UNDP’s Work in Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services

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**Introduction**

Human survival and wellbeing depend upon biodiversity and healthy ecosystems, and the goods and services they provide. Yet, in recent decades, the world has experienced unprecedented biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation, undermining the very foundations of life on Earth.

Rapid demographic changes, overconsumption, and the use of technologies that damage the environment, now combined with climate change, are pushing our planet to its limits. Scientists believe we are beginning to transgress the planetary boundaries within which societies have been sustained for the past 10,000 years.

The loss of ecosystems and biodiversity is a challenge for us all, but it is a particular challenge for the world’s poor. Dependent on ecosystem goods and services for their livelihoods and subsistence, the poor stand to suffer disproportionately from potentially catastrophic changes to fragile ecosystems in coming decades. Ultimately, however, all societies stand to lose.

**Biodiversity and Ecosystems for Development: UNDP’s role**

The Strategic Plan of UNDP, 2014-2017, emphasizes the vital links between environmental sustainability and efforts to eradicate poverty, reduce inequalities, and strengthen resilience. Drawing on over 40 years of experience and expertise, UNDP assists countries to integrate environmental concerns into national and sectoral development plans and strategies, secure resources, and implement programmes that advance inclusive, sustainable growth and development, and strengthen livelihoods of people living in poverty.

UNDP’s work on biodiversity and ecosystems is designed to secure livelihoods, food, water and health, enhance resilience, conserve threatened species and their habitats, and increase carbon storage and sequestration. We move toward the achievement of this objective through three complementary programmes:

1. Integrating biodiversity into development planning and production sectors, e.g. fisheries, agriculture and forestry, to safeguard biodiversity and maintain ecosystem services. UNDP stimulates job creation by helping ‘biodiversity-friendly’ producers access new markets, promotes nature-based local tourism initiatives, and supports sustainable harvesting livelihoods, and access and benefit sharing agreements on genetic resources.
2. Unlocking the potential of protected areas, including indigenous and community conserved areas. UNDP promotes secure land tenure; effective management and expansion of protected areas to increase tourism revenues, and job opportunities; protection of threatened species, including from trafficking, and eco-regions, which act as buffers against climate disasters, while helping maintain water supplies and fish stock.
3. Managing and rehabilitating ecosystems for climate change mitigation and adaptation. UNDP supports: ecosystem-based adaptation to help communities increase their resilience and the resilience of ecosystems; job creation through large-scale rehabilitation projects; expanding and connecting protected areas to conserve forests, wetlands, mangroves and coral reefs as a natural buffers; maintaining and restoring ecosystems as carbon sinks; securing land tenure; and accessing new financing.

Two key approaches underpin this work:

1. Developing capacity at the individual, institutional and systemic levels for more effective democratic governance of biodiversity and ecosystem management; and
2. Assisting countries to identify, access, combine and sequence innovative environmental finance for biodiversity and ecosystem management, mobilize pro-poor markets for ecosystem goods and services, and generate sustainable livelihoods.

In response to country demand, UNDP has developed the following three cross-cutting global support programmes on biodiversity policy, finance and capacity:

* [*NBSAP Forum*](http://nbsapforum.net/): an interactive global web portal hosted by CBD Secretariat, UNDP and UNEP with resources for revising and implementing National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAP), including a technical peer review facility and e-learning courses.
* [*BIOFIN Initiative*](http://www.biodiversityfinance.net/): pilot work in 19 countries that quantifies NBSAP biodiversity finance gaps, improves cost effectiveness, and prepares national resource mobilization strategies. BIOFIN methodologies will be applied 45 other countries that UNDP is supporting to develop “new generation” NBSAPs, and made available to all CBD Parties.
* *BES-Net Facility*: a global initiative that promotes dialogue among science, policy and practice for more effective management of biodiversity and ecosystems, in close collaboration with the secretariats of the Conventions and MEAs and on Intergovernmental Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) themes.

UNDP’s biodiversity and ecosystems portfolio is the largest in the UN system covering 132 countries and over 500 projects with US$ 1.5 billion in funding from the GEF for Biodiversity and Land Degradation and other sources, and co-financing of US$ 3.5 billion.

UNDP also implements the [GEF Small Grants Programme](http://sgp.undp.org/) and [Equator Initiative](http://www.equatorinitiative.org/), working with indigenous peoples and local communities on conservation and sustainable livelihoods.

**Results of the Biodiversity and Ecosystems Portfolio**

Since 2000, UNDP has strengthened more than **2,872 protected areas**. This is more than 1 out of 100 PAs globally (using the World Database of Protected Areas as a reference point). These protected areas areas—which include indigenous and community conserved areas—cover a total area of **481 million hectares**. This involves working both within and beyond the boundaries of protected areas to manage a mosaic of uses including protection, restoration, production and subsistence use, in order to deliver ecological, economic and social benefits. UNDP promotes a rights-based management paradigm based on co-management among communities living in or near protected areas, government and, in some instances, the private sector. The expansion of protected area systems aims to increase tourism revenues, promote business development and create job opportunities.

Beyond protected areas, UNDP works with key commercial sectors to change policies and develop guidelines to minimize negative impacts and maximize investment opportunities; and works with governments to internalize the value of biodiversity in national and sub-national plans, policies and accounting frameworks. UNDP’s current EBD portfolio is directly supporting more than **32 million hectares** of production land- and sea-scapes through this area of work. Considering the catalytic effects of these interventions—including the replication of demonstration activities, and the adoption of policy and regulatory frameworks—UNDP is indirectly advancing sustainable development across more than **500 million hectares** around the world.