

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY

Project brief

Country:	Bangladesh
Project Title:	Bangladesh Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan
GEF Focal Area:	Biodiversity
Country Eligibility:	Ratification of the Convention on Biological Diversity in December, 1993
GEF Financing:	US\$ 278,900
Government Contribution:	US\$ 52,400 (approx.)
GEF Implementing Agency:	UNDP
Lead Agency:	Ministry of Environment & Forest, Govt. of People's Republic of Bangladesh (GoB) (i.e. NEX)
Executing Agency:	The World Conservation Union (IUCN)
GEF Operational Focal Point:	Secretary, Ministry of Environment & Forest, GoB
CBD Focal Point:	Secretary, Ministry of Environment & Forest, GoB
Estimated Starting Date:	February 2000
Project Duration:	24 months

Background

Although it is not frequently recognized, Bangladesh supports a wealth of biodiversity, including some 130 species of mammals, 650 species of birds, +700 species of freshwater and marine fish, 400 species of mollusks, 145 species of reptiles, 15 species of amphibians and over 5,000 species of vascular plants. Many of these species are globally threatened, such as the Asian Elephant, The Royal Bengal Tiger, Gharial, the Ganges River Dolphin and the Hoolock Gibbon. Five species of threatened marine turtles nest along Bangladesh's coastline; and two globally important migratory-bird-flyways converge here - the East Asia-Australian Flyway and the Central Asia-Indian Flyway. Each year, some one million waterfowl winter in Bangladesh, including such globally endangered species as the Spoonbill Sandpiper, Asian-Dowitcher, Nordman's Greenshank and Spotted Redshank, etc.

A broad range of ecosystem types is found in Bangladesh, including tropical evergreen forests, mangrove forests, riparian and coastal wetlands, and the littoral, sub-littoral and benthic communities of the Indian Ocean. Together with neighboring India, Bangladesh supports the largest remaining mangrove forest in the world, the Sunderbans. Over 50 % of Bangladesh can be classified as wetlands.

The many rice cultivars found in Bangladesh are also internationally significant; over 12,000 cultivars have been recorded to date, representing a valuable – but rapidly vanishing - genetic resource.

Bangladesh's biological diversity, however, faces a broad array of anthropogenic threats. With 120 million people, a population growth rate of 2.17%, and a population density of 800 people per square kilometer, the pressure upon the nation's natural resources is intense. Pollution of Bangladesh's soil, air, and water has intensified over the last two decades and constitutes a significant threat to both biological diversity and human health. Illegal gathering and export of medicinal plants and other economically valuable species such as reptiles and amphibians affect many ecosystems, habitats and taxa. Over-fishing of commercial fish species in the riparian and coastal wetlands, as well as poaching and sport hunting of large mammals and birds, are causing populations of many species to decline.

The conservation and management of the nation's natural resources is the responsibility of many different government bodies, including the Ministry of Environment and Forest, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, the Ministry of Lands, and the Ministry of Water Resources. The Department of Forest (under MoEF) is a specialized body dealing with the management of forest reserves, wildlife and protected areas. The Department of Environment is another specialized body under MoEF, dealing primarily "brown" and "gray" issues in the environment sector. Responsibilities, communication channels and coordination mechanisms among these many different Ministries and Departments remain poorly defined and unclear.

Many of the nation's natural resource management laws and policies have their origins in the British colonial period. As a result, they are no longer suited to present day needs for the conservation of biodiversity and the sustainable use of its components. For example, there are no legal provisions to support community-based management of wildlife or protected areas. Similarly, important aspects of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) – such as access to genetic resources – have yet to be accorded legal backing.

As a Party to the CBD, Bangladesh has undertaken an international commitment to prepare a Biodiversity Action Plan. Although the National Conservation Strategy (NCS) provides a broad framework for the conservation of the country's natural resources, it does not specifically focus upon the management of biodiversity. Similarly, the National Environmental Management Action Plan (NEMAP) addresses a very wide array of natural resource management and environmental quality issues, and does not provide adequate guidance – in and of itself – for fulfilling the three primary objectives of the CBD.

