

Biodiversity mainstreaming – focuses on the need to integrate the values and benefits of biodiversity into societal decision-making. In the case of the Gambia, natural resources values are accounted under Tourism and Agriculture sectoral contribution to the GDP. As a result, these and other sectors often have major negative impacts on biodiversity, underpinning the very foundation that sustains them.

To achieve ABT 2, the Gambia assessed the values of biodiversity to a variety of sectors, and integrated biodiversity values fully into national planning processes. This exercise highlighted the significant contribution of the Agriculture and natural resources (ANR) sectors to the foreign exchange earnings required to secure supplementary food supplies from external sources. This makes up about 30 percent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), employs over 70 percent of the active labour force, and generates foreign exchange earnings and provides two-thirds of total household income (ANR, 2009 - 2015). The ANR sector has a key role in helping achieve Government's objectives for economic growth and development. Fiscal reports showed that the country has steadily performed well, registering a growth rate of 4.7% in GDP, primarily driven by developments in tourism, inflow of remittances and re-exports.

Recently, the country has reviewed and updated the Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) Policy (2017-2026). This broadly consultative exercise provided the framework to mainstream Biodiversity consideration in all the sub-sectors involved in the ANR sectors. Biodiversity, being a cross-cutting issue, was mainstreamed in the Forestry, Water resources, fisheries, national environment, agriculture, livestock and other related policies and programmes. The new ANR policy has been successfully approved and validated. Its implementation prompted the Ministry responsible for Environment conservation to develop its strategy (2017-2021) and its execution by the institutions under its purview is presently ongoing.

In the Gambia, Biodiversity values are being incorporated in development processes (every new project is subjected to EIA and biodiversity assessment in the area is the most important issue under the loop during the exercise). During the preparation of the National Development Plan (NDP), THE National Determine contribution (NDC), THE National Action Plan against Desertification (NAP), the Tourism Master Plan and the Gambia Agriculture Investment Plan (GNAIP), the new forest policy, Strategy and Action plan, the climate change policy and the administrative decentralization policy, the National Focal Point of the UNCBD took the bold steps in mainstreaming Biodiversity issues into these various national blue prints. In the preparation of the Large Scale Ecosystem Based Adaptation project, sponsored by GCF to a tune of 21 Million US Dollars, Biodiversity and related concerns will be adequately addresses for the next six years of project implementation.

In the implementation of the national development plan, the Gambia adopted the MTEF, which is a transparent planning and budget formulation process within which the Cabinet and central agencies establish credible contracts for allocating public resources to their strategic priorities while ensuring overall fiscal discipline. The process entails two main objectives: the first aims at setting fiscal targets, the second aims at allocating resources to strategic priorities within these targets.

“Allocation to strategic priorities” requires determination of government wide priorities by the Cabinet collectively and portfolio-wide priorities by Ministries individually. Transparency

requires that the priorities of the Cabinet are explained in a Budget Policy Statement whereas the priorities of individual ministries are explained in their Corporate Plans. Biodiversity was the main budget programme summary with its Expenditure by Economic Classification under the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change, and Natural Resources (MECCNAR) and climate change accounting has been introduced in the government budgetary scheme.

With the advent of the new government, EIA process with high Biodiversity considerations has been re-designated as the very important milestone for the approval and disapproval of proposed development projects. The Biodiversity Newsletter (Miiro or reflexion), the Forest Outlook, the various websites of government environment related institutions, the TV and community radios and other media outlets are consequently used to share information on the values of biodiversity to wellbeing of the communities living with the resources.

Relevant environmental projects (Protected areas Network and community livelihood (PAN) project, Gambia Climate Change Adaptation (GCCA) project, Large scale Ecosystem Adaptation (EbA) project, were developed and are being implemented in order to identify key areas where biodiversity-related actions can alleviate poverty and support livelihoods. This is done through Bio-rights initiatives (bee-keeping, oyster culture and value adding, village banking and gardens, distribution to farmers of early rice varieties, ecotourism products and programmes, transformation and packaging of NTFPs).

