



Connect: Mainstreaming biodiversity into the heart of government decision-making

Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy



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1. Introduction

The Connect project 2016-2020 will help governments to achieve their sustainable development objectives by bringing biodiversity and ecosystem services to the heart of government decision-making using actionable environmental information. Connect focuses on in depth development of proofs of concept with Ghana, Uganda and Mozambique. The **project goal** is:

To ensure biodiversity is taken into account in decision making across government sectors by improving end-users' access to and use of biodiversity information and embedding biodiversity information within national development decision making processes.

The **global objectives** of the project are:

1. Biodiversity data, information, and knowledge products, proof-of-concept models, good practices, lessons and tools, developed iteratively and through active showcasing and facilitated interaction with the three demonstration countries
2. Improved global understanding of and capacity to use and generate biodiversity information to influence development outcomes
3. Revision and development of project theory of change through practice and applied research.

The **national objectives** in each project country are to:

1. Clearly understand the in-country demands for, and the barriers to using, biodiversity information within government decision-making including clarifying the format, timing and packaging required
2. Mobilise and repackage existing biodiversity data and information from a range of national and international sources to meet a number of the above demands; and
3. Strengthen the connection between government decision makers and biodiversity and ecosystem services data providers in order to sustainably provide policy-relevant, spatially explicit information to meet ongoing national needs

2. Purpose of the Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

The Connect project Monitoring and Evaluation Plan is designed to provide the basis for ongoing monitoring of project activities and implementation, and as a guide to the evaluation activities of the project in terms of project impact and effectiveness. Each national team will produce a National Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (Annex 1), containing context specific indicators based on the Project Results Framework (Annex 2).

3. Monitoring and Evaluation Activities and Responsibilities

Day to day monitoring

Day to day monitoring of implementation progress will be the responsibility of the Global Project Coordinator based on the project's Annual Work Plan and the project Results Framework (Annex 1). The Global Project Management Unit will inform UN Environment of any delays or difficulties faced during implementation so that the appropriate support or corrective measures can be adopted in a timely fashion. The Project Manager will fine-tune the progress and performance/impact indicators of the project in consultation with project partners as necessary, and with support from UN Environment. These indicators will be used to assess whether implementation is proceeding at the intended pace and in the right

direction. Revised targets and indicators will be subject to the review of the Global Project Steering Committee (GPSC) and the Implementing Agency.

Inception Workshop and Report

A Project Inception Workshop Report will be prepared immediately following the Project Inception Meeting and first Project Steering Committee meeting. A work plan and budget will be prepared, identifying GPSC meetings and project reporting activities. When finalized, the report will be circulated to project counterparts for comments or queries.

Global Project Steering Committee Meetings

A GPSC will be established to oversee project implementation. Members will be formally appointed at the start of the project and will comprise representation from: each of the National Project Implementation Units, UN Environment World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC; Executing Agency), work package lead organisations (International Institute for the Environment and Development (IIED), Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (SCBD)), UN Environment (Implementing Agency) and Global Environment Facility (GEF; Funder). The GPSC will be responsible for strategic guidance and oversight of the project, including monitoring and evaluation activities. Authority to approve proposed revisions to the project work plan will remain vested in the Implementing Agency.

Half-yearly Progress Report and Project Implementation Review (PIR)

The Half-yearly Progress Report is a project management self-assessment report that is submitted to the UN Environment Office.

The Project Implementation Review (PIR) is an annual monitoring process mandated by the GEF, to be conducted by the UN Environment Task Manager in consultation with UNEP-WCMC.

The items in the PIR to be provided by the UN Environment Task Manager include the following:

- An analysis of project performance over the reporting period, including outputs produced and, where possible, information on the status of the outcome;
- The constraints experienced in the progress towards results and the reasons for these;
- Annual Work Plans and related expenditure reports;
- Lessons learned; and
- Clear recommendations for future orientation in addressing key problems in lack of progress.

Mid Term Review

A mid-term management review will take place at mid-term as indicated in the project milestones. The review will include all parameters recommended by the UN Environment Evaluation Office for mid-term evaluations and will verify information gathered through the GEF tracking tools, as relevant. The review will be carried out using a participatory approach whereby parties that may benefit or be affected by the project will be consulted. Such parties were identified during the stakeholder analysis (see sections 2.5 and 5 of the project document).