A considerable number of biodiversity-related programs and projects are now under implementation or in the design stage. These include: the Coastal and Wetland Biodiversity Management Project; the Sustainable Environmental Management Project; the Sundarbans Biodiversity Project; the Strengthening of the Department of Environment Project and the NCS Implementation 1 Project. Although not directly concerned with biodiversity *per se*, many other programs and projects have biodiversity-related components, such as the Forest Resource Management Project, the Coastal Green Belt Project, and the planned Integrated Coastal Zone Management Project. In the absence of a Biodiversity Action Plan, however, there is no unifying framework to guide and coordinate these many different activities, to identify national biodiversity priorities, or to allocate lead responsibilities.

Outside the specialized government departments and a small number of NGOs and universities, there is relatively little awareness of the importance and values of biodiversity. As a result, there is a lack of “ownership” and support for biodiversity, and a belief that there are high opportunity costs involved in conservation.

In view of the situation described above, it has now become an urgent priority for Bangladesh to develop its Biodiversity Action Plan, through a broad consultative process involving many different groups of stakeholders. In the following sections, the approach and methodology that will be used in developing the SAP are described in greater detail.

Project Objectives and Short Description

The primary objective of this project is to develop a national Biodiversity Action Plan, a plan which fulfills Bangladesh’s international commitments under the CBD, whilst also reflecting national priorities and the country’s unique cultural, historical, and geographical setting. Among the factors which will be important for the SAP to take into consideration are:

- The direct dependence of a majority of the population on the use of natural resources;
- The linkages between biodiversity loss and poverty;
- The significant role of the NGO sector in providing development services and inputs. (BRAC – the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee – is the largest NGO in the world, and has some 50,000 employees);
- The need to adopt flexible and innovative approaches to *in situ* conservation; Bangladesh’s high population density means that conventional approaches to protected area management are unlikely to be successful; and
- Similarly – and perhaps more so than in many other countries – there is a need to ensure that biodiversity concerns are integrated into all relevant sectors.

It is expected that the development of the SAP will result in:

- A coordinating and unifying framework for the management of the nation’s biodiversity;
- Clear goals and objectives for conservation, sustainable use and benefit sharing;
- A prioritized action plan for achieving these objectives;
- Strengthened GoB capacity to fulfill commitments under the CBD;
- Enhanced application of policy, legal and financial instruments for the conservation and management of biodiversity; and
- Increased awareness at many levels of the importance and values of biodiversity.

Coverage Without Duplication

There are two existing national environmental policies in Bangladesh. They are the National Conservation Strategy (NCS) and the National Environmental Management Action Plan (NEMAP). The major objective of the NCS is to provide a guide for development practitioners on the means to preserve or improve the environment while pursuing the goal of sustainable development. Undertaken in two phases the strategy aims to incorporate environmental considerations into the developing planning process. It proposed to do so by developing a framework to address natural resource conflicts occurring in the course of socio-

economic development. On the other hand, NEMAP was requested by MoEF to outline projects and programs that could alleviate environmental degradation. It was intended to be follow up of the NCS document. The NCS was to provide an overview of issues and develop a strategy. On the other hand the NEMAP was to provide action plan for specific projects.

Despite all these activities there has not been any mainstreaming of the process that could lead to a Biodiversity Strategic Action Plan (SAP). However, these activities have generated considerable amount of information that can be used during the process of formulation of a SAP. Presently, there will be no duplication of efforts between NCS and NEMAP implementation projects. As suggested an activity will be developed. Moreover, the integration of biodiversity in other sectoral plans and policies is still at their infancy stage. The SAP will build upon, and complement, the existing national environmental policies. The SAP will also provide an important unifying framework for coordinating many of the biodiversity related programs and projects which are either ongoing or planned.

