

ERITREA
ENABLING ACTIVITY PROPOSAL IN BIODIVERSITY

Country	Eritrea
Project Title	Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plan and First National Report
GEF Focal Area	Biodiversity
Country Eligibility	Convention acceded to on 11 September 1995.
GEF Financing Request	US\$ 275,000
Government Contribution	In-kind
GEF Implementing Agency	World Bank
National Executing Agency	Eritrean Environmental Agency
GEF Operational Focal Point	Eritrean Environmental Agency
CBD Focal Point	Eritrean Environmental Agency
Estimated Starting Date	November 1996
Project Duration	12 months

BACKGROUND/CONTEXT

Eritrea has a land area of 12 million ha, and a population estimated at anywhere from 2.3 - 3.6 million. It has recently emerged as a new nation, after 30 years of civil war with Ethiopia. The highlands, above 1500 m in elevation, account for approximately 1.7 million ha (14 percent of the land area). As much as one-third of the total land area is desert or semi-desert, and is unsuited for livestock or cultivation. Another 60 percent of the land area is used primarily for grazing. It is generally accepted that less than 5 percent of the land area is under cultivation, while irrigated cropland accounts for 0.2 percent. Low rainfall conditions predominate throughout the country, with 70 percent of the land area receiving less than 400 mm of rainfall annually. Forested areas account for less than one percent of the area, and much of this has been highly disturbed. Eritrea's coastline extends for 1,155 km along the Red Sea, and another 565 km around numerous islands in the Dahlak Archipelago, off the coast.

Eritrea's contribution to global biodiversity is primarily in four areas: crop genetic biodiversity, coastal zone and marine resources, forests, and wildlife. Virtually the entire complex of seed crops from Southwestern Asia and the Mediterranean is represented in Ethiopia and Eritrea, with especially high genetic variability in wheat and barley. Over 1,250 species of near shore fish and over 220 species of coral are found in the coastal waters; approximately 20 percent of these are endemic to the Red Sea. There are also healthy populations of cetaceans, dugongs and sea turtles.

Forest biodiversity is concentrated in three areas: the Eastern Escarpment forests, which receive higher rainfall and have been relatively well protected from clearance, represent a distinctly different forest type from that found elsewhere in the country; the riverine forests of the Western Lowlands are also relatively intact, and are of some considerable interest from a biodiversity perspective but also because of their high economic value, providing raw material for local industries and valued resources for grazing and browsing; limited pockets of forests in the northern highlands are remarkable as they represent probably the only remaining, relatively extensive, examples of *Olea/Juniperus* forests which might have dominated the highlands long before settlement. Finally, extensive woodland cover and the few remaining areas of forests provide significant wildlife habitat, including elephant, leopard, and a variety of plains game. Three species of gazelle have been identified as vulnerable, the Dorcas Gazelle (*Gazella dorcas*), the Red-fronted Gazelle (*Gazella rufifrons*) and Soemmerring's Gazelle (*Gazella soemmerringii*).

The loss of habitat, primarily due to the expansion of agriculture and livestock grazing, poses among the most significant threats for biodiversity conservation. Even so, Eritrea's agricultural situation is precarious, as poor soils and low rainfall combine to frustrate any effort to ensure food security. The country is heavily dependent on food assistance to meet its structural food deficit. The diversity of its crop resources is partly threatened by prevailing agricultural conditions. Finally, the principal agents of genetic erosion include drought, the introduction of high-yielding varieties, crop replacement, and changes in cropping patterns and land-use.

The Government of Eritrea's commitment to biodiversity conservation is illustrated in the *National Environment Management Plan for Eritrea* (NEMP-E), which was adopted in 1995. Biodiversity conservation and the development of a Biodiversity Strategy are integral parts and priorities in the Plan. Likewise, Eritrea ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) on 11 September 1995. Draft legislation, the *Proclamation on the Conservation of Biological Diversity*, is currently being reviewed. The Proclamation will be finalized after completion of the Biodiversity Strategy, taking into consideration the outcome of the strategy process. The same applies to draft forest and wildlife legislation and the interim law on marine policy and integrated coastal zone management.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND SHORT DESCRIPTION

The purpose of the proposed project is to enable the Government of Eritrea to develop a Biodiversity Strategy, in compliance with Articles 6 and 8 of the CBD and as a means of identifying priority actions for biodiversity conservation and management. The project will, in addition, provide resources for Government to prepare its first National Report to the Conference of the Parties. As such, the project will also be an important step in enhancing the capacity of the government and other stakeholders in various fields related to biodiversity and in identifying priority areas for biodiversity conservation and management in Eritrea.

