colombia, and the Project Steering Committee in the Philippines, they were all composed of different stakeholders and in some cases, included also at least one non-governmental actor. The terms of reference of these committees did differ in the various countries however.

In Georgia, the ministry established a NBSAP Coordination Committee at the very beginning of the process to elaborate the working procedure for the NBSAP revision process. This committee was composed of officials from the ministry, and representatives of leading conservation organisations. However, it did not include representatives from other ministries. When being invited to the Committee some representatives of the civil society organizations raised issues of potential conflict of interest since they were also interested in contributing substantively to the revision process. The lead agency clarified that each external member of this Committee was being invited as an individual expert, and not as a representative of their organization, and that this would thus not create an obstacle to the organizations’ substantive participation. The meetings of the Committee were “*dedicated to important aspects and issues of the revision process such as approving the overall approach as well as any adjustments to the approach, methodology and specific plans, the process design, selection and involvement of implementing organisations and individual short term consultants. Thus the Committee was the ultimate decision making body in the NBSAP revision process*”. In fact, the limited membership of the Committee allowed it to remain focused and ensure its flexibility and fast operation. At time of the elaboration of this

²⁰ Secrétariat Permanent du Conseil National pour l’Environnement et le Développement Durable (SP/CONEDD) qui relève du Ministère de l’Environnement et Développement Durable (MEDD).

analysis, there were discussions underway, whether this Committee should be maintained for the implementation phase, as a monitoring Committee.

In 1997, during the initial stages of the development phase of the first NBSAP in Fiji, the Department of Environment invited a broad spectrum of societal actors to sit on the Steering Committee. These actors still make up the bulk of the current NBSAP Steering Committee. The Committee is executive in nature and has no managerial or administrative function. It is rather a high level coordinating, monitoring and evaluation body comprising representatives of the seven (7) key thematic areas identified in the NBSAP and technical experts as appropriate, observers and Chairs of all the NBSAP working groups.

In Colombia, a National Project Steering Committee (PSC) was convened. Chaired by the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MADS), the PSC serves as the project's coordinator and decision-making body (Project Board). The PSC includes high level representation from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the MADS and the IAVH. It is responsible for ensuring that the project remains on course to deliver quality products to meet the outcomes defined in the GEF EA project document. The MADS high level official is responsible for providing government oversight and guidance to the project implementation. The day-to-day administration of the project, however, is carried out by a Project Implementation Unit (PIU), comprising of a Principle Technical Advisor and a Project Assistant, located within UNEP offices. The Project Manager manages the administrative implementation of all project activities. In addition, the PIU is supported by a Project Technical Team / Project Technical Officer both from the Ministry and the IAVH as well as by the technical backstopping provided by the UNEP/GEF Regional Technical Advisor.

In Guatemala, CONAP, the National Technical Office of Biodiversity (OTECBIO), was in charge of organizing, fundraising and planning for the development of the National Biodiversity Policy (NBP) and updating of the NBSAP. A Technical Unit conformed by CONAP's directors and technical analysts as well as by institutional representatives of its Council was also put in place in order to provide technical advice, identify ways to mainstream biodiversity and ecosystem services into different institutions and call on stakeholders to play a more active role. Other governmental, academic, indigenous and non-governmental organizations were also involved through a Multi-institutional Support Group which provided an external review of the process.

In Bhutan, the Nature Conservation Section (NCS) under the Forestry Services Division was designated as the agency for the development of the first Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP I). The same agency, later renamed as Nature Conservation Division (NCD) coordinated the preparation of BAP II. Upon its establishment in 1998, the National Biodiversity Centre (NBC) under the Ministry of Agriculture took up the role of revising the BAP. This transfer of the coordination role to NBC followed a recommendation from BAP I that called for the establishment of an operational level institution to coordinate biodiversity conservation in Bhutan. Since then, the NBC has produced BAP III and is currently coordinating the revision (BAP IV).

From the above, one can observe that the institutional structures chosen in each country varied according to specific national circumstances (including availability and management of funds). Perhaps because of the broad scope and comprehensive nature of NBSAPs, countries chose to apply a "*subsidiarity approach*" by which the lead agency, looking for support, input and buy-in, chose to share responsibilities and tasks regarding the NBSAP process with other agencies, institutions and stakeholders.

6.1.3 Centralization vs. Decentralization

Certainly different levels of centralization or decentralization of the institutional structures put forward for the NBSAPs process can also be observed. The decision of the official lead agency to conduct the NBSAP process through a more centralized or more decentralized way was often dependent on the national circumstances. It remains to be seen if the different degrees of centralization have an impact on the implementation of the NBSAP in the long run.

The most centralized way of conducting the process seems to be the one chosen in Iraq. Centralized in this regard does not mean the level to which different geographical regions or entities were involved, but rather describes if the NBSAP process (and/or the underlying participatory process) was carried out by one institution or by various institutions. In Iraq for example, the Ministry of Environment is responsible and leads the entire development of the NBSAP, from its procedural to its most content-related aspects, and is also responsible for engaging stakeholders. This means that it is in charge not only of the organisation of the participatory process including identifying stakeholders, organizing workshops and issuing invitations, but also, of bringing the different inputs together and preparing the document.

The biggest contrast is with the process in Georgia which is seemingly the most decentralized. As described in more detail below, the lead agency and Steering Committee hired six implementing agencies to carry out the core part of the consultation process on different topics identified for the NBSAP. While the Steering Committee and NBSAP Secretariat (created by the Steering Committee) kept a close eye on the process, the implementing agencies were quite flexible in how to identify the main stakeholders to consult and who was finally identified and invited to participate in the process. Also the lead agency and Steering Committee engaged some stakeholders, but mostly in the preparation and finalisation phase of the NBSAP revision process.

Another apparently highly decentralized structure (and process) is the one in Burkina Faso. Even if the NBSAP process is officially coordinated by the CBD NFP in the biodiversity programme of the Permanent Secretariat of the National Council for the Environment and Sustainable Development (SP/CONEDD), the actions initiated are first consulted with other high-level representatives of other programmes and conventions within the SP/CONEDD and then also consulted with a wide range of national actors mainly through workshops or written communications. The “partners” that have mostly been called to support the SP/CONEDD in the different parts of the NBSAP process including the consultation process, are those that form part of the so-called Permanent Secretariat of the Non-Governmental Organizations (SPONG)²¹ and mostly the ministries ascribed to the Ministry of Rural Development including Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Ministry of Animal Resources and Fishing, and Ministry of Water, Hydraulic Planning and Sanitation.²²

As mentioned earlier, there is no model-fits-all approach nor is there a right or wrong approach. Both ways of operating can have advantages and disadvantages. For instance, in the centralized approach, if administered transparently, the identification of all relevant stakeholders to participate in the process can be ensured and stakeholders might not be disregarded because they are seen as possible competitors of the implementing or lead agencies. An “outsourced” approach and stakeholder identification on the other hand, does have the potential to be vulnerable to a bias by the supporting agencies. It is recognized in

²¹ Secrétariat Permanent des Organisations Non Gouvernementales (SPONG)

²² Ministères du Développement rural qui regroupent : Le Ministère de l'Environnement et du développement Durable ; L Ministère de l'Agriculture et de la Sécurité Alimentaire ; Le Ministère des Ressources animales et halieutiques ; Le Ministère de l'Eau, des Aménagements hydrauliques et de l'Assainissement.

the case of Georgia that there was a risk that some of these agencies would be tempted to call on and include only those stakeholders that were “easier” to work with or who were less likely to raise potentially controversial issues. Nevertheless, actions were taken in Georgia so that this risk was minimized. The NBSAP Secretariat for example made all attempts to closely monitor the process and, if needed, raise concerns over lack of stakeholder participation. A flipside of the decentralized approach is also the fact that an invitation to participate in the NBSAP process issued by the Ministry of the Environment (or official governmental lead agency) can have much more weight in some countries than an invitation from an “ancillary agency” thus increasing the chances of the invitation being effectively responded to.

Still, the decentralized approach in some countries had also clear advantages. Following with the case of Georgia, the implementing organizations that were selected to support the consultation process were nationally respected and renowned players in the thematic area they were assigned to lead. As a result, they were able to rely on their existing network of stakeholders in their area of expertise and tap into their good connections with key players. There is no doubt that this greatly facilitated the stakeholder identification. In addition, the existing familiarity among professionals had a positive impact on the discussions at the NBSAP workshops and meetings that were carried out and made it easy to reach consensus. In the case of Burkina Faso, the fact that numerous institutions besides the NFP were called to have a role in the NBSAP process greatly increased the sense of ownership of the process by the various participating institutions and sectors.

6.2 Communication, public awareness and participation

Participatory planning processes can require significant investments in their early stages in the effective identification and mobilisation of all relevant stakeholders. The purpose of such mobilisation is to assure that all potential participants in the process are informed of what is happening, are aware of factors that prompted the process, recognize the legitimacy of the people and organizations (lead agency) that have taken the initiative, and are encouraged to become involved.²³ Nevertheless, before relevant stakeholders are effectively mobilised and engaged in a process such as the NBSAP development and revision one, the right communication channels need to be in place and used, and awareness about biodiversity in general and the process in particular needs to be raised. In this section we look at the different aspects surrounding communication and public awareness that were conducive to different levels of participation and engagement of different actors in the NBSAP process.

6.2.1 How was the NBSAP process communicated?

Even though in the majority, if not all of the countries, a communications and awareness-raising strategy or mechanism of some sort is reported to have been put in place to communicate to the general public on the NBSAP process nationally, there is no clear evidence to conclude that as a result, stakeholders were more committed and engaged to the NBSAP's process and in its subsequent implementation. A number of different means of communications were used and some seemed more effective than others in creating the necessary interest and buy-in by diverse societal groups. Sometimes these communication and public awareness tools relied on existing networks and platforms (Ministry's web pages and the Clearing House Mechanism for instance) and in some others new ways of reaching out to marginalized communities were devised (like radio programs in local languages). The more these mechanisms were tailored and targeted to specific actors, the more they seemed to have triggered some positive outcome even if sometimes these outcomes were limited in their scope with regards to the NBSAP process itself.