By 2020, biodiversity values are integrated 100% into national and local development and poverty reduction planning processes and national accounts

Achieving ABT 2: Key Challenges

1. Inadequate capacity (Institutional and human) to compile environmental statistics and environmental-economic accounts and integrate the results into national finance accounts;
2. Most of these initiatives mentioned above are implemented through projects, limited in time.
3. Lack of accounting scheme to aggregate the biodiversity value and related cost of the GDP.

Linkages to the UN Sustainable Development Goals

Biodiversity conservation in the Gambia has some bearing on related SDGs. Livelihood initiatives of various projects mentioned above do contribute to the attainment of SDG 1 on ending poverty in all its forms in the country. The Department of Parks and Wildlife management has signed a Memorandum with the Gambia Tourism Board and its implementation has established an international Bird Fair Day, the re-introduction of wildlife species in Abuko Nature Reserve and Kiang West National Park.

In addressing SDG 8, implementing the Target has facilitated job creation in the tourism industry (tourist guides, handicrafts and tie-and-die making, vegetable production for market supply and the introduction of breeding programmes on Guinea fowls in EbA intervention sites. Village banking as micro-finance scheme has assist women in uplifting the rural living standard around protected areas. The Market and Development framework established in rural Gambia by the

forestry department has gone a long way in the creation of Biodiversity product related entrepreneurship.

To address SDG 11, mainstreaming Biodiversity has enabled the country to integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning with the formulation of the new ANR policy, the forest strategy and other blue prints development.

To Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development (SDG 14), the review and update of the ANR policy has effectively assist in regulating harvest and end overfishing, illegal unreported and unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices . It has also helped to implement science-based management plans, in order to restore fish stocks in the shortest time feasible.

The policy shift into private sector involvement in natural resources management with the preparation of a comprehensive guideline has increase the economic benefits of ecotourism, the promotion of aquaculture and rational exploitation of the country's fish stock and marine products.

Finally, the mainstreaming of Biodiversity into the relevant policies and programmes has help to Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss (SDG 15) and strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development (SDG17).

Assessment answers

- **□Where are opportunities for better managing biodiversity in order to reduce poverty?**

There are great opportunities in the following areas:

- a. Establishment of game sanctuaries to create employment and increase revenue generation
- b. Private sector involvement for protected areas development and species restoration
- c. Promotion of village banking and gardening for viable financial scheme
- d. Wildlife breeding programmes to promote bushmeat production and to generate revenue
- e. build capacity of locals at household level to develop nurseries for commercialization

- **Is there recognition among national, regional and local decision makers about the importance of integrating biodiversity values in development strategies?**

Recently, during the consultations for the development of the ANR policy, the regional Governors Decision makers of the various institutions involved stressed the need of the national representation of the CBD focal point in their various regions. This proposed expansion of the intervention area will provide on the ground representation to build awareness but also to address recurrent conflicts. In the development of all policy documents, Biodiversity values have been thoroughly and adequately mainstreamed.

- **To what extent has your country integrated biodiversity and ecosystem service values into sectoral and development policies and poverty reduction strategies and planning processes?**

Biodiversity is virtually integrated in all policy and programme documents of the country. All development projects are subject to EIA process which in turn is based on Biodiversity features considerations.

- **Does your country have policy development processes that account for biodiversity in land use and poverty reduction plans?**

The recently developed National Development Plan (NDP) accounts for biodiversity in land use and poverty reduction plans. The Tourism Master Plan has been very explicit in terms of land allocation to various schemes especially along the coastal strip of the country.

- **When national, regional and local decisions are being made on economic development or to reduce poverty, is the contribution of biodiversity a significant consideration?**

Natural Resources sectors are very important set up at the regional and local level for development decision making. In the Gambia the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) is supporting the Regional Governor in managing development affairs of the region. Along side the TAC, all regions have an Agriculture and Natural Resources sub-committee addressing environmental and biodiversity issues at the level of the region.

All these set ups are established in order to consider local development programmes through the environment loop. As one can see that decisions are made in consideration of the impact of the development project to the environment and the biodiversity.

- **Do your country's national development plans (including food, water, disaster, climate, disaster, development, poverty) specifically consider the values of conserving biodiversity?**

The NDP (or PAGE II) was developed on the understanding that environment or Biodiversity is a very important pillar for a sustainable development of the Gambia. Dealing with the ANR sectoral plans with Biodiversity conservation as a center piece, the plan has emphasized the need of the rational conservation of the natural resources. This was adopted because of the correlation between Biodiversity conservation and the sustainable production of food and water; the fight against disaster, climate poverty for a sustainable development of the country.