The Mid-Term Review will be undertaken by independent consultant/s contracted by WCMC on behalf of UN Environment. The consultant/s will work under the overall responsibility of the UN Environment GEF Task Manager and WCMC Project Manager and will consult with her/him on any procedural and methodological matters related to the evaluation.

The Global Project Steering Committee will participate in the mid-term review and develop a management response to the evaluation recommendations along with an implementation plan. It is the responsibility of the UN Environment Task Manager to monitor whether the agreed recommendations are being implemented.

Terminal Evaluation

An independent terminal evaluation will take place at the end of project implementation. The UN Environment Evaluation Office will be responsible for the Terminal Evaluation (TE) and will liaise with the Task Manager and Executing Agency (WCMC) throughout the process. The TE will provide an independent assessment of project performance (in terms of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency), and determine the likelihood of impact and sustainability. It will have two primary purposes: (i) to provide evidence of results to meet accountability requirements, and (ii) to promote learning, feedback, and knowledge sharing through results and lessons learned among UN Environment, the GEF, executing partners and other stakeholders. The direct costs of the evaluation will be charged against the project evaluation budget. The Terminal Evaluation will be initiated no earlier than six months prior to the operational completion of project activities and, if a follow-on phase of the project is envisaged, should be completed prior to completion of the project and the submission of the follow-on proposal. Terminal Evaluations must be initiated no later than six months after operational completion.

The draft Terminal Evaluation report will be sent by the Evaluation Office to project stakeholders for comments. Formal comments on the report will be shared by the Evaluation Office in an open and transparent manner. The project performance will be assessed against standard evaluation criteria using a six-point rating scheme. The final determination of project ratings will be made by the Evaluation Office when the report is finalised and further reviewed by the GEF Independent Evaluation Office upon submission. The evaluation report will be publicly disclosed and may be followed by a recommendation compliance process.”

The GEF tracking tools can be found in Appendix 13 of the project document. These will be updated at mid-term and at the end of the project and will be made available to the GEF Secretariat along with the project PIR report. As mentioned above the mid-term and terminal evaluation will verify the information of the tracking tool.

Project Publications

Project Publications will form a key method of crystallizing and disseminating the results and achievements of the project. These publications may be scientific or informational texts on the activities and achievements of the project, in the form of journal articles, multimedia publications, etc. The Global Project Management Unit will determine if any project technical reports merit formal publication, and will also, in consultation with UN Environment and other relevant stakeholder groups, plan and produce these publications in a consistent and recognizable format. Project publications will be developed in collaboration with project partners to ensure geographic balance and appropriate balance of publication authorship

across project partners. Any publications need prior clearance from UN Environment. Project resources will need to be defined and allocated for these activities as appropriate and in a manner commensurate with the project's budget.

Annex 1. Project Results Framework

Project Objective	Objectively verifiable Indicators	Baseline	Mid-term target	End of project target	Means of verification	Assumptions
To ensure biodiversity is taken into account in decision making across government sectors by improving end-users' access to and use of biodiversity information and embedding biodiversity information within national development decision making processes.	Number of new or existing biodiversity information products used by end-users per project country within their decision making processes;	Data providers are not developing biodiversity information products in a timely manner or in appropriate formats for end-users;	At least 1 x biodiversity information product per project country identified to address needs of end-users.	At least 1 x biodiversity information product developed, implemented and used by end-users in each project country.	Global Project Management Unit monitoring against baseline, project reports and project files.	There are some existing biodiversity data and information products that could meet/be adapted to end-users requirements; If legitimate, credible, salient and relevant information products are made available to end users, they will utilise them within their decision-making;
	Number of cross-sectoral fora where gender is a discussion topic and where there is a gender balance among the participants.	End-users are not aware of how biodiversity information can be used to inform key development decision points or processes;	At least one project country has proposed a cross- sectoral forum	All three project counties have proposed a cross-sectoral forum and at least one project country has established such a forum	Documented case studies in project countries.	Project countries maintain economic and political stability and remain committed;