In Bhutan for instance, the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) process generally begins with public announcements in the media (newspaper, television or radio) usually calling for consultancy services. That is perhaps the first time when the BAP information appears in the public domain. Further, information on the BAP process is also contained in official letters including invitations to participate in stakeholders' workshops and meetings. Such correspondences usually contain background information on BAPs. Nevertheless, participation was limited as workshops and meetings were by invitation only and there were no provisions for other interested people to attend. The process was therefore entirely set within the sphere of "primary stakeholders" and contacts at the national level. There were actually no initiatives to keep informing the general public about the process. With the majority of the population being Internet illiterate and still engaged in subsistence farming, the only popular far-reaching media in Bhutan is radio followed by television. Therefore, to attract the attention of a wider range of the population, radio and television remain effective means of informing the public. It is worth noting the strategy adopted for the launch of BAP II which helped publicize the document and its contents to the general public. Queen Mother Her Majesty Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck launched the BAP II document and this attracted press coverage and thus the interest of the general public.

The case of the Philippines was similar in that workshops were also by invitation only. However an effort was made to inform the public, particularly in the regions, of the NBSAP revision process. To this end, members of local media (print, TV and radio) were invited to participate in the workshops at the regional level. Furthermore to keep the process transparent and all information available to the public, a Facebook account was created

²³ CANARI 2011. Facilitating participatory natural resource management: A toolkit for Caribbean managers. Laventille: CANARI.

where the project management team and the participants of workshops were able to post updates after the workshops.

In Fiji, the Department of Environment confirms that a communications strategy formed integral part of the NBSAP process. Various communication channels were used to reach out to the public and inform about the process. These ranged from newspaper supplements, posters, flyers, radio shows, Sunday programs dedicated to interesting stories on environmental sustainability, promotional materials using public figures and sports people, to making use of the Fiji Biodiversity Clearing House Mechanism Website, and celebrating World Biodiversity and World Environment Day. Despite these efforts, many people in Fiji, including some actors with direct stakes on the conservation of biodiversity (i.e. fishermen) and representatives of high-impact sectors seem not to be aware of the NBSAP process or how to engage in it. The low awareness of the NBSAP can be linked to an excessive use of jargon which prevented certain groups from understanding the document and thus did not allow all different stakeholders to participate on an equal footing.

Communications within participating agencies and actors was at times poor and thus seemed to have contributed to low awareness. For instance, participation to meetings and workshops organized was usually delegated to technical staff who did not properly communicate information to decision-making staff in their respective departments and organizations.

At the outset of the NBSAP revision process in Burkina Faso, a communiqué was released by the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development so as to inform the whole Government about the process. Numerous mailings and letters were also sent to ministries and high-level representatives of civil society calling them to provide initial inputs and participate in the process. Two information-sharing workshops were also organized in August 2012 and February 2013. The latter was used to provide an update of the status of progress in the process.

Within the NBSAP revision process in Burkina Faso, the elaboration of a fully-fleshed biodiversity communications and awareness raising plan is foreseen and some activities have already taken place with that aim. For instance, a survey was prepared to assess the general level of knowledge about biodiversity from different stakeholder groups and the study that is being made out of the information gathered will help improve the information and key messages needed to better engage the general public in biodiversity conservation and associated processes like the NBSAP.

In Antigua and Barbuda it was noticed that past awareness raising efforts on biodiversity conservation through newspapers and websites were not as fruitful as planned. However there was a strong appreciation of the need for raising awareness of the general public also since there is still a sentiment that the Environment Division is against tourism development. Therefore a broad based communication strategy for effective environmental management was elaborated. This strategy goes beyond communicating about the NBSAP process and aims at educating the general public on wider environmental issues. The public's understanding of biodiversity is critical for gathering support for implementing activities. Different groups were targeted through different means. The strategy is designed to result in the nurturing of a long term relationship with key audiences to develop trust and gain credibility for environmental management.

In Guatemala, the process started with a strong communications campaign to raise awareness about the value of biodiversity and ecosystem services, and thus supporting the need to develop a National Biodiversity Policy (NBP) as well as its implementing mechanism, the updated NBSAP. As part of this communications campaign, the book "*Guatemala and its Biodiversity, a historic, cultural, biological and economic approach*" (CONAP, 2008) was published and was then massively distributed including electronically.

The Government of Guatemala also used every opportunity to communicate on biodiversity-related issues including the NBSAP process. For instance, when Guatemala joined the group of Like-Minded Megadiverse Countries (LMMC's) in 2010, the announcement was made in national newspapers, television, posters, and pamphlets, both in English and Spanish. This was decisive as it helped raise awareness of the strategic importance of the country's biodiversity and the need to develop a Strategy for its conservation and sustainable use. The process was also announced through the Clearing House Mechanism as well as through CONAP's website.

Informing the public about the NBSAP revision process was a main element of the NBSAP updating process design of Georgia. Several announcements were made in this context. The first announcement was posted on the biodiversity monitoring website of the lead agency, distributed through the Ministry's newsletter in different districts of the country and circulated through the Caucasus Environmental NGO Network's electronic information network that has about 22,000 subscribers. Subsequent announcements on the progress of the NBSAP revision were placed on the Ministry's website. In addition, representatives of the government and other stakeholders involved participated in a radio show on the national radio station, to announce and discuss the launching of the NBSAP revision process. The final NBSAP was also shared on the Ministry's website for the general public to consult. Despite these efforts, some stakeholders thought that additional targeted outreach and communication work could have been done for example by holding public hearings in areas of national "biodiversity hot spots". It is also suggested that an opportunity might have been missed to transform the NBSAP into a subject matter for environmental education.

6.2.2 Stakeholder identification

The cases of the different countries analysed here do not only show that the institutional set up chosen to conduct the NBSAP process differ from country to country, but also that the roles and responsibilities of each of the actors vary according a myriad of circumstances. The way in which stakeholders were identified and approached to participate also varies from country to country. A multitude of approaches were chosen to identify the key and most relevant stakeholders and in nearly all countries a conscious decision was made early on (at the planning phase) to do so. In other cases however, this process happened rather less planned and just naturally developed over time.

A first step in identifying the stakeholders to participate was usually through the use of a matrix or list prepared by the lead agency. This was the case for example in the Philippines. The lead agency developed a Stakeholder Matrix identifying different sectors, possible agencies to represent them and the potential role they could have in the revision project. The possible roles were for instance, contributing with technical inputs or policy inputs or by ensuring that gender considerations become a part of the NBSAP. In the case of Namibia, the lead agency was also the first instance to identify key stakeholders. They were initially identified to participate in the first workshop which addressed the review of the first NBSAP. Therefore, participants mostly included those actors who were involved in the formulation and implementation of the country's first NBSAP. After the initial workshop the people sitting on the newly established Steering Committee (that itself was composed of governmental and non-governmental actors) identified additional stakeholders who were to be consulted and included in the NBSAP revision process. A similar approach was taken in the case of the Philippines.

In the case of Antigua and Barbuda, the development of the NBSAP was built upon an already existing process, the Sustainable Island Resource Management Mechanism. Its Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was used to carry out the content work of the NBSAP revision. Since the TAC had already identified and engaged a set of stakeholders before directing its attention to the NBSAPs process, part of the actors engaged for the NBSAP revision, were those identified for the initial process. However, additional stakeholders were identified over time since it was believed that it was important for the NBSAP revision process to engage other members of the communities. Consequently, a stakeholder mapping exercise was carried out to identify influential groups and individuals based on the knowledge and experience of the Environment Division. This was complemented by an overview of their level of involvement in resource management activities.

In Iraq, a list of all possible relevant stakeholders was first compiled. The list was then modified, narrowing it down and/or selecting additional stakeholders, using "an ecosystem based approach": stakeholders were identified by matching them to the ecosystem services they use, benefit from, or impact, and by analysing who would be affected by a change in the status or management of the ecosystem. Once identified in this way, these stakeholders were then invited to participate in the process. The gradual expansion of the number of stakeholders over time in Antigua and Barbuda was also influenced by similar considerations.

In other countries like Burkina Faso, an exhaustive list of stakeholders and actors as well as their roles was already prepared in the project document that anteceded the start of the NBSAP revision process. The majority of stakeholders identified initially was consulted and took part in the NBSAP revision process but at different levels and with varying degrees of representativeness. It was observed that the least represented have been the representatives from the private sector and civil society organizations. It is expected nonetheless, that they would be targeted to participate in future planned sectoral consultations.

For the ongoing NBSAP revision process in Fiji, there was no specific stakeholder identification strategy as the current process has followed an extensive stakeholder consultation process which was undertaken for the NBSAP development. This has meant that the same stakeholders have been consulted again. When new stakeholders are identified to participate in the NBSAP process, it is through existing networks like the iTaukei Affairs Board, a statutory body that represents Indigenous affairs in Fiji, and is a key stakeholder group that has ensured the link to the indigenous Fijian communities.

