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Capacity Development Plan

For The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan for Iraq (2015-2020)



CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN (2015-2020) - IRAQ

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1. Background

In order to achieve international partnership in the unified environmental work and to preserve the environment under its global framework and perspective, Iraq has acceded, or is acceding, to many international agreements and conventions. In 2009, the Government of Iraq became a party to the CBD, under which and beside many steps taken, Iraq has developed its NBSAP. NBSAP serves as a principle instrument for CBD implementation, to ensure that this strategy is mainstreamed into the planning and activities of all sectors whose activities can have an impact (positive and negative) on biodiversity and to manage sustainably and conserve the biodiversity resources in line with the global targets. One of the key elements for a successful NBSAP implementation is a Capacity Development plan.

It has become clear that capacity building is central to the quest of sustainable development. The ability of Iraq to follow sustainable development is determined to a large extent by the capacity of its people and institutions, as well as by its ecological and geographical conditions. Capacity building is an essential step to deal with long-term challenges, rather than only concentrating on immediate problems.

Although biodiversity and natural resources are being increasingly threatened at a global level, Iraq has a long history of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of natural resources. It is committed towards integrating the principle of sustainable development into country legal and policy frameworks, and programs, while reversing the loss of biodiversity.

The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) of Iraq, identified actions that are aimed towards the integration of CBD objectives into relevant sectoral plans, programs and policies. Thus, there is an urgent need for building and strengthening individual, institutional and systematic capacities.

It is widely recognized that strengthened national capacity is the key to sustainable development, yet is a challenge. Although MoEI is the nodal party for handling multi-lateral agreements and activities, capacity building doesn't only fall under its mandate. The multi-stakeholder character of biodiversity conservation makes it necessary to continually focus on capacity building at all levels and for all concerned stakeholders. This Capacity development plan identifies the capacity gaps in implementing the provisions of the NBSAP, while suggesting an action plan to meet these constraints at different levels.

2. Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the Capacity Development Plan is to identify priorities for developing Iraq's capacity to enable it implementing the NBASP and meeting its commitments in biodiversity conservation and management at national and global level. The priority strategic objectives for capacity development in Iraq are to:

1. Develop capacity for land use policy development and planning;
2. Improve legislative and institutional arrangements for biodiversity conservation;
3. Strengthen capacity to implement community-based natural resource management;
4. Expand capacity for education and research to create a sustainable knowledge base in support of biodiversity conservation;
5. Raise awareness of policy and decision-makers, and of other key stakeholders about the role of the NBSAP in biodiversity conservation in Iraq.

Accordingly, this report describes the current situation in addressing national and global biodiversity challenges in Iraq, including strengths, constraints and capacity needs, and recommends capacity development actions to address them. Most importantly, the Capacity development plan focuses on Iraq's capacity to effectively implement the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and to mainstream the component of capacity assessment and development as an integral part of national development planning.

The NBSAP of Iraq outlines strategies, priorities and actions for biodiversity conservation and the sustainable use of natural resources. Accordingly, it should be publicized widely to secure stakeholder, public and governmental ownership and commitment. It should be made available as a planning tool for integrating biodiversity into national development and sectoral planning policies and laws; and for fundraising and coordination of support to the implementation of the CBD. As a matter of fact, the NBSAP assisted in identifying capacity gaps and priorities for support to biodiversity conservation and sustainable development.

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Table 2-1: General Capacity Constraints and Requirements

General Capacity Constraints	General Capacity Requirements
Gaps in national legislation that that constrain the implementation of the CBD	Incorporation of ecosystem approach/community-based management into national conservation legislation for the effective implementation of the CBD
Lack of sustainable economic planning and absence of a general land use policy	Revision and enactment of sector legislation to manage land use
Absence of a lead authority to observe the overall management and conservation of natural resources	Strengthening the systematic level by fully mandating a focal point and enhance its coordination role to harmonize policies, trim irregularities
Improper affiliation that entails changes in policies and plans, and affects the relationship between relevant institutions	Capacity and partnership building of key stakeholders to address planning and management that are essential for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of natural resources
Lack of logistics and infrastructure of institutions working on biodiversity conservation	Restructuring national institutions, increasing their capacities and integrating their activities into decision-making
Lack of coordination and synchronization between institutions	Strengthening monitoring and evaluation by improving inventories of human resources and synchronization between institutions
Security constraints that make several areas of the country inaccessible	
Low awareness of biodiversity and its values, particularly among policy and decision-makers and the public	Formulation and implementation of national awareness programs for project effectiveness and sustainability

3. Capacity Gaps and Development Action

This section identifies priority capacity-building actions, and proposes that MoEI is the key executive body in charge of biodiversity conservation that is responsible for coordination and consultative planning. The involvement of MoEI enhances its in-house institutional capacities, and improves the enabling environment for biodiversity conservation in Iraq, guided by the following principles:

1. Enhancing MoEI's role in coordination;
2. Building political support for strategies and policies related to biodiversity;
3. Harmonizing strategies and policies;
4. Improving capacity to enforce policies.

Apart, people and livelihoods are included as essential variables for sustainable conservation efforts, especially that the basis for conservation is to ensure that people dependent on particular resources obtain better and secure livelihoods.