The Eritrean Environmental Agency (the "Agency") will establish a *Core Planning Team*, which will coordinate activities during the development of the Biodiversity Strategy & National Report. This team will be responsible for stocktaking and assessment exercise, which will be carried out utilizing existing information. Identification and Analysis of Options will be carried out through a series of national, regional and local workshops and seminars through the Eritrean People's Forum on the Environment. Local workshops will be held at the community council (*baito*) level in the vicinity of critical ecosystems. Regional workshops will reflect the four ecogeographic zones of the country and will draw heavily on the results of the local workshops. The National Workshops will provide a forum for engaging policy makers and planners in development and finalization of the strategy, drawing heavily upon the results of the local and regional workshops. Dissemination of information about biodiversity will be carried out through the production of printed material. In selected areas, Participatory Rural Appraisal methods will be used to identify locally acceptable options for biodiversity conservation and to facilitate the preparation of plans for targeting investments in biodiversity conservation initiatives at the local level. The final draft, produced in Tigrinya and English, will be submitted to the Ministerial Council on the Environment for discussion and approval. The *First National Report* will be prepared for the Fourth Conference of the Parties (1997) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), describing the development of the Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plan and other measures taken by Eritrea to implement the CBD.

COVERAGE WITHOUT DUPLICATION

The development of a Biodiversity Strategy was identified as a priority in the *National Environmental Management Plan for Eritrea* (NEMP-E). The Strategy will expand upon and complement the sections on Biodiversity in the NEMP-E and will follow the principles outlined therein, particularly, the need for cross-sectoral planning at the macro and national levels which is responsive to the environmental

management priorities identified by communities and other local organizations through a community-based consultative process.

A number of related initiatives are currently underway or in the pipeline. The following initiatives have been taken into account in the design of this proposal:

- A draft *Framework Marine Biodiversity Strategy* is in preparation in conjunction with the UNDP/GEF project, *Conservation of Coral Reef Biodiversity through Community-Based Resource Management*. This draft Strategy will be integrated as a sectoral component in the overall Biodiversity Strategy. The UNDP/GEF project will also generate data that will assist in refining the marine component of the overall strategy.
- The project *Support for the Eritrean Environmental Agency*, financed on a grant basis by the World Bank through its Institutional Development Fund, provides resources for capacity building and for developing a mechanism for cross-sectoral consultation on environmental issues.
- An FAO-supported Assessment of the Wildlife and Forestry Sector will generate information, relevant for the stocktaking and assessment component of the strategy process.
- The Community Development Fund project, supported by the World Bank and other donors, may provide resources for future local biodiversity management projects.

TIME PLAN AND SEQUENCING

The BSAP will be produced over a period of 12 months according to the schedule outlined below, starting in November 1996. The tasks and sequence of events envisioned for the Eritrean BSAP are consistent with those recommended in *National Biodiversity Planning: Guidelines Based on Early Experiences Around the World* (WRI/UNEP/IUCN 1993) as well as the *Operational Criteria for Enabling Activities: Biodiversity* (Global Environment Facility 1996). The schedule outlined below is consistent with the need for submission of the first national reports on implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity by June 30, 1997.

Activity/Month	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Establish Core Planning Team	X											
Preparation of work plan	X	X										
Review stocktaking materials		X	X									
Identification and analysis of options				X	X	X						
Regional Workshops						X	X	X				
Production of Issues and Options paper based upon regional workshops							X	X				
Preparation of Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plan								X	X			
National workshops									X	X		
Finalize Strategy & Action Plan										X	X	X
Preparation of National Report to COP								X				

BEST PRACTICES

The Eritrean Environmental Agency builds on the approaches described in *National Biodiversity Planning: Guidelines Based on Early Country Experiences (WRI/UNEP/IUCN: 1995)* and comply with the best practices outlined in the *Operational Criteria for Enabling Activities: Biodiversity*. Many of the steps in the process are taken from this publication and adapted to the Eritrean situation. Several aspects of the policy and planning environment in Eritrea bear particular mention, as they provide a unique context for preparation of the Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plan in a way which reflects many elements of 'best practice.'

Ownership and integration in the policy process. The Government of the State of Eritrea has placed a very high priority on bringing about broad-based, improved environmental management. The identification of biodiversity conservation priorities, and ownership of these initiatives are especially strong, as the development of a Biodiversity Strategy was identified as a priority in the *National Environment Management Plan for Eritrea (NEMP-E)*. Especially because of the attention given to biodiversity conservation in the NEMP-E, the Strategy will be integrated into the broader development policy framework, and will identify mechanisms and activities to address sectoral and cross-sectoral issues. The strategy will be discussed and adopted by the Interministerial Council on the Environment. Sectoral priorities which will be given emphasis in the biodiversity strategy will reflect the country's most important biodiversity resources in the marine, forest, wildlife, and crop biodiversity sectors. National and regional expertise will be used as much as possible in the development of the strategy. External technical assistance will only be provided in specific areas, where national expertise is insufficient.

Consultation and community participation. There is a strong tradition in Eritrea of consultation at the local level through community councils, called *baitos*. Social concerns related to the conservation of biodiversity will be addressed through the participation and consultation of a variety of stakeholders in a number of workshops at the *baito* level and elsewhere. The Participatory Rural Appraisal exercise will address issues related to local perspectives and needs with regard to biodiversity conservation. Consensus building amongst the stakeholder groups will be an important principle of the strategy process. The Eritrean People's Forum for the Environment, a specific Eritrean mechanism, will play an important role in this process.