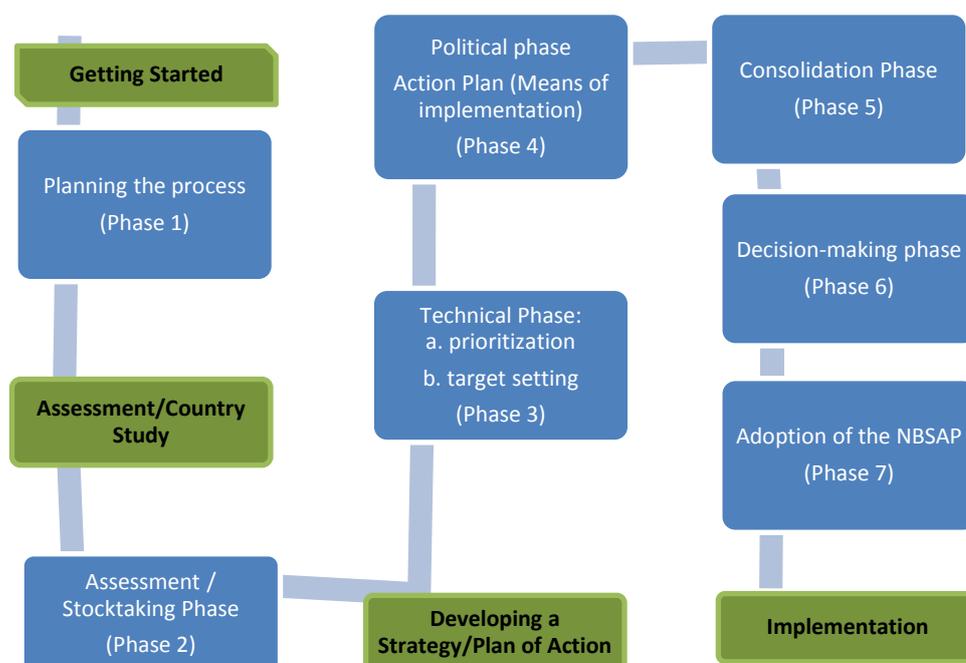
In Bhutan the situation was somewhat different. Stakeholders were identified for the purpose of one to one meetings and for group consultations or workshops. They were identified according to the extent that they would match the objectives set for each particular consultation process. For instance, among the objectives set forth for the consultation process of the first Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP I) was to provide a forum for participation for local people who use, affect, study and conserve biodiversity and thus assure a wide participation in the BAP process. Stakeholders were identified following this logic and ranged from representatives of the local people such as Gups, Chimis, and Mangmi from each district to sawmill owners and paper industry owners. In general though, stakeholders that have mostly been targeted in Bhutan have been those representing government agencies as well as conservation organizations. As a result, many relevant national stakeholders and actors have not been approached to participate.

Given the highly decentralized approach of Georgia, where the core part of the consultations was carried out by six implementing organizations, the ways to identify stakeholders varied. Each implementing organization was responsible for identifying the stakeholders to be consulted on the topics they were leading. The implementing organizations were not only hired for their technical knowledge, but attention was also given to their experience as well as reputation to be able to draw all key stakeholder groups into the process. When identifying stakeholders most organizations did not need to develop a new stakeholder matrix, but could rely on stakeholder maps that they had been using in their projects and on-going activities. When reporting back to the lead agency about their choice, some prepared lists clearly justifying the choice of each stakeholder, while others did not. In the finalisation of the NBSAP, to complement the consultations led by the implementing organizations, the lead agency analysed the choice of stakeholders made by the different organizations and reached out to such groups that had not been included in the consultations.

6.2.3 Stakeholder engagement

Once stakeholders are identified and in some cases mapped out, generally at the planning phases of the process, their actual involvement in the NBSAP process happened from then on in different parts of the process and with varying degrees of engagement and responsibilities. While in some scenarios, stakeholders were included from the beginning (the planning phase) to the end of the process (the final decision making) in other cases, stakeholders were invited only to take part during specific stages of the process. To facilitate the analysis of when stakeholder participation is most prominent and to better understand the composition of stakeholders' groups engaged at each step of the process, we have divided the process in seven (7) Phases as displayed in figure 1. These seven phases can be considered as a sub-set of four of the seven steps of biodiversity planning as contained in CBD NBSAP Module 2.²⁴ This presents the process in a chronological order; however, since the NBSAP process is a living, iterative and evolving process, it must be understood that some of the phases might occur simultaneously or that there might be a back and forth between some of the phases to allow for feedback and adaptation of the course of action.

Figure 1: Stages of the NBSAP Revision Process



Step 1: Getting Started

Phase 1: The planning of the process (development/revision):

This phase constitutes the very first step of the process and describes the initial design and planning of the NBSAP development or revision process. This phase takes place immediately after a government takes the decision to formulate or revise an NBSAP. In this planning phase, the structure and modalities of the process are laid out including setting a timeframe and establishing possible sources of funding. At this stage, the stakeholder

²⁴ <http://www.cbd.int/doc/training/nbsap/b2-train-prepare-update-nbsap-revised-en.pdf>, pp. 7 – 19.

engagement “strategy” is usually also planned. Initial decisions might be taken about which actors should be involved, how is their engagement to take place and when.

In the ten countries analysed, this phase was largely driven by the lead agency like in the case of Iraq, or by a Steering Committee of some sort if one was established, like the cases of Georgia, Namibia, and Antigua and Barbuda. As noted before, when other actors outside the governmental sphere were part of these Steering Committees, spaces were limited to specific stakeholders.

In turn, in Colombia during this first planning phase, it was the Technical Team, composed by technical officers from the lead agencies – the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MADS) and the Humboldt Institute (IAvH), that prepared a background analysis, identified strategic priorities, and planned the conceptual framework for the Strategy. During this planning phase, the MADS was responsible for issuing calls for participants in the process based on the timeline that had already been approved by the Steering Committee and the methodological proposal formulated by the Technical Team.

At the inception stage in Bhutan, a core group comprised of representatives of key agencies in the Ministry of Agriculture was formed. The core group for BAP I and II included representatives of the Department of Forestry Services, Department of Agriculture and Livestock Support Services, and Research, Extension and Irrigation Services. The primary function of the core group was to coordinate the entire process of BAP development, guide the consultant, and determine the content of the document. BAP III did not rely on a core group, instead management, advisory support and supervision was provided by the National Biodiversity Centre staff.

Step 2: Assessment / Country Study

Phase 2: Assessment / Stocktaking

During this phase, past NBSAPs were analysed and assessed in terms of their degree of implementation, challenges and successes, actors engaged, degree of political buy-in, public awareness and dissemination, etc. Lessons learnt were then extracted in order to inform the revision process. In addition, usually this phase allowed for the gathering of all relevant information on the status of biodiversity at the broader country level. In the case of Iraq, given that there was no previous NBSAP to be assessed, this phase focused solely on taking stock of the status of biodiversity in the country and of the possible stakeholders to include in the process.

One can observe that during this phase a stronger involvement of stakeholders than in Phase 1 took place. While in some cases the compilation of assessments was still largely conducted by the lead agency with contributions by the Steering Committee as was the case in Antigua and Barbuda and the Philippines or by the lead agency with contributions by the scientific community like in the case of Iraq, other countries chose a broader approach and relied on stock-taking workshops. This was the case in Namibia. However, the stakeholders participating in this stock-taking workshop - government agencies, NGOs and the private sector- were somewhat different from the stakeholders involved in the subsequent phases. Since this phase focused also on the evaluation of the first NBSAP, most of the participants that attended had already been involved in the implementation of that NBSAP. Georgia, through its decentralized approach, chose a different system. The six implementing agencies were contracted to supply assessment reports for the eleven thematic areas they were working on. In this process they were encouraged to also reach out to other stakeholders.

Driven by the Department of the Environment, the development phase of the NBSAP in Fiji (which combines Phase 1 and 2 here), saw the compilation of baseline information and so the participation of the scientific or academic groups was high. In contrast, the participation of the private sector was mainly through hoteliers interested in plans concerning the marine

environment as most hotels in Fiji are located along the coast and they had a direct interest in being part of the process.

Steps 3/4: Developing a Strategy / Developing Plan of Action

Phase 3: Technical phase

This phase has two components. First, the data gathered in Phase 2 allowed for prioritization of the most essential issues to tackle. Second, and after these priorities were established, the necessary targets were elaborated and indicators to measure progress were proposed.

In all countries, this was the phase that had the widest stakeholder engagement or representation from a broad range of actors. In general, all stakeholders from different backgrounds like governmental agencies, NGOs, indigenous people and local communities were involved. Often space was also given in this process to persons and individuals from different regions. This phase relied heavily on workshops as described in more detail below.

In Bhutan for example, all Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) processes engaged a task force or a technical working group. The task force for BAP I and II comprised of individuals representing stakeholders from different government ministries and agencies, NGOs, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). BAP I had eleven members and BAP II engaged eighteen members representing the various stakeholder groups. The task force functioned as the Steering Committee for the project and provided the platform for consultation, discussion, and review of earlier BAPs, analysis, and further coordination of the BAP process. Instead of a task force, BAP III engaged a technical working group comprised of key conservation and conservation-related agencies to guide and support the national consultant hired to prepare the document. In the on-going BAP IV process, no consultant has been hired and the technical working group has assumed full responsibility in the development of BAP IV whereby every member is actively engaged in facilitating consultative processes and writing the document chapters. According the National Biodiversity Centre that now leads the process, this approach encourages full engagement of the technical group members.

In the case of Guatemala, this technical phase was seen as a step of collective construction and socialization (public validation) of the NBSAP 2010-2012. This process included the socialization, negotiation, discussion and validation of the goals set forth and the agreement of strategic actions through workshops, electronic communications, and the National Clearing House Mechanism (CHM). The workshops for instance were carried out in all of the country's main regions. During these national workshops, a wide array of key stakeholders involved directly or indirectly in the management of biological diversity and ecosystem services participated, including NGOs, government agencies, academic and scientific institutions, the private sector, and indigenous representatives and authorities, among others.

Phase 4: The Political phase

This phase can be described as the one where discussions took place to put the technical targets and priorities set before in line with political ones. In addition, this was the phase where responsibilities were attributed to different actors for the achievement of the targets agreed and where the means of implementation for the strategy were discussed.