Project Objective	Objectively verifiable Indicators	Baseline	Mid-term target	End of project target	Means of verification	Assumptions
	Number of new collaborative agreements in place between data providers and end-users per project country.	There is a disconnection and lack of collaboration between data providers and end-users.	Data providers and end-users are working together on information products that meet end-users' needs.	At least 1 longer-term collaborative agreement between data providers and end-users per project country: inc. MoUs, web services, APIs, etc.	Formal agreements in place.	Partners (including governments) maintain relevant budget commitments; Project outputs relevant to non- project countries who have resources/ capacity to adopt findings.
	Number of global/regional events at which project learning is disseminated	There is limited global understanding about how biodiversity information fits into the mainstreaming equation	3 national theories of change designed using best-available expertise on biodiversity information and mainstreaming	A tested and revised theory of change through practice and applied research	A published theory of change and associated published paper on how biodiversity information fits into the mainstreaming equation	

Component 1. Mainstreaming entry points, and response strategies

Outcome / Outputs	Objectively verifiable Indicators	Baseline	Mid-term target	End of project target	Means of verification	Assumptions
<p>Outcome 1 Decision points or processes across government sectors are identified where biodiversity information can be influential, and response strategies devised.</p>	<p>Number of in-country mainstreaming initiatives involving data sharing</p>	<p>Data providers are not aware of/not able to access entry points to influence decision making;</p> <p>No baseline information exists on end-users perception of salient, credible and legitimate biodiversity information.</p> <p>Strategies to influence decision making with biodiversity information in the 3 project countries (if they exist) are not fully effective.</p>	<p>1 national action plan in each project country developed and validated by male and female stakeholders at the national level.</p>	<p>Implementation activity from each national action plan per project country underway and yielding initial results and lessons.</p>	<p>Documented case studies;</p> <p>National action plan.</p>	<p>The correct entry points can be identified during the inception phase;</p> <p>Basic project theory of change is a sound starting point;</p> <p>The relevant stakeholders can be identified in order to influence decision making processes.</p>
<p>Output 1.1 Political Economy Analysis and assessment of user needs for biodiversity information.</p>	<p>Number of sectors related to natural resource management participating in /responding to calls for information to inform these user needs assessments</p>	<p>Limited understanding of decision-making processes and user needs exists.</p>	<p>1 PEA/Context Analysis and assessment of user needs per project country.</p>	<p>1 PEA/Context Analysis and assessment of user needs per project country.</p>	<p>3 x National context analysis reports</p>	<p>Project has sufficient access to all relevant stakeholders.</p>

<p>Output 1.2 User groups at national level which advise on, review and validate project outputs.</p>	<p>Number of different sectors represented on National Steering Committee membership.</p> <p>National Steering Committee formed of a balance between males and females.</p>	<p>o National Steering Committees prior to project implementation;</p> <p>There is limited interaction between different government sectors and between data providers and end-users.</p>	<p>National Steering Committee established and operational in each project country.</p> <p>National Steering Committee in each project country has a gender balanced membership.</p>	<p>National Steering Committees remain operational in each project country until end of project to validate final outputs.</p> <p>National Steering Committee in each project country has gender balanced membership throughout its life.</p>	<p>Reports, Terms of Reference, list of NSC members, NSC meeting minutes.</p>	<p>National Steering Committee participants successfully selected; senior enough with appropriate influence and commitment and with appropriate balance of male and female members.</p>
<p>Output 1.3 An innovative strategy to mainstream biodiversity information into identified decision processes is devised in each project country.</p>	<p>Number of untried or tested new activities to access entry points included in National Action Plans.</p>	<p>o prior to project implementation.</p>	<p>3 x innovative National Action Plans to access entry points developed and validated by peers.</p>	<p>3 x innovative National Action Plans to access entry points implemented and yielding lessons on how biodiversity information can be used by end-users.</p>	<p>National Action Plan, NSC meeting minutes</p>	<p>Sound National Action Plans can be developed through facilitation, peer review and ITAUG validation.</p>
<p>Output 1.4 Targeted interventions devised to neutralise or address identified barriers to</p>	<p>Number of countries that have undertaken analyses of barriers to sharing of biodiversity data and who have</p>	<p>In project countries no barrier removal strategies have yet been devised and successfully implemented</p>	<p>1 National Action Plan including a barrier removal strategy per project country (total of 3) developed and peer reviewed by a</p>	<p>1 National Action Plan including a barrier removal strategy per project country implemented (total of 3) including any</p>	<p>National Action Plan, NSC meeting minutes</p>	<p>Data sharing barriers will be common enough between countries / similar to those faced in other countries.</p>