Regional linkages and cross boundary issues. Cross boundary issues, particularly with Ethiopia, will be identified and discussed during the strategy development process. Links will also be established with the *clearing house mechanism* of the CBD Secretariat to encourage the exchange of information.

Investment planning. The Biodiversity Strategy will identify a number of specific initiatives for which investment is required, and should lay out the basis for preparation of subsequent proposals to GEF and to other multilateral and bilateral donors for the financing of these initiatives.

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK AND PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The Eritrean Environmental Agency will be the lead agency for the project. The Agency, still in the process of formation, is, like most other government institutions, a small and young institution. Although the government has shown its dedication to and capacity for natural resource management planning with the production of the NEMP-E, the financial, infrastructural and human resource capacities of the Agency will have to be strengthened to cope with the development of the biodiversity strategy, which comes in addition to a number of other urgent tasks.

The *Core Planning Team* will consist of 8 to 9 members, representing the Eritrean Environmental Agency, the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Local Government, Ministry of Marine Resources, and the University of Asmara. The Core Planning Team will focus on developing constituencies across sectors for the Strategy (including the private sector and community-based organizations), give sound advice and guidance in the vision and direction of the strategy activities, and see that long term implementation becomes a reality. The Team will actively participate in the implementation of certain components of the planning process. The Team will meet regularly to review progress, discuss options for action, review objectives and draft documents, and build consensus between the different stakeholders.

COST-EFFECTIVENESS

Two particular aspects of the situation in Eritrea account for the relatively higher cost of this initiative. Firstly, the Government's capacity to undertake this initiative is severely constrained. Environmental institutions in Eritrea have only recently been created and face many pressing and urgent tasks. This proposal, consequently, reflects a high degree of capacity building, developed by involving broad participation in both regional and national workshops, and by strategically using limited technical national and international technical assistance.

Secondly, the proposal describes a highly participatory initiative, derived from the strong tradition in Eritrea of consultation at the local level through community councils, called *baitos*. The Government of Eritrea has made a commitment fully to engage communities in the discussion about local, regional, and national environmental management priorities, and the preparation of the Biodiversity Strategy is seen as an important opportunity for doing so.

DEVIATIONS FROM CRITERIA AND NORMS

The proposal does not deviate from the *Operational Criteria for Enabling Activities: Biodiversity*.

CONSISTENCY OF APPROACH AND PROCEDURES

Various biodiversity conservation activities are being financed in Eritrea as described above (see "Coverage without Duplication"). The approach and procedures of the BSAP will be consistent with these ongoing activities as well as the *Operational Criteria for Enabling Activities: Biodiversity*.

PROJECT FINANCING

	Product	Process	Total Support
<i>Stocktaking and Inventory of Existing Information</i>	25,000	15,000	40,000
International consultant	5,000		5,000
National consultants	15,000		15,000
Training: Information Management		15,000	15,000
Documentation	5,000		5,000
<i>Identification and Analysis of Options</i>	27,500	76,500	104,000
International consultant	7,500	7,500	15,000
National consultants	10,000	13,000	23,000
Local and Regional workshops		41,000	41,000
Training: PRA		15,000	15,000
Travel and per diem	10,000		10,000
<i>Preparation of Strategy & Action Plan</i>	30,000	74,000	104,000
International consultant	5,000	5,000	10,000
Training: Economics and Planning		20,000	20,000
National consultant	5,000	5,000	10,000
National workshops		44,000	44,000
Dissemination of drafts	5,000		5,000
Publication and translation	15,000		15,000
<i>First National Report</i>	8,000	0	8,000
Publication and translation	8,000		8,000
Promotion, misc.	4,000		4,000
<i>Coordination and Management Costs</i>	7,500	7,500	15,000
Total	102,000	173,000	275,000

STANDARD ACTIVITY MATRIX

NOTES AND COMMENTS

1. The NEMP-E was completed in February 1996, prior to ratification of the CBD. While it describes in general terms the country's priorities with regard to biodiversity conservation, it lacks detail. Further development of the biodiversity conservation priorities, and the means for addressing these is considered a priority and will be addressed by this Enabling Activity.
2. The Marine Biodiversity Strategy will be an important input into preparation of the National Strategy. Preparation of the National Strategy will draw on the work already completed on the Marine sector, and is not expected to be duplicative.
3. Support for the Eritrean Environmental Agency (EEA), provided on a grant basis by the World Bank, is primarily oriented toward institutional development within a broader environmental policy and legal framework. Biodiversity conservation planning does not feature strongly in this support.
4. The FAO Wildlife/Forestry Activity is specifically oriented toward project identification for AfDB investment. As the EEA is involved in this exercise, the outcome would be consistent with the priorities identified in the NEMP-E. It is not expected to duplicate work carried out in preparation of the Biodiversity Strategy.
5. The World Bank financed Community Development Fund project provides financing for community natural resource management activities. At the moment, there is no specific component which deals with biodiversity conservation.
6. A draft of the First National Report should be prepared by June 30, 1997.