The level and kind of participation in this phase varied quite significantly from country to country. In some cases it was the Steering/Coordination Committee that reflected politically

on the outcomes from Phase 3. In other cases it was the decision-makers in government alone that carried out the activities in this phase, like in the case of Namibia. Here, individual interviews were held with strategic decision-makers mostly from government agencies to elicit policy and technical priorities. Still others like the Philippines and Iraq chose to involve more stakeholders in Phase 4. Given that in the case of the Philippines the technical and political phase took place simultaneously, in the same fora, they also had the same type and level of participation. Not only priorities were discussed during this phase with a broad range of actors, but also the activities and time frame, the means of implementation, including financial aspects, and specific responsibilities. In Iraq, discussions during this phase also counted with wider participation, including of different Government ministries, institutional bodies, NGOs and the private sector.

In Guatemala this political validation phase was not that dissimilar from the phase before in that it consisted of the systematization, organization and completion of all the collected information through the consultations and workshops. Equally, it cannot be completely disassociated from the next phase. During this phase, CONAP's technical staff and the so-called Multi-institutional Support Group reviewed, corrected and validated the documents that had been developed through monthly meetings. In fact, the National Biodiversity Policy (NBP) and the NBSAP were revised and confirmed at this stage by all the institutions and key stakeholders involved in their development, and in five regions in the country (Petén, Izabal, Guatemala City, Quetzaltenango and Huehuetenango).

Phase 5: The Consolidation phase

This phase can be described as the moment when the draft (or final draft) NBSAP was elaborated by taking into account all the information gathered and decisions taken in the previous four phases. Often this consolidation phase went back through another iteration of Phase 3 and 4. The consolidation process was mostly carried out by the lead agency and the Steering Committee (or its equivalent). Hence, this phase can be characterized by a rather low participation. There were exceptions to this of course. For example, in Namibia a final validation workshop was held with a selected number of the most active and engaged stakeholders. In Bhutan, national stakeholder workshops, or review workshops, were carried out to present the draft report (NBSAP), secure feedback, comments and endorsement by different actors. In the Philippines the consolidation was carried out by the Technical Working Group (basically a committee with limited stakeholder representation). Nevertheless, the final draft of the NBSAP is to be presented in September 2014 for selected stakeholders that were involved in the updating process or are critical for its implementation.

Phase 6: Decision-making phase

Given that an NBSAP should provide for a policy and action framework that goes beyond the environmental sector, it needs to be owned by the whole Government and integrate and be integrated into national sectoral priorities. The decision to go forward with its approval is then usually taken at a high political level. This phase sometimes coincided with the consolidation phase as was the case in Namibia; in others, with the approval or adoption phase like the case of Bhutan. In this phase usually participation was limited to a few high-level individuals in strategic governmental positions. In the Philippines it was the Ministry or the Steering Committee plus additional ministries that undertook a final assessment. Here, the division chiefs of the Biodiversity Management Bureau and other bureaus of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources such as the Mines and Geosciences Bureau or the Forest Management Bureau were sent the draft NBSAP for vetting.

Phase 7: Adoption phase

The final phase in the process is the adoption phase. Recalling that the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 through its Aichi Target 17 calls for the adoption of the NBSAP as a *policy instrument*, meaning for and by the whole-of-government, this final moment of the process, even if merely an issue of protocol, is extremely important. In all the countries covered by this study, the NBSAP (or its revised version) has not been yet adopted. Nevertheless, in those that have already gone through the full NBSAP process at least once, like Georgia and Namibia, the document has been adopted by the Government. In Bhutan, the final approval of all BAPs has been granted at the highest ministerial level. The first BAP was signed by the Minister of the Planning Commission as well as by the Chairman of the National Environment Commission (NEC); the second BAP by Her Majesty the Queen and the third BAP by the Minister of Agriculture and Forest. The Philippines will be adopting its NBSAP at a very high level too, through administrative issuance of the President. It is worth noting that stakeholders are thus no longer involved in this last stage of the process.

Step 5: Implementation

After its formal adoption, the NBSAP is to be implemented. The degree to which this policy (and technical) instrument is endorsed and appropriated by the different actors of society in order to be turned into action, will no doubt depend on how the process was conducted, its level of integration of priorities, values and interests of those same actors. Nevertheless, the focus of this study is not on assessing implementation of NBSAPs but rather looking more closely at the process and the relevance of engaging all relevant actors along the way.

6.2.4 Different ways to engage with stakeholders

If generally at the early stages of the process, Parties used various ways to communicate about the NBSAP revision and biodiversity in general, they also relied on various tools and mechanisms to engage stakeholders beyond the mere provision of information. In this respect, the favoured and most used tool to engage stakeholders, promote discussion, foster dialogue and get their views about key aspects and priorities for the NBSAP, was undoubtedly through workshops.

Workshops

Workshops were conducted on different topics and at different levels (local-regional-national) and used different approaches to interact with participants. In general, they aimed at targeting a good number of stakeholders at once and so relied on some sort of stakeholder “mapping” to identify who was to be invited to attend. They were used at different stages of the NBSAP development and revision process and were often well attended. For instance, Namibia reported on a process that combined key national topical workshops with a strong regional outreach. The national workshops focused on designing the NBSAP revision process, conducting the review of the previous NBSAP and mainstreaming-related aspects. They were also used as means to report back from the regional workshops and to present the draft NBSAPII document. The regional consultations on the other hand, were used as opportunities to discuss a variety of topics including the concept of biodiversity, its values and the CBD framework as well as the results of the NBSAPI review. In addition, participants discussed the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and their relevance to each region as well as deliberated on key activities and priorities for the NBSAPII.

In the Philippines most workshops (6 out of 7) were held in the different regions of the country to gather all available information on biodiversity conservation in the region, including threats. This constituted an initial layer of information on the state of biodiversity in each region, which was to be supplemented with actual baseline data on the various ecosystems. The last workshop was held in the capital for a final stakeholder consultation. Workshops took on a three-day format in which background information on the biodiversity of the country and about the CBD was provided. This was followed by a discussion about the Aichi Targets and information about the previous NBSAP. In addition, information was provided on other national planning processes that have a biodiversity component. From the second day onwards the workshops focused on a detailed target setting exercise where on-going stakeholder projects were mapped against these targets and a lead entity identified. The workshop was facilitated by the experts of the Technical Working Group.

Workshops were not necessarily of one type or scope (i.e. not only held at the regional level). In Georgia for example, all workshops organized by the implementing organizations took place at the national level, and each focused on a specific topic. In addition, the lead agency organized other central ones in the early and final phases of the revision process. The decision of holding only national, only regional or both regional and national workshops depended greatly on the characteristics (such as size, available information) and the political system of the country. In some countries it was essential to hold regional workshops to be able to determine the local priorities, while in other countries the regions enjoy a certain level of autonomy and are the ones who will be responsible for implementing the NBSAP. In both cases regional workshops are indispensable. In other countries however, especially small ones like Antigua and Barbuda, regional workshops make little sense.

Often countries organized different workshops that focused on a specific element of the NBSAP revision. In the process of development of the first and second Biodiversity Action Plans (BAP I and II), Bhutan adopted an extensive consultative process engaging stakeholders at the national and regional levels. Consultations were carried out in various forms including so-called consultation workshops. These were organized at the national as well as regional district levels and were of different sorts. For instance, some were more

“formulation workshops” where stakeholders discussed the approach to be adopted in the process of preparing the BAP, reviewed terms of reference of the core team, the task force, and its members. Such workshops were also the appropriate platform to agree on the outline, conceptual features, and process for preparation of the document. Another type was regional stakeholder workshops which aimed at being more inclusive, far reaching, and educative. These types of stakeholder workshops were held in western, central eastern and southern regions of the country and were considered primarily action-planning workshops. In contrast, the national stakeholder workshops were considered review workshops. Here the draft report was shared and presented to secure feedback, comments, and endorsement. The final BAP is in any case submitted for government approval.

In the case of Antigua and Barbuda, nine national consultations were held between April 2013 and January 2014 with participants from different stakeholder groups. The first three discussions focused on a Stocktaking Exercise Report evaluating the most recent issues relating to biodiversity and those identified since 2001 and a final targets and indicators document was deliberated and agreed. Six additional national consultations were held, which focused on the revised NBSAP and offered the possibility to comment on the draft documents presented at each stage of the NBSAP process.

The approach used in Colombia is somewhat different as it focused on targeting key sectors and actors impacting biodiversity. One of the leading agencies, the Humboldt Institute (IAvH), proposed that the initial workshops were to focus on the biodiversity Strategy (and not the action plan) and dwell on the relationships and incidence of biodiversity and its ecosystem services on different sectors (agriculture, mining, trade, tourism) and the wellbeing of the population. At a later stage, the Action Plan priorities would come out of a collective review in the workshops.

A total of 10 workshops were programmed in Colombia. The first 5 of them were national workshops, held in the capital city, Bogotá, to discuss both the Strategy and Action Plan with representatives from five groups of actors related to biodiversity management: the National Environmental System (SINA), the agricultural sector; Ministries and other national public institutions (Housing, Commerce, Tourism, Defence, Export, Foreign Affairs, Water Commission); local communities; and international donors, financial and cooperation entities (including the World Bank, Inter-American Bank, USAID, embassies, NGOs). The 5 remaining workshops were planned as regional workshops to cover the five natural regions of the country. These regional workshops were designed to discuss the Strategy and Action Plan with representatives of the Regional Environmental Authorities, urban environmental authorities, municipal authorities and Regional Protected Areas Authorities.

