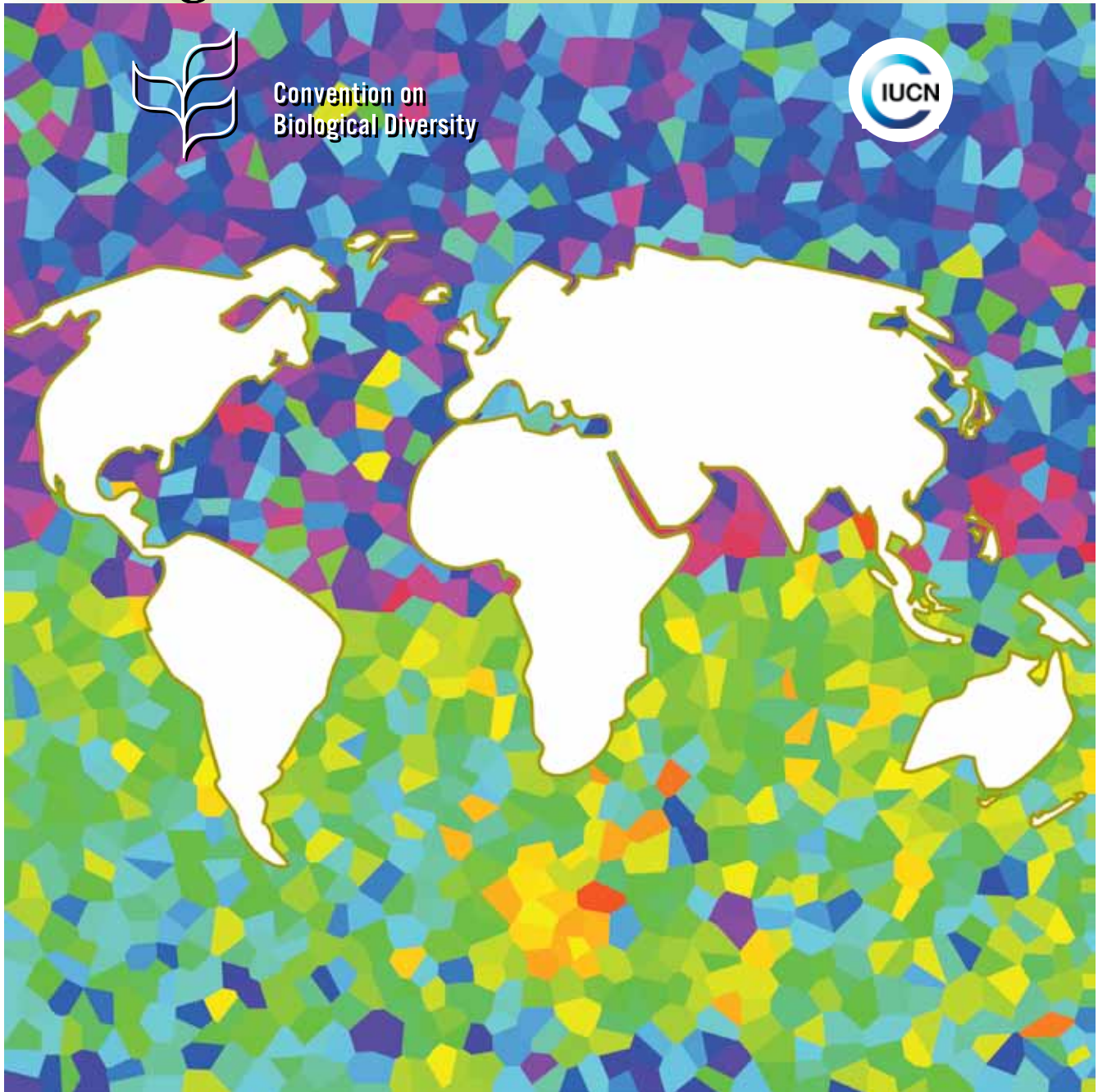


Gender and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs)



The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in its Article 6 states that each Contracting Party should develop a NBSAP or equivalent instrument. The NBSAP or

equivalent instrument should reflect how the country intends to fulfil the objectives of the CBD and present different sectoral or cross-sectoral plans, programmes and policies.

A fundamental characteristic of the NBSAPs should be the active involvement of all social groups in their elaboration. However, in order to ensure genuine representation, it is necessary to

recognize that there is diversity within social groups due to their sex, age, ethnic group, income, occupations and civil status, among others.

COP decisions

- *Paragraph 13 of the Preamble of the CBD, recognizes “the vital role that women play in the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and affirming the need for the full participation of women at all levels of policy making and implementation for biological diversity conservation”.*
- *Decision V/16: Article 8(j) and related provisions states: “Recognizing the vital role that women play in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and emphasizing that greater attention should be given to strengthening this role and the participation of women of indigenous and local communities in the program of work”.*
- *Programme of work Implementation 8 (J) CBD General Principles: “Full and effective participation of women of indigenous and local communities in all activities of the program of work”.*
 - *Task 4. Parties “to develop, as appropriate, mechanisms for promoting the full and effective participation of indigenous and local communities with specific provisions for the full, active and effective participation of women in all elements of the programme of work*
- *The Second Working group for the Review of Implementation of the Convention in July 2007: “Urges Parties in developing, implementing and revising their national and when appropriate regional, biodiversity strategies and action plans...to promote the mainstreaming of gender considerations”.*

Some countries have already started to fulfil these mandates by either presenting clear gender strategies or by including gender considerations in some parts of their NBSAPs. As of 4 April 2008, 160 of the 190 Parties of the Convention have finalized NBSAPs. Of these, 141 were reviewed and 77 mention gender or women's issues.