Work Plan

The proposed starting date of the project is November, 1999. The SAP will be prepared in 18 months and a further six months are likely to be required for its adoption by the Cabinet. A detailed work plan is presented in Annex I.

Best Practice

The methodology to be used in the preparation of the SAP will be consistent with the WRI/IUCN/UNEP *Guidelines for Preparing National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans*. The identification of goals and objectives, and the prioritization of the actions required, will be based on broad stakeholder consultation, and will seek to reflect national aspirations, global concerns, and Bangladesh's commitments under the CBD. The SAP document itself will be drafted by a multi-sectoral team of national and international experts.

A high level SAP Steering Committee will be established in the Ministry of Environment and Forest. The Committee will be chaired by the Secretary, MoEF, and will be responsible for providing overall policy and planning guidance, and ensuring inter-agency coordination. The Committee will meet on a quarterly basis, and will be composed of senior representatives from a broad range of Ministries, GoB departments and agencies, as well as several environment and development NGOs. Key GoB bodies are likely to include:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| • Ministry of Agriculture; | • Ministry of Tourism; |
| • Ministry of Fisheries and | • Ministry of Planning; |
| • Livestock; | • Ministry of Education; |
| • Ministry of Water | • Ministry of Shipping |
| • Resources; | • Planning Commission |
| • Ministry of Land; | • Department of Environment; |
| • Ministry of Industry; | • Department of Forest. |

In the longer term, it is envisioned that the members of this inter-ministerial Steering Committee will serve as biodiversity focal points within their respective organizations and be responsible for catalyzing the implementation of the SAP.

The Ministry of Environment and Forest will designate a National Project Director to oversee the project, and to act as the Secretary to the Steering Committee. A full time Project Manager will be appointed by IUCN in consultation with the Ministry, to handle day-to-day coordination and management.

A national Inception Workshop will be organized at an early stage in the project. Building on the consultative process initiated by NEMAP, the workshop will involve a broad range of stakeholders, including government ministries and specialized line departments, NGOs, academia, research institutions, local populations and the private sector. The purpose of the workshop will be to:

- Reiterate the need for a Biodiversity Action Plan in Bangladesh;
- Build consensus on a “vision” for biodiversity conservation and management in Bangladesh, and the objectives of the SAP in particular;
- Identify the priority themes that should be addressed by the SAP, and agree on a draft outline of the SAP document;
- Agree on the Terms of Reference for the proposed Thematic Working Groups.

An international biodiversity planning specialist will be recruited to assist with the organization and facilitation of this workshop, and to familiarize the core project team with biodiversity planning and analysis techniques.

As a follow-up to the Inception Workshop, it is anticipated that approximately ten Working Groups will be established, comprised of leading experts from academia, government agencies and NGOs. Although the themes to be addressed by the Working Groups will be dependent upon the outcome of the Inception Workshop, it is likely that these will include such topics as: legal and policy issues; institutional issues; *in situ* conservation; education and training; advocacy and awareness; research; and *ex situ* conservation. Working Groups might also be established to consider the status and special requirements of specific ecosystems.

The Working Groups will be expected to meet on a regular basis, to carry out an in-depth review of their respective themes (thematic review), and to develop a prioritized set of recommendations. Each Working Group will be supported by a national expert, who will be responsible for preparing an initial background paper and carrying out additional research as may be required. Generic Terms of Reference for the Working Groups will be agreed upon during the Inception Workshop.

Working group reports and recommendations will be presented at a second national workshop, which will bring together decision-makers and experts from sectoral ministries, national NGOs and other stakeholder groups (such as business communities, environmental activists, tea garden managers, rubber planters, representatives from the shrimp cultivators association, representative from fisher cooperative, representative from export promotion bureau, representative from ayurvedic/herbal medication practitioners, gas exploration companies, representative from inland river transport etc). Participants will discuss the results of the assessments and the gaps identified. Recommendations will be analyzed to ensure that approaches across sectors are complementary and to agree upon joint mechanisms for action. An international consultant with conflict resolution skills will facilitate the workshop.