Interviews / one-on-one meetings

Despite the reliance on national or regional workshops, some Parties considered that it was necessary (and beneficial) to reach out to stakeholders in a more “direct” and personalized way. In the Philippines for example, separate smaller meetings were also held after the conclusion of workshops with the National Commission for Indigenous Peoples, and the League of Municipalities and League of Cities, the umbrella organization of the Philippine local government units. In Namibia, individual interviews were carried out with strategic decision-makers from government agencies to solicit both policy and technical priorities. In Bhutan when individual interactions and meetings were used these were primarily undertaken by a consultant and sought views and opinions from selected individuals such as ministers, government officials, NGOs and the private sector in relation to biodiversity conservation concerns, issues, and efforts.

In the Philippines, the workshops were framed first by an expert group meeting that preceded the regional and national consultations and second by meetings to refine NBSAP targets and indicators that took place afterwards.

Electronic consultation

Besides in-person meetings, many countries also allowed stakeholders to participate in the consultations via email or through other online mechanisms. Consultations through these means were of different forms. Sometimes they were a follow-up to discussions that had previously taken place at a workshop or interview and in other instances they were used to obtain important contributions from relevant actors. The first form was quite common and was the case of the Philippines or Iraq. In the Philippines a cloud server was used to share the matrix of inputs from each national and regional workshop and expert group meeting with all participants who had attended. In Iraq, all material related to the workshops was shared with the stakeholders via email to sustain the information and the relationships between participants and the Ministry. In Antigua and Barbuda, email submissions could continue to be made after public consultations were held, either if actors were not satisfied with the way their concerns were addressed, or if they were not able to participate. In addition, the Technical Advisory Committee used several rounds of emails to approve the final decision on targets and indicators. In Georgia, the final draft NBSAP was posted on the Governments' website for a public consultation of one month. However, only very limited feedback was received through this mechanism. This low-level participation could be due to the fact that the essential stakeholders had already been involved through the other consultations or by a possible lack of interest in the topic of the general public.

It is important to note that despite their practical nature and simplicity, online consultations alone are generally not sufficient when conducting a public policy making exercise like the NBSAP revision process. Depending on the country and the computer literacy of its citizens this form could be chosen as a complement to other means of consultations. However in many countries they would not be able to replace regional workshops or more direct and personalized meetings because of the low level of connectivity of some areas. In addition, online consultations are often not targeted and do not offer the same platform for discussion and negotiation as in-person meetings. Gathering information and compiling views solely through online consultations or electronic means can be risky; in the absence of personal interaction, information can be easily misinterpreted and in some cases suggestions made via email turned out to be just not implementable. Decisions taken on the basis of the results or responses to online consultations tend to be of executive nature rather than consensual. Perhaps because of these limitations and the advantages of in-person discussions, electronic consultations did not fully replace an in-person consultation in any of the countries studied.

6.3 Integration of different societal actors' views in the NBSAP

Throughout the NBSAP development and revision process a lot of information is generated and collected. Stakeholders' views, priorities, preferences and commitments need to be processed to support the decision-making process.

In most countries, the stakeholder consultation workshops operated under a consensus mechanism. That meant that decisions taken on targets, actions, priorities, were usually not contested and could thus be used as building blocks for further steps in the process. In several cases their identification also followed a clear methodology, e.g. the pressure-state-benefits-framework. This was for example applied in the workshops of the Philippines and Iraq. In these cases the discussions were thus guided by strict criteria and little conflict emerged. Even when there were discrepancies in the discussions in the Philippines, these were usually resolved through additional individual discussions. In Fiji and Namibia, only very minor disagreements between actors were observed in the course of review workshops and meetings. It is equally noteworthy that in Bhutan there were no reports of any opposing views that required reconciliation.

Since different actors were either present (or represented) and had to negotiate and weigh preferences with others, in general the outcomes stemming from these workshops received support from or at the very least, were considered acceptable by participants. However, most of the times, the outcomes of the workshops were not left "untreated". Either by those in charge of leading or organizing the consultations or by a core group of some sort (that in some cases were the lead agencies or linked to it), these were compiled and "filtered" at later stages of the process.

Even though it seems that there are not enough documented records about the exact process and criteria used in filtering and selecting the information gathered, two main challenges are mentioned in the different case studies. The first challenge has to do with the type of representation of key societal groups at the workshops. The workshops were not always attended by people in a position to take decisions on behalf of the stakeholder groups or institutions they were representing; in some instances participants were rather "technical staff" with no decision-making power as opposed to senior-level representatives. That indeed posed a problem at the moment of selecting the inputs needed to feed into the draft NBSAP when an agency, although previously involved (through representatives that had no decision-making power to commit their agencies to specific actions), had seemingly changed its views and were no longer in agreement with what resulted from the consultations.

In other instances, participants to NBSAP workshops had different levels of knowledge and information about biodiversity or were not acquainted with the subject-matter. Some were interested in attending solely because of personal motivations (and not necessarily representing the interests of their stakeholder group). For instance, in Burkina Faso various participants to NBSAP consultations were motivated to attend because they wanted to learn more about biodiversity-related issues ("scientific curiosity") or because they thought a good financial compensation might be provided to those who responded positively to the calls for contributions. Here it is worth noting that this type of disparity among different stakeholders with uneven levels of information and knowledge about the subject matter and/or the NBSAP process in itself as well as different expectations and motivations, was seen as an important impediment in the collective construction of the NBSAP.

The second challenge mentioned has to do with the fact that the outcomes of different workshops still needed to be brought together, streamlined and analysed from a political perspective and feasibility. That meant that the information and outcomes compiled were generally put together by a rapporteur or a consultant who then passed this on to a task

force or some kind of technical group. These were entitled to process the information and it appears as if the choice of which inputs to take and which information to retain was left mostly for them to decide and was not always guided by a predefined methodology. In other words, in the absence of established mechanisms for selecting the “right inputs”, or documented records of such mechanisms, the decisions about what to include or not ultimately lay in the hands of these technical task forces or groups (whose members might not always have been present in the workshops or meetings). This seems to have been the case in Bhutan, at least for the processes that followed the development of the first Biodiversity Action Plan (BAPI). In Guatemala, the lead agency, CONAP, relied on the expert judgement and expertise of the Multi-sectorial Support Group to decide on the relevance and prioritization of inputs gathered. Antigua and Barbuda faced a similar challenge in the decision making process that took place within the task force mostly comprised of governmental agencies. The meetings of the task force were not always well attended and participation was low. However, in Antigua and Barbuda only governmental agencies have the legal authority to manage and rule on the country’s biodiversity and therefore something like deciding on the implementation of national targets relies heavily on them. To ensure that all agencies participated in the discussions and therefore to be able to reach legitimate decisions, the rules of procedure were changed to have decisions made by a “lack of objection” basis.

It is possible to identify four ways in which these two challenges were tackled in the study countries.

First, if the task force in charge of gathering and compiling the information from stakeholder consultations found that there were things which were not clear, could be contested, needed further reflection, or basically that the information was not complete, then the most common “solution” used was simply to carry out additional consultations. In the case of Georgia for example, when a seemingly opposing view was discovered in the consolidation phase of the NBSAP process, the relevant implementing organisation was encouraged to further engage with the stakeholder (group) in question. The Philippines also chose additional discussions to solve issues of conflict (e.g. mining) and prepared various drafts of the text to reconcile the different views. In Guatemala, when there seemed to be some discrepancies or when opposing views did manifest themselves in the consultations, new opportunities to discuss were created until agreement would be reached. In that way, stakeholders were provided with more information and the time to discuss and debate was extended by organizing new workshops. Nevertheless, only one case of “strongly opposing views” was recorded in Guatemala and was solved by holding an additional workshop in which agreement was finally reached or requested in the case of the Indigenous Authority Network.

Second, even if paradoxical, the authority vested in the task force that processed the information, and its expert judgement, helped move the process forward. Both in Fiji and Guatemala for instance, the use of a bottom-up approach to gather and disseminate information and inputs and engage stakeholders, was in the end guided by national priorities and interests of which the task force and ultimately the lead agencies were the stewards. So even if sometimes this centralized (and probably ad-hoc) management of inputs gathered seemed to pose some questions of legitimacy and representativeness of the final consultation outcomes, it also contributed to keep the process running.

Third, in some countries the use of the Clearing House Mechanism (CHM), the internet and electronic consultations was seen as a means of publicly disseminating and making information available to stakeholders, thus being a mechanism to validate the results of the consultations. Continuing with the case of Guatemala, the CHM and CONAP’s website were used for acquiring, organizing, processing and communicating information throughout the NBSAP revision process. To this end mailing groups, online open forums, and online meetings were used. Regarding organization of information, specific databases were created and maintained. For processing the information, inputs from consultations were collated into

a matrix containing the strategic goals and expected final outcomes from the NBSAP, and subsequent analysis allowed highlighting commonalities amongst different societal groups in terms of interests and common inputs. All information related to this process was made publicly and available through the CHM. The Philippines also used electronic means to make these types of matrixes available to participants after the workshops. Similarly, in Burkina Faso, reports from workshops were transmitted by e-mail to all participants for their comments and « validation ». The final version of the report which included the feedback gathered was again sent to all participants and posted in the CHM. Nevertheless, over-reliance on electronic means of communication and on the internet was seen as also limiting the scope and impact of consultations. In many of the countries of this study, internet availability is quite limited as was mentioned before.

Lastly, another way of deciding which proposed action to take on board was by looking at their feasibility and assigning responsibilities for their implementation. In Antigua and Barbuda, having learned from the past NBSAP experience and facing budget constraints at the time of discussion, a strict mechanism was put in place. Unless there was a work programme or agency mandated to address the target or action being proposed, it was not included in the NBSAP or it was amended to suit the agency's capacity. This might of course be specific to the case of Antigua and Barbuda, where only public agencies have the legal authority to manage the nation's biodiversity.

