



The challenges for implementation existing biodiversity projects and urgent environmental issues in Iraq

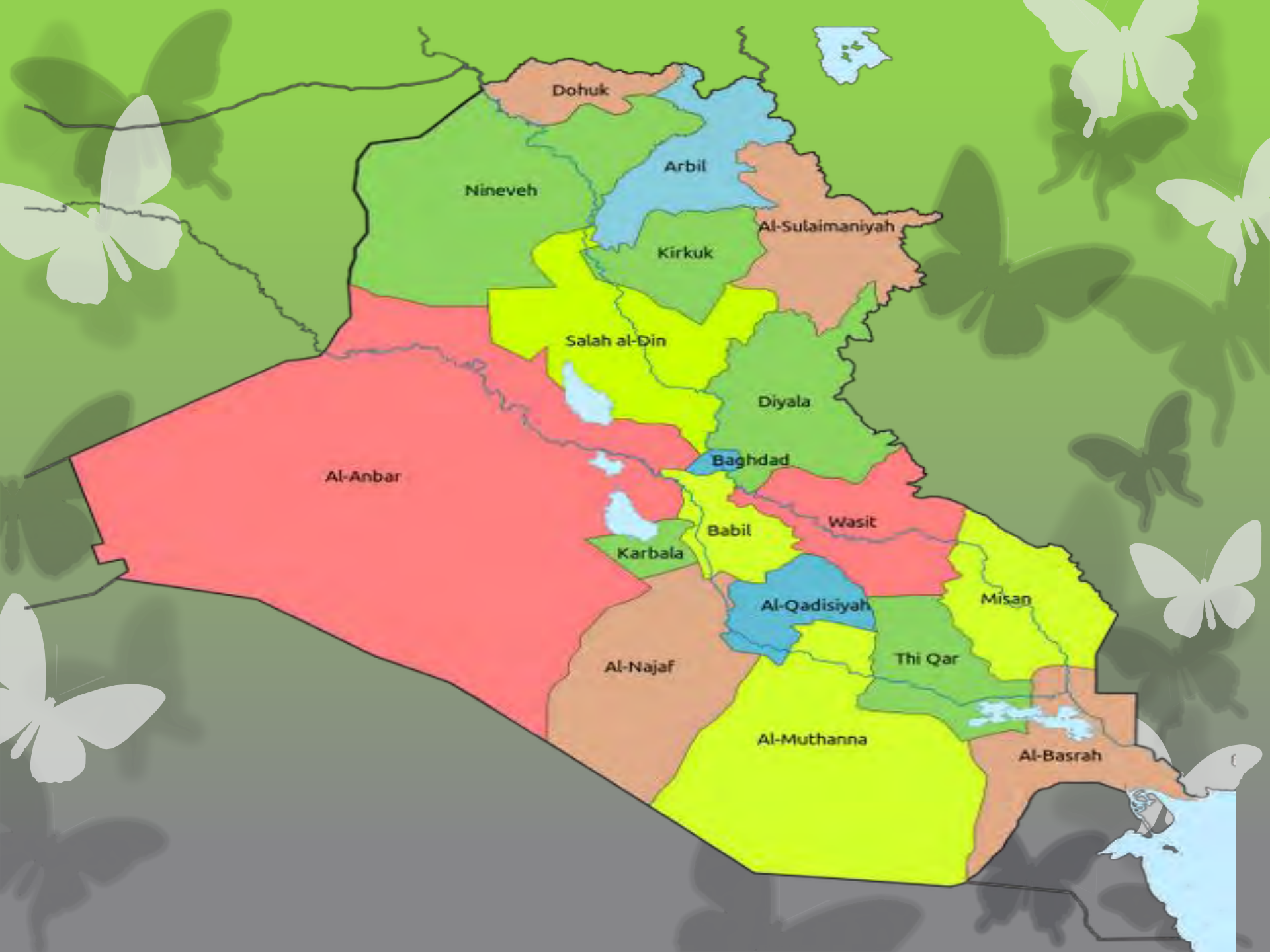
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Dohuk