Following the second national workshop, the Project Manager, the National Project Director and additional experts will compile the draft Biodiversity Action Plan. It is envisioned that the draft Plan will include the following:

- An introductory section, explaining the importance of biodiversity and GoB's commitment to the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity;
- A background section on the current status of Bangladesh's biodiversity;
- A set of guiding principles, goals and objectives;
- The Action Plan itself. Each set of recommendations will identify the roles and responsibilities of the major actors, and also establish time schedules and targets. A costing for selected priority activities will be provided;
- A strategy for launching and implementing the Plan, which identifies lead institutions, coordination mechanisms, and means of generating political and financial support;
- A section on monitoring and evaluation, explaining the measures that will be adopted to monitor the status of biodiversity in Bangladesh, to track the implementation of the SAP, and assess the results of the Plan;
- A set of annexes (lists of endemic and threatened species; lists of protected areas; etc.).

The draft SAP will be produced in both English and Bengali, and will then be widely disseminated for public review and discussion. To ensure that the document reaches a broad range of stakeholders, a variety of dissemination channels and mechanisms will be used, including national ministries, the major rural development NGOs, and divisional governments (or regional reviews).

Public consultation workshops will be organized in each of Bangladesh's six divisions, to seek feedback and input on the draft at the regional level. Comments from the divisional (or regional) workshops will be considered in the draft document. These will then be followed by the third, and final, national workshop.

Following this phase, the SAP will be finalized by the project team and submitted to the Cabinet of Ministers for review and adoption. Upon adoption, the SAP will be published (in English and Bengali) and widely disseminated to the government agencies, the NGO community, the private sector and other stakeholders of Bangladesh. A high-profile launching ceremony will also be held.

GEF Budget Matrix

	Product	Process	Total (\$ c,d
	<i>Preparation and Execution of an activity</i>	<i>Stakeholder consultation, consensus building</i>	
<i>Stakeholder and Inventory of Existing Information, including social assessment</i>	30,000		30,000
<i>Identification and Analysis of Options</i>	37,000	103,000	140,000
<i>Preparation of a Strategy and an Action Plan</i>	29,900	58,000	87,900
<i>First National Report</i>	13,000	8,000	21,000
Total	109,900	169,000	278,900

Project Financing

The total project budget is estimated at US\$ 331,300 of which US\$ 278,900 is sought from UNDP/GEF; contribution from the Government of Bangladesh, i.e. in-kind - including staff time, facilities, and logistical support - is expected to amount to approximately US\$ 52,400.

Deviations from Criteria and Norms

This proposed project is consistent with GEF Enabling Activity criteria and norms.

Institutional Framework & Project Implementation

The project will be implemented by the Ministry of Environment and Forest and executed by the Bangladesh Country Office of IUCN-The World Conservation Union. In recognition of IUCN's global and regional experience in the preparation of National Biodiversity Action Plans¹, its contributions to the NCS process, its current role in NEMAP implementation, and its wide membership base, the Government of Bangladesh has requested IUCN to execute the project and provide necessary technical assistance.

The Ministry of Environment and Forest will oversee the implementation of the project and designate a National Project Director. The Ministry will also constitute a Project Steering Committee to provide overall policy and planning guidance, and to monitor project progress. The Steering Committee will have broad-based representation from various ministries and NGOs to ensure inter-agency coordination. It is anticipated that the members of the Steering Committee will continue as biodiversity focal points in their respective ministries after the completion of the SAP.