6.4 Mainstreaming

If NBSAPs are to be effective and respond to national priorities and thus be adopted as policy instruments, then ideally all relevant government agencies, levels of government, community organizations, non-governmental organizations, indigenous and local communities, women, scientific associations and academia, economic sectors, business and industry, and the media need to be somehow involved in their design, development and implementation. Integrating biodiversity objectives into mainstream development is nevertheless a complex challenge that lies at the heart of the Convention, and a key objective of NBSAPs.

Although in theory the links between biodiversity and poverty reduction are increasingly recognized, in practice, these links are not fully taken into consideration nor sufficiently explored.²⁵ It is common in the literature and guidance on NBSAPs and biodiversity mainstreaming to focus on linking biodiversity with economics by placing the emphasis more on preserving threatened species, and not on the significant contribution of biodiversity to local livelihoods and ultimately on their dependence on healthy ecosystems and biodiversity.

Participation of all relevant actors and consideration of their interests and priorities within the NBSAP becomes an enabling factor for effective mainstreaming of biodiversity into all sectors and plans. Mainstreaming biodiversity objectives in different sectors entails addressing the social dimension of sustainable development by demonstrating that by integrating biodiversity considerations into sectoral plans and vice-versa, there are greater chances of finding win-win solutions between conservation and development paradigms. This is particularly true in the South where natural resources are still “abundant” but poverty is widespread especially in rural areas. Even though improved natural resource management in different sectors is likely to benefit rural communities, mainstreaming could also impose costs on the poor if, for example, access to essential resources is restricted. In addition, rural communities are rarely consulted or able to influence decision-making.²⁶

What is mainstreaming?

“Mainstreaming” means the integration of the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in both cross-sectoral plans such as sustainable development, poverty reduction, climate change adaptation/mitigation, trade and international cooperation, and in sector-specific plans such as agriculture, fisheries, forestry, mining, energy, tourism, transport and others. It implies changes in development models, strategies and paradigms.

Mainstreaming is not about creating parallel and artificial processes and systems, but about integrating biodiversity into existing and/or new sectoral and cross-sectoral structures, processes and systems.

Source: Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (2011) NBSAP training modules version 2.1 – Module 3. Mainstreaming biodiversity into national sectoral and cross-sectoral strategies, policies, plans and programs. Montreal, June 2011.

“Biodiversity mainstreaming is the process of embedding biodiversity considerations into policies, strategies and practices of key public and private actors that impact or rely on biodiversity, so that it is conserved and sustainably used both locally and globally.”

Source: Huntley, B.J. and Redford, K.H. (2014). ‘Mainstreaming biodiversity in Practice: A STAP advisory document.’ Global Environment Facility, Washington, DC.

²⁵ Swiderska, Krystina. Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Development and Policy Planning: A Review of Country Experience. IIED, September 2002.

²⁶ Ibid. p.8.

The challenges associated with mainstreaming biodiversity into sectoral and economic policies and plans are still present in most, if not all, of the countries analysed in this study.

In the majority of the countries, one of the main challenges to mainstreaming seems to lie in the timing of the different government planning processes. Timelines are mostly fixed and do not necessarily happen at the same time to allow for continuous feedback among these planning processes. In addition, the lack of certainty about the benefits and values in engaging with other sectors seems to have played a role in many of the countries and the “silos” at different levels are still quite prominent.

In Bhutan, even though the environment is one of the four pillars of the country’s Gross National Happiness development philosophy, and its steward, the Gross National Happiness Commission is mandated to integrate environmental conservation priorities into the Five Year Plans (FYPs) and allocate resources for their implementation, there seems to be a separation between the processes of development of the Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) and the FYPs. Desirably, BAP priorities must form the basis for sectorial priorities on biodiversity and accordingly reflected in the FYPs. In other words, the FYP priorities on biodiversity conservation must adequately align with the priorities set forth in the BAP. However, this logic seems to have suffered from the lack of ownership of the BAPs. As a result, it is not possible to associate the biodiversity priorities in the BAP III with the priorities of the Eleventh FYP currently in place. It appears that BAP priorities were identified through the BAP development process while a separate process was initiated to identify priorities for the FYPs. In this context, BAP documents were a reference but not a guide for setting biodiversity priorities into the FYP.

An additional challenge mentioned was the apparent disconnect between internal institutional priorities and objectives and those agreed to internationally, including the Aichi Targets. For example in the case of Fiji it was noted that the Fisheries Department’s national targets varied from the Aichi Targets in scope and thus it was difficult for the NBSAP coordination team to work with them to bring these national targets in line with those set within the NBSAP.

Nevertheless, it was also seen that a good number of efforts were put in place, which enabled some positive results. For example, the second NBSAP of Georgia, which was thoroughly reviewed and eventually approved by all ministries, contains explicit requirements of integration of biodiversity into various sectoral and cross-sectoral national policies that are currently being developed or planned as well as into on-going reforms in the fields of forestry, agriculture, tourism, regional development and the education system. However the level of integration achieved by the second NBSAP into these policies remains to be seen. A differentiation might occur between the policy processes led by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resource Protection and those that are led by another ministry.

The Philippines generated several outputs from the regional and national consultations on which the mainstreaming of the NBSAP will be based. Such outputs are an action plan about awareness-raising and communication, a plan integrating biodiversity values into national and local development and poverty reduction strategies, a plan identifying the costs necessary to achieve the different actions, an action plan on gender mainstreaming and a framework agreement among key institutions on information sharing that contribute to national reporting and the monitoring of the status of Philippine biodiversity. In addition, outcomes from the NBSAP process were also submitted to the national economic planning agency which is in charge of updating the country’s Development Plan so that they can be integrated there.

In Guatemala specific elements from other national policies were integrated into the NBSAP and vice-versa, biodiversity considerations are included in these other national policies allowing for some degree of “alignment” between them. These policies include: the National Climate Change Policy (2009), which considers integrated management of watersheds, productive landscapes and bio-cultural and biological corridors as part of its overall aim of developing national capacities for mitigation and adaptation to climate change; the National Rural Development Policy (2009), which focuses on strengthening socio-environmental management and sustainable use of land, water and forest to increase resilience to climate change; the National Strategy for the Conservation and Management of Natural Resources in Communal Lands (2009), which proposes alternative ways to conserve communal lands besides protected areas and points out the relevance of traditional knowledge for conserving biodiversity; National Policy of Food Security (2005), which is articulated within the NBSAP through actions aiming to maintain the productive capacity of ecosystems for the benefit of human populations. But more importantly, probably the core approach for mainstreaming biodiversity included into the NBSAP is the mandate for creating and implementing tailor-made sectoral plans for each category of key stakeholders defined during the revision process (Governmental Organizations, NGOs, and Indigenous People). These sectoral plans will define specific guidelines to implement the five strategic axis of the NBSAP within each societal sector.

Having noted the low level of awareness about the country’s first NBSAP and biodiversity in general even among critical ministries and other stakeholders, the lead agency in Namibia decided to place particular emphasis on mainstreaming and effective communication as critical elements into the revision process. In this context, a workshop was held to develop a strategy with the Steering Committee and communications experts to look at how best to integrate biodiversity concerns into national development and how to effectively communicate the importance of the NBSAP to different audiences. These strategies now form an integral part of the revised NBSAP. Biodiversity mainstreaming is also considered relevant when talking about other environmental plans, including plans developed under the other Rio Conventions or other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). Thus the different national focal points to these Conventions were called to participate and were closely engaged in the NBSAP revision process in Namibia. Their involvement has contributed to further creating synergies in the monitoring process to each convention by including convention specific targets, objectives and commitments into the NBSAP. Another aspect highlighted in Namibia is the importance of gender mainstreaming. Despite the fact that women are the main managers of natural resources, they often play only a marginal role in decision-making. Therefore the revised NBSAP promotes the full participation of women also in the planning of biodiversity-related initiatives.

Regarding the integration of biodiversity in other sectorial and cross-sectorial plans and national legislation in Burkina Faso, several measures have already been taken which are encouraging. These include the creation of the Economics and Environmental Statistics Directorate²⁷ which will be in charge of the environmental accounts and their further integration into the national accounting system; the creation and distribution of a guide on mainstreaming biodiversity, climate change, wetlands and desertification in the development of regional and communal development plans; and the current development of another guide on mainstreaming biodiversity into environmental evaluations.

²⁷ Direction de l’économie et des statistiques environnementales.

Section IV. NBSAPs participatory processes in three countries in Europe

The previous section looked at the NBSAPs participatory processes that were carried out in ten countries from different regions of the world. The analysis has shown that the different elements that define those participatory processes are determined to a large extent by the particular characteristics, political setting and culture of each country. In spite of these differences, many commonalities can be found and those have been highlighted. We now turn to look at three additional countries, this time in Europe: **Belgium**²⁸, **France**²⁹ and **Switzerland**³⁰. The aim of this section is to complement the information presented before and focus on the experience of these three European countries, which are characterized by similar economic contexts and cultural aspects and that face comparable threats to biodiversity.

These three countries are at different stages of their NBSAP revision process. France released its revised National Biodiversity Strategy (NBS) in 2011 and Belgium in 2014. The NBSAP revision process of Switzerland must be understood in two separate instances: first, the elaboration and approval of the strategy by the Government in 2012 and second, the development of the action plan that defines the measures to be taken to achieve the goals set in the strategy and which is to be concluded in 2015. This section briefly analyses the revision of the Belgian and French NBS and in the case of Switzerland focuses on the creation of the action plan.

1 The institutional structure for the NBSAP revision process

The NBSAP revision process in both France and Switzerland was led by an office within the Ministry of the Environment, while the process in Belgium was led by a federal scientific institution.