1. How many sectoral plans have you developed that explicitly include biodiversity considerations?

The Gambia, recently in June 2018, embarked on the review and update of the Agriculture and Natural Resources policy. This piece of legislation compiled the policies of the Agricultural sector with the following institutions Forestry, Water resources, the National Environment agency and the department of Parks and Wildlife management. The forestry strategy and action plan is being revised whilst the National Adaptation plan against desertification has been validated in late 2017.

2. What sectors do the plans that integrate biodiversity focus on, e.g. agriculture, tourism, energy, extractive sectors, and transportation?

The Biodiversity mainstreaming focuses mainly on the Agricultural, Fisheries, water resources , forestry, tourism and very recently transport sectors.

Have you clearly identified the opportunities and timeframes for linking the NBSAP and its components to existing planning processes in the environmental and other sectors, such as poverty reduction, national development, sustainable development, land use, agricultural development, forestry, water, coastal management, climate change, disaster risk reduction?

There were some opportunities for the mainstreaming of Biodiversity in the review and update of the National Development Plan, the Agriculture and natural resources policy.

3. To what extent is the value of biodiversity and also of natural resources to economies and livelihoods mainstreamed in the processes that drive development planning?

Biodiversity under the environment has become a very important pillar of the National Development Plan . It is worth to note that The financial sectoral reform with the Mid Term Economic Framework (MTEF), took advantage on budgeting institutional activities based on performance and outputs. It was in this vein that Biodiversity was identified as a key budget line for the environment sector under the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources.

- **What actions are you taking to further integrate biodiversity values into national and local development and poverty reduction strategies?**

The execution of the Ecosystem Based Adaptation project sponsored by the Green Climate Funds (GCF) has enable to integrate Biodiversity considerations in regional or sub-national development planning in order to address negative impacts of climate change and improve local community resilience. This project will increase the portofolio of financing local community entrepreneurship on activities related to Biodiversity Conservation and livelihood improvement. Market and Development of NFTP, wildlife cropping or ranching and Eco-tourism development. The implementation of the numerous activities identified as priority areas of the project will facilitate the development of EbA protocols for the establishment of those businesses in relation to the rational exploitation of the natural resources management.

- **How and to what extent are the values that biodiversity and natural resource bring to economies and livelihoods incorporated or mainstreamed into national accounting and/or financial reporting systems?**

The financial sectoral reform with the Mid Term Economic Framework (MTEF), took advantage on budgeting institutional activities based on performance and outputs.

- **Does your country have a system of environmental-economic accounting or a framework for integrating statistics on the environment and its relationship with the economy?**

No, the Gambia has not yet established a system of environmental-economic accounting or a framework for integrating statistics on the environment and its relationship with the economy

- **Has your country implemented natural resource accounting within the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA)?**

No, this remain to be done

- **Is biodiversity integrated into national SEA frameworks?**

Yes, Biodiversity is the foundation of the Strategic Environment Assessment to be conducted for any major development project or programme.

- **Have ecosystem valuation studies been completed, and if so, which ecosystems do they cover?**

Ecosystem valuation studies are yet to be conducted. It is part of the road map for the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit sharing.

- **How are these valuation studies informing decision-making?**

Not yet applicable

- **To what extent has your country spatialized data on biodiversity and biodiversity values, relevant to national development plans?**

Spatialized data on biodiversity and biodiversity values is not yet valued in the country and are seldom used for determining strategies and options to national development

- **What other actions have you taken to contribute to this ABT at a global level, such as providing assistance to other countries, territories or originations, or regional or international cooperation, technology transfer and/or information-sharing?**

In the framework of the Regional Partnership of Marine Conservation (PRCM); the Abidjan convention and the RAMPAO, the Gambia is working diligently to share information and data for transboundary management of the shared resources for Biodiversity mainstreaming into regional and international projects and programmes. The Gambia is participating in numerous regional projects for the sustainable conservation and management of wetlands, small pelagic fisheries, cuckles and clams, coastal and marine ecosystems,....