biodiversity data sharing in each project country.	implemented actions to address		gender balanced group.	gender-related barriers, lessons collected; 1x summary of common lessons learned in overcoming barriers biodiversity data sharing		
Output 1.5 Up-scaling approach devised and implemented including improved identification of entry points / response strategies achieved by sharing experiences, lessons, good practices, tools, etc. between countries and globally.	Proportion of co-authors for peer-reviewed papers within the upscaling approach who derive from outside of the environment sector	No upscaling approach currently exists. Limited peer reviewed literature on lessons learned has been produced by mainstreaming projects.	First Component of upscaling approach i.e. 1 x review of previous mainstreaming projects using information as a mechanism for change, made publically available. 1 x global upscaling approach devised and validated.	A tested and revised theory of change in the public domain, one of the proposed products of an upscaling approach 1- 3 peer-reviewed research papers developed on use of biodiversity information in decision making processes, including a balance of male and female authors; Global lessons from this project adopted by dissemination through established global communities of practice e.g. BIP, SGA, NBSAP Forum etc.	Reports of ITAUG, Project documents, Use of project website.	Relevance of lessons from project countries can be drawn to inform other countries; Motivation of project participants remains high throughout project.

Component 2. Capacity to respond (using appropriate information)						
Outcome / Outputs	Objectively verifiable indicators	Baseline	Mid-term target	End of Project targets	Means of verification	Assumptions
<p>Outcome 2 Technical stakeholders are more easily able to <u>acquire and share relevant data, and use this to communicate effectively</u>, for current and future information needs.</p>	Positive shift in capacity and capability of male and female technical stakeholders as assessed by a capacity assessment tool at key points in project.	Data providers report limited ability to develop and deliver information products that support decision making;	Technical stakeholders including data providers understand what makes biodiversity data salient, credible and legitimate	Technical stakeholders including data providers regularly sharing data which is salient, credible and legitimate in response to stated information needs	Follow-up survey on guidance use; Training reports / post-training survey; Capacity Assessment Tool Stakeholder interviews	Data providers are able to dedicate time amidst multiple demands and staff resourcing levels to training and enhancing their technical capacity.
<p>Output 2.1 Biodiversity information products and processes utilising innovative mechanisms and technologies are developed/ strengthened and trialled to respond to the demands for biodiversity</p>	Number of new information products developed and/or existing products strengthened	No integrated knowledge sharing system exists in any of the three project countries; Global information products not deemed useful or used routinely at the national level.	At least one case per project country identified where biodiversity information products and processes can be developed using innovative mechanisms and technologies	At least 1 x information product developed, implemented and used by end-users in each project country.	Annual reports of partners; Progress reports, 3 x biodiversity information products	That data exist and are available; There is scope to re-package information products; There are adequate technical skills at national-level.

information identified under Outcome 1						
Output 2.2 Public sector technical stakeholders capacity to respond to future requests or opportunities for biodiversity information (including data standards, data management, technologies, reporting systems, etc.) is built/enhanced.	Number of technical staff applying good practice guidance for delivering biodiversity information to end-users.	Limited awareness by data providers of good practices to deliver biodiversity information and ability to apply them;	Training/guidance on enhancing technical capacity to acquire, share and communicate biodiversity data delivered to a balance of male and female participants	Enhanced capacity demonstrated by tried and tested examples in each project country of how innovative technologies and mechanisms have responded to national biodiversity data needs.	Training reports, follow-up survey; Project reports; User surveys, Trip reports, Capacity Assessment Tool	Basic level of public sector capacity to build on; Sufficient continuity in operations during the project lifespan.
Output 2.3 Establishment or formalisation of partnerships necessary for the acquisition, sharing and delivery of biodiversity information, and catalyzing the further development of national biodiversity monitoring networks.	Number of partnerships linking data providers with end-users.	No or limited number of partnerships and/or existing partnerships ineffective.	At least 2 potential partnerships between data providers and end-users identified in each project country.	Collaboration agreements in place, as above.	Collaboration agreements in place, as above.	Willingness of partners to collaborate; Capacity and resourcing of partners remains steady or increased during project lifespan.