Nineveh

Arbil

Al-Sulaimaniyah

Kirkuk

Salah al-Din

Diyala

Baghdad

Al-Anbar

Wasit

Karbala

Babil

Al-Qadisiyah

Misan

Al-Najaf

Thi Qar

Al-Muthanna

Al-Basrah

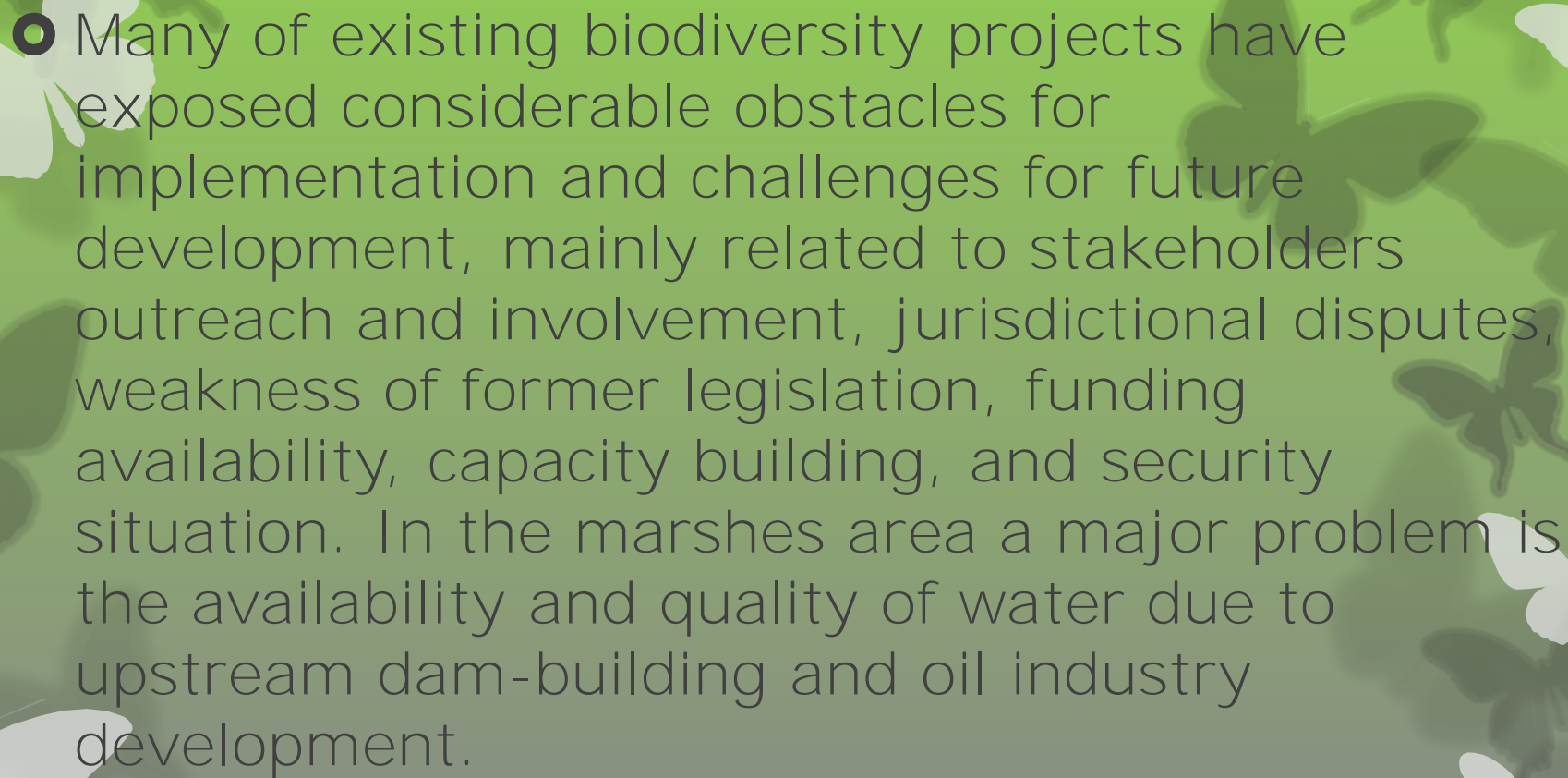
Introduction

- Since 2003, the Ministry Of Health and Environment has been involved in a number of initiatives to carry on research in the Mesopotamian Marshlands of southern Iraq. These efforts have led to a national program called the Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA) Project to survey the country's biological diversity.









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- The background of the slide is a light green color with a pattern of white and dark green butterfly silhouettes scattered across it. The butterflies are of various sizes and orientations, creating a decorative and nature-themed backdrop.
- Many of existing biodiversity projects have exposed considerable obstacles for implementation and challenges for future development, mainly related to stakeholders outreach and involvement, jurisdictional disputes, weakness of former legislation, funding availability, capacity building, and security situation. In the marshes area a major problem is the availability and quality of water due to upstream dam-building and oil industry development.

- Iraq face a great environmental challenges like any countries host refugees for protracted periods experience long-term economic, social, political, and environmental impacts (genetic resources, species, and ecosystems). From the moment of arrival, refugees may compete with local citizens for scarce resources such as water, food, housing, and medical services. Their presence increases the demands for education, health services, infrastructure such as water supply, sanitation, and transportation, and also in some cases, for natural resources such as grazing and firewood.