In Belgium, two Steering Committees, “Biodiversity Convention” and “Nature”, jointly initiated the NBSAP updating process under the leadership of the CBD National Focal Point hosted by the Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences. These committees gather regional and federal competent authorities and the Steering Committee “Biodiversity Convention” also includes a “number of scientific and technical experts selected for their expertise in a wide range of fields”³¹ mainly coming from universities and nature conservation associations and already involved in the development of the first national strategy. The approach to update the text of the strategy was rather centralised and based on a screening of the new European (EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2020) and multilateral environmental commitments (Aichi Targets of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020), and on the conclusions of the mid-term assessment of the ongoing National Biodiversity Strategy 2006-2016. The

²⁸ This section is based on information contained in *Moniteur Belge*, 07.05.2014, pp. 36748-36750, email exchanges with the CBD National Focal Point of Belgium and other persons involved in the Belgian NBSAP revision process and information contained on <http://www.biodiv.be/implementation/docs/stratactplan/updating-process-nbs/consult-biodiv2020>.

²⁹ The description of the French NBS revision process is based on a monograph prepared by the Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy, which will be made available on www.iucn.org/NBSAPs.

³⁰ The information on the Swiss process is based on an interview with Sarah Pearson, management of the action plan to implement the Swiss biodiversity strategy, FOEN, complemented by information from FOEN, *Partizipativer Prozess zur Erarbeitung des Aktionsplans Strategie Biodiversität Schweiz: Zusammenfassende Berichterstattung*, 15.04.2014, available at http://www.bafu.admin.ch/aktionsplan-biodiversitaet/index.html?lang=de&download=NHZLpZeg7t,Inp6i0NTU042l2Z6ln1acy4Zn4Z2qZpnO2YUq2Z26gpJCHdoN6f2ym162epYbg2c_JjKbNoKSn6A--.

³¹ <http://www.biodiv.be/implementation/authorities/steeringcom>

recommendations formulated by these committees for updating the NBS were approved by the Interministerial Conference of the Environment on 18 February 2013. These committees drafted the pre-project of the updated strategy accordingly. The draft revised strategy also gained a pre-approval by the ministers before it was submitted to a public consultation.

In Switzerland, the Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN) led the NBSAP process with the assistance of a Steering Committee (in charge of project management and which counts on two strategic support groups). As in the case of Belgium, the Steering Committee was also composed of a variety of different actors. The main project management was conducted by representatives from different ministries and federal offices, while it brought in support groups composed of ministries, parliamentarians, local authorities and civil society representatives. Similar to other countries, in Switzerland a more decentralized approach to the NBSAP process was planned and other ministries were encouraged to lead the work and the relevant consultations on a specific thematic area. However, due to a lack of resources in many ministries, this only happened on few thematic areas³².

In the case of France, the NBSAP revision was initiated by the Ministry in charge of the Environment. In 2010, a Committee for the revision of the National Biodiversity Strategy (NBS) was created to be the instance for piloting, validation and institutional support for the NBS revision. It was made up of about 100 members, representing all relevant stakeholder groups such as NGOs, the private sector, public agencies, different ministries and local authorities.

2 Different ways of involving stakeholders

Despite the similarities among these three countries, the ways of involving stakeholders showed some differences. Looking at common elements, first, in all three cases stakeholders were involved at different levels to play particular roles and tasks. On the one hand, some stakeholders took part in the process at the Steering Committee level, and on the other hand, at a more technical or functional level. Secondly, they used online tools to reach out, generate input and make the NBSAP process known. And lastly, all three countries issued an open invitation for the NBSAP revision process and thus the process was not limited to already involved persons or active and well known groups. In addition to the open invitation, in each case, key stakeholders were directly approached. On-going practice in all countries of actively exchanging with non-governmental actors and civil society organizations and collaborating with them on field-projects greatly simplified the stakeholder identification and in many instances allowed for drawing on previous processes and existing databases.

Turning to the exact ways in which stakeholders were involved in the NBSAP revision process, some differences can be pointed out. In Switzerland, the main mechanism used to engage stakeholders was workshops. A total of twenty-one workshops were held and allowed for about six-hundred and fifty people to participate (representing different stakeholder groups). The workshops were organized by thematic topics (sub-fields of action) and produced the raw material for the activities to be included in the action plan. A feasibility study was also carried out at this stage. Terms of References were prepared in advance concerning stakeholder participation in order to guide the process. Despite the usefulness of this guidance, it was later noted that it might not have been detailed enough even though it contained important information on who needed to be included so as to achieve the right level of participation. The draft activities stemming from these workshops were analysed by the Steering Committee and the strategic aspects were discussed. The final drafting of the activities happened within the FOEN. In this final phase of the process, more political considerations had to be taken into account and added an extra level of complexity. In this

³²For the overview of which area was led by which ministry, please refer to Table1 in FOEN 2014, p. 3.

respect, it was noticed that the outcome of the participatory process, was not always in line with the political direction. The text was hence adapted in the political part of the process to come up with an outcome document that contained feasible actions. The final draft NBSAP was then presented to stakeholders in another meeting in November 2013.

The recent NBSAP revision process in Belgium concerned a document that had been developed through a comprehensive participatory process in 2006 in a similar way as the Swiss example above. This NBSAP was valid through 2016, and hence the updating took place within this period, and addressed only specific parts of the Strategy and not its general scope or direction.

The main instrument for the participatory process in Belgium was an online consultation that took place for sixty days from 14 May to 12 July 2013. Besides a public announcement through environmental portals and the media, the invitation to participate was also sent to a large network of stakeholders from universities, the private sector, NGOs, federations of industries and trade unions. In this period, a pre-project of the National Biodiversity Strategy (NBS) was made available for consultation on the website of the Belgium Clearing House Mechanism. This pre-project was elaborated by the Steering Committee Biodiversity Convention and its Contact Group for the National Strategy composed of representatives from the three regions and the federal government. Those representatives were designated by the Interministerial Conference for the Environment. In its discussions, the Contact Group solicited experts from thematic groups of the Steering Committee (protected areas, access and benefit-sharing, agriculture, marine areas, etc.). To ensure broad outreach and transparency, the document was posted online in the three national languages (Dutch, French and German) as well as in English. A questionnaire was elaborated to facilitate the provision of feedback. On the one hand, the questionnaire sought the general opinion about the draft strategy (the changes introduced, a possible extension of the duration, etc) and on the other hand, it addressed the identification of relevant actors for the implementation of the NBS.

The input gathered through this online consultation was complemented by a Stakeholders Dialogue that took place within the same time frame. Twenty-three people (six of them as part of an association) participated in the online consultation and about fifty in the stakeholders' dialogue. Governmental agencies, NGOs, the private sector, trade unions, and other experts were represented. The consultation showed that overall there was a strong agreement with the objectives of the draft NBS and there was also a general agreement with its vision. The information gathered fed into the finalization of the NBS that was conducted by the Steering Committees mentioned above. Even though not all comments could be integrated, they allowed for improvement of the text. In addition, the comments also led to the identification and direct mentioning of principal actors for each strategic goal in the strategy and who are concerned by its implementation. The updated strategy was adopted by the Interministerial Conference on the Environment on 13 November 2013.

In the case of France, the core of the participatory process happened within the Committee of NBS revision. This was the instance responsible for piloting, validating and providing institutional support and that guaranteed the smooth functioning of the process and the quality of the results. As mentioned above, the Committee was made up of about a hundred members, representing seven categories of stakeholders: NGOs, local authorities, professional enterprises and organizations, public entities, the State and governmental agencies, qualified personalities and trade unions. Each stakeholder category (except the trade unions) brought a similar number of entities to the process. Given that all key stakeholders were represented in this Committee, most of the discussions were held within the committee. In addition, multiple cross-cutting working groups met throughout one year (May 2010-2011) to create the structure and develop the content of the NBS, taking into account inputs from its diverse membership, a public consultation and a series of preparatory conferences. The national discussions took place in the context of the

biodiversity negotiations at the European Union as well as the CBD level and thus were permeated by their ambitious target-setting approach. As a result, the goals of the French NBS correspond to those adopted at the European and international level.

In addition, in France the public was consulted in a similar way as in Belgium. A questionnaire covering seventeen items was made available online for a three-week period and resulted in feedback from about six-thousand citizens. The participants expressed themselves concerning biodiversity in general and the NBSAP revision process in particular and made many propositions on topics such as awareness-raising, reducing the impacts of productive activities on biodiversity and preserving and restoring species and ecosystems. The information gathered was taken into account by the NBS Revision Committee in elaborating the text of the Strategy. Besides providing input into the NBS revision process, this consultation also greatly increased general public awareness about biodiversity.

3 Lessons learnt

Challenges had to be overcome in all three countries in order to finalize an NBSAP that, on one hand, is built on the public inputs gathered and that, as such, reflects the biodiversity priorities of the country, and at the same time, is scientifically sound and implementable. However, it can be said that these challenges allowed these countries to self-reflect on their processes and take valuable lessons that will certainly make subsequent biodiversity planning processes even smoother.

As mentioned above, in some cases the apparent separation between an NBSAP process that is purely technical or purely political created some confusion. This was not always only dependent on the design of the process, but sometimes evolved naturally when participants with low decision-making power represented a specific stakeholder. Therefore the consultations could result in priorities that were more technical than political in nature and thus were not always able to gain enough support for their follow-up and implementation. Given that the NBSAPs are to be adopted at a high level (as a policy instrument), political support is essential. For example in France, the Strategy was adopted at the interministerial level and therefore under the authority of the Prime Minister.

Depending on the composition of the decision-making body, further trade-offs had to be made. In the case of Switzerland for example, the Ministry that houses the NBSAP lead agency covers a variety of topics, in particular the environment, transport, energy and communications. *“Locating the demands of exploitation and of protection within the same department nevertheless often leads to conflict of interest. Decisions therefore require careful preparation”³³* as they need to be politically adequate and viable. Because of possible conflicts of interests and their low level representation, the outcome of the consultations cannot be used without being revised from a political point of view. This needs to be handled with care to avoid that stakeholders involved in the consultations feel, that the deliberations only had limited weight. Defining the strategic direction with governmental decision makers before entering into a participatory process, as was done in Belgium, could be a way of avoiding a political process that contradicts the outcomes of the consultations in the finalization phase.