As executing agency, under the supervision of UNDP, the GEF Implementing Agency, IUCN will be responsible inter alia for: (a) Recruitment of International and National Consultants, including candidate search/selection, preparation of TORs, supervision, etc.; Project Coordination, including organization of regular meetings with project implementing agency, Steering Committee, Technical Committees, etc.; Financial Management and Accountability, issuance of payments, training staff on financial disbursements and reporting, ensuring complete and timeliness of financial reporting; Technical Reporting, including preparation of reports i.e. APR, PIR, progress reports, etc.; Monitoring and evaluation, including project monitoring/site visits, development of clear guidelines for project progress and impact, etc.; Organization of Training/Workshop Activities; Awareness Raising, including dissemination of relevant information to host and other countries, sharing training materials, etc.; Procurement of Equipment, including preparation of specifications, identifying suppliers for goods and services, evaluating contracts, awarding contracts, authorising payment, etc. The project will form Thematic Working Groups comprised of scientists and experts supported by national consultants. The Working Groups will carry out detailed reviews of their respective themes and prepare a prioritized set of recommendations for consideration at the second national workshop.

The Project Manager will organize the various project workshops and assume the lead responsibility for the preparation of the SAP document. International consultants will be recruited for short assignments to provide familiarization with biodiversity planning approaches, to facilitate workshops, and to provide expertise in different issues as appropriate.

¹ At a global level, IUCN has assisted with over 20 different Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans. Recent experience in South and Southeast Asia includes the provision of technical assistance with SAPs in Sri Lanka, Nepal, Vietnam, and Pakistan. IUCN also prepared the Cambodia Biodiversity Prospectus and expects to play a technical assistance role in the development of the SAP for Lao PDR.

Activity Matrix

Enabling Activity	OUTPUT	CAPACITY BUILDING	PUBLIC PARTICIPATION	COMMENTS
Commitment	PLANNING, EXECUTION	INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTH	TRAINING	
PREPARATORY PHASE				
Designation of National Project Director		X		
Recruitment of Project Manager		X		
Establishment of Project Office		X		
Establishment of the Steering Committee		X		
Meetings of the Steering Committee		X		
Formation of the Working Groups		X		
Meetings of the Working Groups		X		
Recruitment of Experts		X		
SAP PROCESS				
State of Knowledge	X			
Cross Sectoral Issues	X			
Policy Framework	X			
Regulatory Mechanism	X			
Linkage of Management Network	X			
Assessment of Human Resources	X	X	X	
Needs and Institutional Capacity Enhancement				
Root Causes & SWOT Analysis	X			
Technologies for Sustainable Management of Biodiversity	X		X	
Impact Assessment & Their Mitigation Measures	X	X	X	X
Ongoing Available Tools for Mitigation	X	X	X	X
Determination of Objectives	X	X	X	X
Gap Identification & Analysis	X			X
Need Assessment & Prioritization	X			X
Identification, Analysis & Finalization of Issues and Priorities	X			X
Strategies for Conservation	X	X	X	X
Strategies for Sustainable Use	X	X	X	X
Strategies for Benefit Sharing	X	X	X	X
SAP PLANNING & PREPARATION				
Policy Guideline	X	X	X	X
National Strategies	X	X	X	X
Biodiversity Program & Action Plan	X	X	X	X
SAP LAUNCHING				
Legislature	X			X
Public Consultation	X			X
Formal Launching	X			X

WORKPLAN		YEAR 1												YEAR 2											
Activities		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. ESTABLISHMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE																									
1.1 Designation of National Project Director																									
1.2 Recruitment of Project Manager																									
1.3 Establishment of Project Office																									
1.4 Establishment of the Steering Committee																									
1.5 Meetings of the Steering Committee																									
1.6 Formation of the Working Groups																									
1.7 Meetings of the Working Groups																									
1.8 Recruitment of Experts																									
2. SAP PROCESS																									
2.1 First National (Inception) Workshop																									
2.2 Preparation of Thematic Reviews																									
2.3 Second National Workshop																									
2.4 First Draft of SAP																									
2.5 Division-level Workshops																									
2.6 Third National Workshop																									
2.7 Finalization of SAP																									
3. SAP APPROVAL & LAUNCHING																									
3.1 Cabinet Approval																									
3.2 Printing of SAP and Distribution																									
3.3 Launching and Distribution of SAP																									