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Table 3-1: Capacity Gaps and Development Action

Individual Capacity Development	Institutional Capacity Development	Systemic Capacity Development
1- Development of competence standards for specific jobs	1- Target individual sectors with specific capacity building exercises on biodiversity conservation and policy reform.	1- Review of existing sustainable use laws, policies and models to enhance their effectiveness and applicability.
2- Initiate programs and training workshops (with the help of key institutions) aimed at improving institutional and individual capacities for assessing current and potential threats caused by invasive species.		2- Develop action plans for ecosystems, protected areas and species; and adopt legislative measures for their implementation.
3- Conduct of training programs for individuals (decision makers and relevant staff) about techniques of standardized monitoring protocols	3- Review the sectoral and cross-sectoral strategies, plan and programs to identify the weaknesses along with possible mechanisms of intervention for sustainable use and biodiversity conservation	3- Enact a comprehensive and effective biodiversity conservation policy and practice that addresses issues such as land use, land allocation and land tenure.
4- Build capacity and promote legal capabilities to safeguard the national interests and rights of the Iraqi people over their intellectual property rights pertaining to biodiversity, resources, indigenous knowledge and natural heritage	4- Build institutional capacities for better surveys and assessment processes, collection, documentation and preservation need to be improved and expanded to involve multiple stakeholders need to be encouraged.	4- Develop a long-term monitoring strategy for endangered species and the following high priority bio-geographic and thematic areas within and outside the formal PA network.
5- Develop a framework for rehabilitation of displaced people from protected areas.	5- Build effective partnership between NGOs and the governmental agencies.	5- Establish large-scale integrated monitoring surveys/programmes and early warning systems to measure and monitor species as well as ecosystem responses to threats,

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		and to develop management techniques and policy guidelines for protected areas.
6- Building the capacity in terms of both institutional strengthening and impart training to all concerned stakeholders	6- Review the legal framework for protected areas and develop a protected area policy by MoEI, along with the assistance of a multi-disciplinary advisory group.	6- Establish a network of field stations and permanent plots as a cross-cutting initiative, depending on the requirement in the country.
7- Provide technical and financial support for the field trainings to the staff about conservation practices of biodiversity	7- Building capacity of local communities for facilitating long-term participatory management, with the incorporation of potential benefit sharing protocols as incentives.	7- Strategic investments to strengthen the infrastructural capacity and technical expertise of the implementing agencies, in addition to training programmes in rapid assessment techniques for biodiversity documentation and monitoring, in interdisciplinary strategies in protected area management especially those relating to socio-economic factors, and in legal procedures related to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use.
8- Strengthen the institutional technical capacity by improving the technical infrastructure and the manpower base through extensive training programmes to carry out the tasks.	8- Technical support to institutions to build their own data standards to make existing biodiversity databases of the country compatible with global networks and databases.	8- Establish survey and research programs to generate and collect information.

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<p>9- Inform decision-makers and the general public by providing adequate information through the media, and improved extension services and networks.</p>	<p>9- Promote traditional systems and improve cultural practices of sustainable use of biodiversity resources through the adoption of these mechanisms in the current policy</p>	<p>9- Building an integrated database in accordance with international norms.</p>
<p>10- Establishment of information database and network of experts in the country.</p>	<p>10- Implement capacity building of rural schools, encouraging the current activities of NGOs in order to augment existing funds and develop appropriate programmes.</p>	<p>10- Allocate adequate funds for social and natural science research projects and educational programs pertaining to biodiversity conservation and sustainable use.</p>
<p>11- Develop guidelines for implementing agencies to develop frameworks for the capacity building aimed at identifying and developing effective participatory models that facilitate multiple stakeholder involvement in decision-making.</p>	<p>11- Identification of responsibilities for all aspects of biodiversity conservation so as to prevent overlaps and conflicts.</p>	<p>11- Social science research in the subjects pertaining to community perceptions, management and use of resources should be promoted and integrated with policymaking processes.</p>
	<p>12- Improve information sharing system inside the ministry of environment.</p>	<p>12- Build capacity to document and devise frameworks for traditional and innovative biodiversity and sustainable practices</p>
	<p>13- Capacity building for participation in Clearing House Mechanism.</p>	<p>13- Improve the financial support from the Iraqi government to the biodiversity relevant actions, and by cooperating with international financial organizations, donor countries</p>

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		and private companies, to develop and operate innovative financial mechanisms of biodiversity conservation.
		14-Identify models that have demonstrated successful conservation, and promote sustainable practices while creating sources of alternative income.

4. Conclusion

There is a need to mainstream biodiversity concerns with the overall national policy and regulatory frameworks by developing a better understanding of the all inclusive nature of the concept biological diversity per se. The specific capacity building measures for biodiversity conservation are as follows:

1. Information and knowledge:
 - Strengthen information capacity and knowledge-base of the country's biodiversity;
 - Promote the application of modern tools of bio-systematic; and,
 - Improve access to information and technology.
2. Planning, policy and decision making:
 - Encourage multi-disciplinary and participatory approach involving stakeholders in policy planning and decision making processes;
 - Strengthen, rationalize, and harmonize the existing policies, laws, and acts on biodiversity conservation; and,
 - Develop and implement strategies to mainstream biodiversity concerns among relevant stakeholders.
3. Implementation of management actions:
 - Strengthen institutional infrastructure and human resources;
 - Aid capacity building of local institutions and communities; and,
 - Promote public-private partnerships in biodiversity conservation.
4. Monitoring and Evaluation:
 - Establish monitoring mechanisms for conservation policies and programs and strengthen evaluation criteria of research and assessments; and,
 - Promote incentives for compliance with principles of sustainable development.

The Government of Iraq is implementing a number of programs and projects to develop the national capacity for biodiversity conservation. To supplement these efforts, Iraq has developed its first NBSAP in order to strengthen the capacity to implement the provisions of CBD in Iraq. Such efforts need to be strengthened by mobilizing more resources as well as strategically using the available resources to built country's capacity to conserve, manage and use biodiversity and its natural resources sustainably.