In the three cases, there seems to be a generalized understanding about the implications of conducting the revision and update of an NBSAP through a participatory process and it is certainly seen that this goes way beyond the adoption of a representative NBSAP. Although sometimes a mandatory step, the NBSAP process is just as much about fostering collaboration, forming communities, supporting a self-reflection of the stakeholders, gaining

³³<http://www.uvek.admin.ch/org/00469/index.html?lang=en>

stakeholder commitment and putting in place a system of shared biodiversity governance to align the revision with the implementation.

However, a lack of communication about the reasoning of choosing a participatory process led to uncertainty about what the process is really about in some countries. Even some people responsible for conducting the consultations were not aware of the overarching goals of the revision process and believed that the exercise was solely about creating a representative document that contains the main priorities and actions to be taken to better conserve biodiversity. If the overarching aims and goals of the NBSAP process are not communicated properly to all stakeholders, many of them might end up being disappointed if for instance, their individual views were not integrated in the final product. An open and transparent communication should thus be made internally and externally so that the parties involved understand the positive impacts. Another aspect of communication that could be strengthened in the future is to cater the message better to the audience in question and facilitate an easy process for feedback. In the process of Belgium for example, a more concise communication about the updates of the text of the strategy and a simplified questionnaire might have enabled more participation.

Aware of the benefits of a participatory process (i.e. newly formed networks and communities, sense of ownership and commitment by all stakeholders, etc) those that lead the process came to realize that it was necessary to maintain this momentum for the implementation phase. Both France and Belgium observed that for NBSAP actions to be carried out, specific relevant actors need to be identified with a clear mandate for their implementation. As a result, during the process of NBSAP revision they started assigning responsibilities, or at least, defining who will be concerned by the operation of specific parts of the strategy. Stakeholders were thus mapped in this way. Also, in Belgium a networking event was held after the NBS adoption, where all stakeholders had the opportunity to present their activities in relation to the objective of the updated strategy.

In France additional steps were taken towards institutionalizing this “new shared governance” model. For example, the NBS is intended to result in voluntary commitments by the different actors of society in order to achieve the objectives adopted. A comprehensive system has been set up to capitalize on the current impetus and mobilize stakeholders to become the “owners” of some of the actions proposed. After adoption, concerned actors formally sign up to the NBS to show their interest and commitment to make the NBS known. Every actor that signed up is further invited to make a voluntary pledge during a yearly call for commitments. This commitment is a project consisting of a set of coherent and significant actions related to each actor’s work. If the proposed project matches certain criteria it will be recognized as a voluntary commitment and publicised. By September 2014, four-hundred and eight entities have signed up to the NBS and in 2012 and 2013 about fifty-five projects were recognized. As soon as the NBS was adopted in May 2011, in an additional step towards institutionalization of this participatory approach, France has taken the decision to convert the multi-stakeholder Steering Committee into a new committee mandated with overseeing the implementation of the NBSAP.

As shown in the global situation analysis earlier in this study, some countries had produced a second generation NBSAP in the early 2000s through a participatory process in a manner closer to the guidance provided by the CBD. Due to the perceived organizational burden that such a comprehensive process entails, some of these countries were reluctant to undertake another broad participatory process after 2010 shortly after having come to a conclusion of a new NBSAP. However, as the experience in Belgium demonstrates, it is possible to adapt and plan a participatory and deliberative process in such a way that it responds to the immediate needs of the overall NBSAP process, whatever is its stage of development or implementation. The initial Belgian NBSAP was formulated in 2006 through a very wide consultative process that included several workshops, thematic group meetings and a public consultation and its timeframe was set until 2016. The revision and updating of this strategy

thus took place within the time span which was originally agreed. Therefore, only specific parts of the national strategy were updated since the general orientation did not change. The revision process was carried out in a targeted way in order to receive quick feedback on the changes introduced to the strategy. Stakeholders that had been involved in the formulation of the 2006 NBSAP were called to participate again in this targeted exercise. Besides revising several elements of the Strategy, the updated version adopted in November 2013 also extends the duration to 2020 and matches to the timeline of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2020.

Section V. Key messages and recommendations

This last section presents a series of key messages, findings, lessons learnt and recommendations for the future. They are based on the wealth of information gathered through the ten country monographs, the insights from three European countries and our own research. They are presented as a way of conclusion for this study. Yet, if one main conclusion can already be anticipated, it is that the development of national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) is a societal process and as such, is a dynamic, evolving and ever-changing route. As was seen in the literature review, the importance of participation in the collective construction and implementation of public policies cannot be overemphasized. In the case of NBSAPs, societal participation is becoming increasingly important to ensure buy-in and implementation.

Key messages and lessons learnt

1. The process of deliberation, construction and implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) is both a technical and a political undertaking and must be understood as such. When different stakeholders are summoned together to discuss, define and plan on priorities, actions and commitments with respect to biodiversity, scientific and practical information, knowledge and experience are as important as politically savvy considerations. In most of the countries analysed here, the apparent disjuncture between a “political NBSAP” and a “technical NBSAP” manifested itself in some way, and in some cases was the source of some tension between the different actors.
2. Developing and implementing an NBSAP by using a participatory approach to its construction and delivery is not a given, it is a choice. In all the cases presented in this study, even if motives varied, those in charge of leading the NBSAP development and revision process chose to carry out a participatory process to engage all relevant national stakeholders. With varying degrees of involvement and commitment and at different phases of the NBSAP process, different societal actors indeed took part. Nevertheless, in the absence of explicit records and indicators of these processes, it is difficult to assess how much that participation positively influenced the course of the process and will have an effect on the successful NBSAP implementation in the future.
3. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to a successful participatory NBSAP process. There are no right or wrong models. All processes are equally significant and worth analysing more closely, not only in order to learn from them, but also possibly to replicate them. But even if national contexts and specificities shape the course of action, there are certain elements that make for a truly participatory process and one that would seemingly have more positive effects in the long run. These elements have to do with:
 - a. Collective definition of “the problem to solve” and the ultimate goal of the process - *the what* is understood by all participants in a similar way as they have taken part in its description.
 - b. Comparable level of knowledge and information about the subject matter among participants – establishing a minimum level of awareness both about the NBSAP process and about biodiversity is instrumental (*levelling the playing field*).

- c. Balancing leadership with partnership – institutions that choose to lead the process by establishing partnerships with stakeholders, sharing responsibilities, and allowing for voluntary commitments to flourish, have better chances of being recognized and respected and thus the process to be collectively owned.
4. An NBSAP participatory process does not come about naturally, it needs to be designed. But a design (or plan) that is not flexible and adaptable to changing social and natural circumstances, and that does not lend itself to change by trial and error, is not conducive to find many committed actors. In other words, biodiversity participatory planning requires a certain degree of flexibility and adaptability to trigger buy-in and ownership by those envisaged to put into action the NBSAP.
 5. Communications and public awareness are of paramount importance for public policy planning and implementation. In all countries studied in this report, it was recognized that having a clear communications and awareness-raising strategy embedded within the NBSAP process significantly contributes to engaging all relevant stakeholders. Moreover, the more targeted those communications and awareness-raising materials are the better.
 6. Finally, it seems clear that sufficient technical and financial resources have to be made available to allow for a truly participatory process to take place. If financial resources allocated for the NBSAP process are scarce, then the possibility of having a comprehensive plan to engage all relevant stakeholders, and effectively engaging them, is significantly hampered. If on the other hand, the technical resources available (expertise, knowledge, information) do not go with the extent of the NBSAP requirements, then chances are there will also be a mismatch between the resulting NBSAP's level of ambition and its feasibility in practice.

Some recommendations

The following recommendations are intended to serve as an indicative list of things to consider for the future continuation of the NBSAP revision and implementation process. Without forgetting the theory behind participatory biodiversity planning, nor the statutory guidelines (and deadlines) provided by the numerous decisions from the Conference of the Parties regarding NBSAPs and Aichi Target 17, this list of recommendations is more a practical “Do-not-forget” series of take home messages. Mostly, these are directed to CBD National Focal Points and NBSAPs Coordinators but might be useful for other relevant stakeholders in the NBSAP process.

1. **Nurture political commitment:** political buy-in and support does not come automatically. It needs to be built. Engaging key high-level officials and decision-makers from the outset of the NBSAP process is cost-effective in terms of time and resources. Therefore, investing from the beginning in building political credibility, ownership and commitment pays off in the end. In order for NBSAPs to become “whole-of-government” policies, political commitment must be ensured.
2. **Foster partnerships:** NBSAPs should not only be built collectively but they should also be implemented collectively. Therefore, all relevant actors must see the benefits from participating in their creation and delivery. Clear responsibilities must be

assigned for the NBSAP implementation and their expectations and interests must be reflected in it. Considering other actors and stakeholders in the NBSAP process as partners greatly increases the chances of having fully put into practice the targets and actions planned.

- 3. *Measure progress and publicize success:*** NBSAPs are social and complex processes and as such they are difficult to measure. Participation within NBSAPs is even more complicated to evaluate. Nevertheless, if from the planning phases of the process milestones and indicators to determine success are built within the NBSAP framework, then flexibility and adaptability of the plan can be improved. But it does not suffice to only measure, when targets are reached, they must be publicized. Communicating achievements can bring more “allies” to the process.

- 4. *Communicate regularly:*** Linked to the above, there is no doubt that mobilizing public support for the NBSAP process heavily relies on having a proper communications strategy implanted in the design of the NBSAP itself. Targeted communications about the process before, during and in the implementation phase of the plan are important to create the necessary support (and compromise) towards collective ownership and further implementation. And ideally, these targeted communications must be done on a regular basis to avoid losing momentum when it has been reached.

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