<p>Output 2.4 Up-scaling approach devised to replicate and transfer these innovative mechanisms and technology between countries and globally.</p>	<p>Number of views/downloads of materials generated via project by information providers/technical stakeholders through global biodiversity communities of practice and platforms for debate e.g. BIP, SGAN, NBSAPS Forum, CoPs, SBSTTAs etc .</p>	<p>No upscaling approach currently exists.</p> <p>Limited peer reviewed literature on lessons learned has been produced by mainstreaming projects.</p>	<p>First element of upscaling approach i.e. 1 x review of previous mainstreaming projects using information as a mechanism for change, made publically available.</p> <p>1 x global upscaling approach devised and validated.</p>	<p>A tested and revised theory of change; in the public domain one of the proposed products of an upscaling approach</p> <p>1- 3 peer-reviewed research papers developed on use of biodiversity information in decision making processes, including a balance of male and female authors;</p> <p>Global lessons from this project adopted by disseminated through established global communities of practice e.g. BIP, SGA, NBSAP Forum etc.</p>	<p>Reports of ITAUG, Project documents;</p> <p>Measures of traffic to project website at key points (e.g. during side events, or following publishing of papers);</p> <p>Number of stories on Connect project activities published on external platforms such as BIP website, NBSAP forum website etc.</p>	<p>Relevance of lessons from project countries can be drawn to inform other countries;</p> <p>Motivation of project participants remains high throughout project.</p>
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Component 3. Embed/integrate necessary information into national development systems						
Outcome / Outputs	Objectively verifiable indicators	Baseline	Mid-term target	End of Project targets	Means of verification	Assumptions
<p>Outcome 3 Policy frameworks, including accounting and reporting systems across a range of sectors are incorporating biodiversity decisions</p>	<p>Number of verified case studies where policies, frameworks or regulations governing sectoral activities integrate biodiversity conservation considerations</p>	<p>End-users in other sectors not using biodiversity information effectively in development focused decision making; not demanding information about biodiversity.</p>	<p>At least 1 substantive development decision explicitly identified as requiring biodiversity information per project country.</p>	<p>At least one example per project country where biodiversity considerations have been incorporated into policies, frameworks or regulations governing sectoral activities</p>	<p>Government, NGO and Private Sector annual reports; Documented case studies.</p>	<p>Partnerships and dialogue between different sectors and biodiversity interests will prove valuable and flourish; Policy/practice will change as a consequence of the biodiversity information product being used.</p>
<p>Output 3.1 Strategies and measures for integrating biodiversity information into decision-making recommended by national user boards, based on iterative review and assessment of results, are identified and implemented.</p>	<p>Number of strategies and measures for integrating biodiversity into decision-making recommended by National Steering Committees identified and implemented.</p>	<p>Mainstreaming strategies are currently not identified or being implemented.</p>	<p>At least 1 National Steering Committee recommendation adopted per project country.</p>	<p>1 National Steering Committee recommendation adopted and implemented per project country.</p>	<p>Project reports.</p>	<p>Recommendations can be sufficiently convincing to ensure longer-term financial allocations.</p>

<p>Output 3.2 Capacity of decision makers across government sectors to respond (supported by biodiversity knowledge products) is enhanced</p>	<p>Positive shift in capacity of decision makers as measured by a capacity assessment tool at specific times during project.</p>	<p>Capacity of decision makers to make decisions informed by biodiversity considerations currently low.</p>	<p>At least 1 sector across the three project countries show improved capacity to use biodiversity knowledge.</p>	<p>At least 2 sectors across the three project countries show improved capacity to use biodiversity knowledge.</p>	<p>Capacity survey. Capacity Assessment Tool.</p>	<p>Attitude and motivation of decision makers amenable.</p>
<p>Output 3.3 Up-scaling approach devised and implemented, including that capacity for embedding biodiversity information into national systems planning, and reporting processes is enhanced iteratively by sharing experiences, lessons, good practices, tools etc. between countries and globally</p>	<p>Number of countries beyond the 3 project countries who are accessing/downloading materials generated via project through global biodiversity communities of practice and platforms for debate e.g. BIP, SGAN, NBSAP Forum, CBD CoP, SBSTTA etc.</p>	<p>No global impact and sharing of lessons learned</p>	<p>Experience in three project countries of using information as a mechanism for change encapsulated ready to feed into upscaling approach</p>	<p>Upscaling approach being tested out in countries across all regions</p>	<p>Reports of ITAUG, Project documents; Measures of traffic to project website at key points (e.g. during side events, or following publishing of papers); Number of stories on Connect project activities published on external platforms such</p>	<p>Relevance of lessons from project to inform other countries; Motivation of project participants remains high throughout project.</p>

					as BIP website, NBSAP forum website etc.	
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Annex 2. National Monitoring and Evaluation Plans

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