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- the absence or limited availability of tools to limit or mitigate the negative impacts of the identified issue on the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity:
 - -Collating reliable data on the environmental degradation and forced migration (conflict & terrorism) pressures in Middle East region.
 - -Promoting the identification and mapping of potential environmental degradation made by forced migrating (conflict & terrorism).
 - -Enhancing knowledge of livelihood, successful adaptation, preparedness and coping strategies used by local populations.

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- Supporting research which will enhance understanding of the relationship between environmental degradation and conflict / terrorism.
 - -Commissioning research on potential governance models for areas experiencing degradation and migration pressures.
 - -Promoting and coordinating policy responses to environmental degradation and forced migration.
 - -Adopting proactive development policies to address the potential migratory made by forced migrating (conflict & terrorism).
 - -Strengthen the corporation of strategies in programs and projects adaptation and sustainability.
 - -Supporting sustainable adaptation measures by refugees (locally and regionally) .

- So there is urgent need for global involvement and commitment in order to overcome these obstacles. Capacity building activities, with support of the Convention Secretariat, as well as constant funding provisions are necessary to address biodiversity research activities, implementation the NBSAP is fundamental to comprehensively addressing major threats.

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● Iraq needs support to ensure effective implementation of the Strategic targets of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan:

NATIONAL TARGET 1

By 2020, 25% of urban and rural people have awareness of the status of biodiversity, its benefits for people, the pressures that affect it, and the actions they can take for its conservation and sustainable use

- This target aims to achieve a better knowledge about biodiversity and its importance for the well-being of people in a relatively short time, by setting a threshold of the 25% of urban and rural population. The awareness about biodiversity in a sample of urban and rural population has to be tested with statistical tools in order to assess the 25% threshold that will allow meeting the target.

NATIONAL TARGET 2

By 2020, 50% of policy makers and planners have awareness of the status of biodiversity, its benefits for people, the pressures that affect it, and the actions they can take for its conservation and sustainable use.

- This target aims to achieve a better knowledge about biodiversity and its importance for the well-being of people for policy makers, planners and managers. The threshold of 50% (higher than for the common people) has been set in order to signify that the level of awareness on biodiversity issues, of those people influencing the choices and future economic development of the country has to reach much higher standards because they will have the responsibility of taking care of the environment in a responsible way.

NATIONAL TARGET 4

By 2020 the use of tools (films, publications, educational programmes, guidance materials, and training) for raising awareness of biodiversity is improved with locally de-fined, area based and targeted awareness programs (e.g. governorate level).

- In order to develop an effective gap filling program concerning the production and use of awareness tools, the awareness raising programs have to be specifically tailored to the needs and particular situations of the various governorates, target people, needs and priorities of specific areas of the country, that means providing different tools depending on the specific local situations and needs.

NATIONAL TARGET 5

By the end of 2020 a GIS database of the extent, condition (i.e. healthy or degraded) and protection status of the natural (not altered by human intervention), semi-natural and human modified habitats of Iraq has been developed.

In order to assess the rate of loss and the degradation of the habitats in Iraq many steps have to be taken. First of all the habitats of Iraq are not all 'natural' meaning that most of them have been partially or totally modified by human intervention; nevertheless they are providing essential services to people, for this reason all the habitats need to be included in the assessment foreseen by this target. Their extent is relatively easy to be assessed, when relying on GIS layers and tools. Determining their condition is more complex and will possibly involve the use of key species or ecological indicators to perform an evaluation of their status. This target is very ambitious and involves also the acquirement of technological skills to build and maintain the GIS database.

NATIONAL TARGET 6

By the end of 2020 the reasons for loss and degradation (i.e. the species that used to be present in that habitat are not there anymore, and the services that the people expected or used are reduced or absent) of each of the natural (not altered by human intervention), semi-natural and human modified habitats of Iraq have been identified to inform conservation actions.

The knowledge about the loss and degradation of the habitats is a pre-requisite for achieving this target; also some examples on how to assess loss and degradation are provided inside the target itself and other information on these two factors should be obtained in parallel with the work in progress for target 5 above. The causes and reasons that have determined and are determining the loss and degradation of the habitats need to be investigated and known as a main outcome of this target in order to plan for the appropriate conservation and remediation actions.

NATIONAL TARGET 8

By the end of 2020 legislation to address the main pressures on forest ecosystems and native forest species is issued, promoting sustainable management, restoration and conservation.