Some examples of how different countries have linked gender to their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans are:

- Nepal, Swaziland, and Uganda recognize that rural women depend greatly on the diversity of natural resources. Moreover, Swaziland mentions that even though this dependence exists, women are often excluded from the management of these resources. Nepal recognizes that they could have a vital contribution and proposes that women's roles should be fully recognized, as they are often the most knowledgeable about patterns and uses of local biodiversity. All the countries' documents mention that women should be included in all decision-making processes related to biodiversity.
- Women in many countries use specific resources and accumulate unique knowledge. Examples of this recognition could be found in the NBSAPs from Mali, Germany, Bhutan and El Salvador, among others. In Mali, for example, women tend to be the ones that use the shea tree, edible tamarind and fonio. Additionally, certain vegetable species are valued because women use them for basket making, weaving, and pottery making. Bhutanese women are often the ones who manage or harvest underused species that could contribute to food security, agricultural diversification, and income generation. In several communities in El Salvador, women are usually the ones that have a greater knowledge of the diversity of plants and animals for medicinal purposes due to their traditional role as carers.
- Women play a key role in biodiversity conservation and, in particular, agrobiodiversity conservation. For example in Yemen women select seeds with specific characteristics and are in charge of growing "women's crops" such as groundnuts, pumpkins and leafy vegetables. This has the effect of raising biodiversity and food security in their farms. Additionally, in Mali it has been recognized that the calabash tree's maintenance and development is due to the uses women give to it.
- Women's economic freedom and

security depends largely on agricultural activities and the use of natural resources. Bhutan recognizes that women could benefit greatly if the activities on which their livelihoods depend are supported and a sustainable use of the resources is promoted. An example that illustrates this can be found in Benin, where mushrooms are an important food supply for rural populations. Actions taken by an NGO created opportunities for marketing mushrooms, which resulted in increased incomes for women.

- NBSAPs from Guinea, Mauritius and Mali recognize that some resources used by women are collected in a way that compromises their development and regeneration. If these practices are improved and women are included in the process, conservation strategies could be more effective. In Guinea, for example, loss of soil fertility is associated with traditional techniques for smoking fish carried out by women that use large quantities of mangrove trees (*Rizophora* sp.). Many fisherwomen in Mauritius depend on octopus fishing even though the maximum sustainable yield has been exceeded because they collect female octopus before they reach maturity.

- Nepal recognizes that one of the major weaknesses of community forestry is that not all forest users were equally represented in community forestry management. They suggest that adequate attention should be paid to identify all users, to inform them of their rights and responsibilities, and to involve disadvantaged groups and women in community forestry management.
- There is a link between women's education and the preservation and conservation of natural resources. In Togo, women are responsible for the exploitation of natural resources but they have less access to education than men, e.g. the proportion of men taught to read and write is higher (69%) than that of women (38%). The lack of education hinders women's understanding of sustainable practices, which could lead to the further degradation of the resources they depend on. This degradation might jeopardize their well-being and increase their workload. It has been shown that an increase in household chores leads to lower school attendance by girls, who have to stay at home to help their mothers (Davis *et al.*, 2005).
- Kenya, Liberia and Zimbabwe mention that gender imbalances exist in land access and ownership. Kenya identifies land as the country's

most important natural resource; and recognizes that although their statutory laws do not prevent women from owning land, women still face numerous difficulties in relation to land tenure.

- There is a connection between health, women and biodiversity. For example, medicinal plants are heavily used to treat symptoms of AIDS such as diarrhoea and pneumonia; women increasingly have to harvest plants unsustainably and go farther afield to collect them (Oglethorpe and Gelman, 2004). Malawi's NBSAP mentions that both HIV/AIDS and gender are key issues that affect their country's biodiversity and should be included in the biodiversity programmes.
- Women are important agents of change in conservation of biodiversity, if they are given the proper opportunities. In Germany, almost twice as many women as men cited proximity to nature as a key aspect in their quality of life. This could lead to the creation of more protected areas if their needs are considered in decision-making processes.
- Some Parties, like Belize, Benin, Maldives, and Marshall Islands, have included women groups in participatory consultation processes to formulate their NBSAP. In addition, Nepal's NBSAP proposes

the formation of separate groups for men and women to ensure active participation by women. The effective inclusion of women and their issues in many local and international processes is truncated because, in many countries, men are still the ones who are in charge of public spaces; and in many workgroups, there is the misconception that men guarantee the vision of "the community".

The fact that the involvement of women in biodiversity-based livelihoods has direct impacts on poverty alleviation, health and human well-being, could be beneficial to the NBSAPs as the link can be made between gender, biodiversity and poverty eradication.

As NBSAPs build awareness of biodiversity issues among gender and women's organizations through education programmes, progress to integrate gender considerations into national level biodiversity activities could be measured in an outcome-oriented way with indicators. Implementation of the NBSAP could therefore be analyzed through a gender-differentiated approach.

Challenges

- *Ensuring that, in mainstreaming a gender perspective in NBS-APs, they present gender/biodiversity-related information, include gender-disaggregated data, and involve both men and women in the research of data.*
- *Parties are encouraged to include all stakeholders in the NBSAP design and implementation process; in particular stakeholders already active on the promotion of gender and women from local and indigenous communities, to ensure that women's needs are heard and included.*
- *Recognition in NBSAPs of women's needs and their potential as agents of change. Liberia's NBSAP proposes that consideration should be given to how different approaches towards biodiversity planning affect women and men differently and the potential impacts on their livelihoods.*

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