- This target is truly an action that requires the commitment and the cooperation of the competent institutional bodies in order to issue the most appropriate and effective legislation act to the purpose of protecting and conserving forest ecosystems. The achievement of the target will only involve the issuance of the legislation; however it is essential that every new legislation act issued or any review of existing legislation is closely followed up as concerns its implementation and enforcement.

NATIONAL TARGET 9

By the end of 2020, about 1,000 square km of desertified shrubland grassland is restored.

- Despite being very short in wording this target is very complex. The main issue here is to define and assess in the field the 'desertified shrubland grassland' habitat type. The first step is to compare the current land uses and habitats with historical information (possibly by using GIS tools and maps) in order to identify the desertified lands of Iraq. Among the total amount of desertified lands found, about 1,000 Km₂ have to be chosen to be restored with the most advanced technologies and by carefully planning for their subsequent long-term maintenance.

NATIONAL TARGET 10

By end of 2017 a national monitoring programme is established for identification of the main sources and diffusion paths of chemical and physical pollutants in the natural ecosystems and the effects of pollution on natural ecosystems

- This target has a very short term deadline for being accomplished; the issue here is to draft the monitoring programme that means a plan with all the requirements and timeline for identify the sources and the diffusion paths of chemical (e.g. dangerous compounds or elements affecting the water quality because of their dangerous effects when entering into living organisms) or physical pollutants (e.g. colour change, suspended solids, foaming, temperature).

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NATIONAL TARGET 11

By the end of 2018 environmental standards are issued and enforced for prevention and control of priority pollutants in the natural ecosystems (not altered by human intervention).

- This target has a short term deadline due to the fact that it represents already an action to be carried out in a relatively easy way. International environmental standards about the thresholds of pollutants allowed in the natural environment are present from many sources: the reference could be international with the necessary national adjustments, as needed.

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NATIONAL TARGET 15

- **By the end of 2020 ten new Protected Areas have been gazetted and established.**
- This target is an action: the process of assessing and declaring a number of protected areas is on-going, under the lead of the Ministry of Environment, the institutional body responsible for Protected Areas.

NATIONAL TARGET 17

- **By the end of 2018 a national strategy/sub-national strategies are established for the sustainable management of ecosystems to supply important ecosystem services for rural and urban people.**
- After the main ecosystem services and the natural habitats that supply them have been identified nationally, a national strategy and local strategies for their conservation need to be set in place. This target calls for the drafting of national and local strategies/action plans by 2018.

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NATIONAL TARGET 18

By the end of 2017 legislation is enacted to control the introduction and diffusion of non-native species into the natural environment

- This target is an action that involves the issuance of legislation; the preparation and issuance of the law can be relatively easy and can be accomplished in the short term. The effectiveness of the legislative provision depends on the commitment of the involved institutional bodies and on the capacity of the institutional power to implement and enforce the provisions.

NATIONAL TARGET 19

By the end of 2020 the list of invasive species of Iraq and their impacts and invasion pathways has been published.

- A good progress in achieving this target has already been achieved by compiling a national list of non-native or invasive species with the support of ISSG (Invasive Species Specialist Group) of IUCN within the framework of the Iraqi 5th National Report to the CBD. This list needs to be further refined and completed, especially as concerns the invasiveness status of many non-native species. The research of invasion pathways needs also to be discovered in order to enact the appropriate measures of control.

NATIONAL TARGET 20

By the end of 2020 the list of threatened species of Iraq has been published and an action plan for the conservation of priority species is produced

- This target is very ambitious since it requires the collection of all research and information about Iraqi (animal) species as well as an update and analysis of this information with recent assessments and surveys, in order to evaluate the conservation status of species whose status is recognized as critical nationally due to a number of reasons and pressures. Also an action plan for their conservation must be drafted, maybe starting from the ones that are recognized (also at the international level) as being most threatened with extinction.

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NATIONAL TARGET 21

By 2020 legislation for the conservation of threatened species is issued and enforced.

- Once the threatened species of Iraq have been identified a specific legislation for their conservation must be created with a new legislative act or by using and adapting the framework of an already existing provision. The important issue for this type of legislation as for all the others that are mentioned in the National targets is that they are implemented and enforced.

NATIONAL TARGET 22

By the end of 2020 a survey of indigenous and local communities' traditional knowledge, use and practices relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of bio-diversity is published.

- This target involves broadly the participation and cooperation of the local authorities and institutions besides local conservation groups and NGOs. The first step is to carry out a locally oriented survey that will cover the whole country as much as possible and feasible. Target questionnaires can be used in order to collect the relevant information about the way in which the local communities are using and benefitting of the services provided by ecosystems and also on their traditional ways to conserve and improve the environment.



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