

NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN - INDIA

Guidelines for Executing Agencies (State, Sub-State, Ecoregional, and Thematic Level)

Note: These guidelines are common to all groups, but not all points may be relevant to each group).

Expected activities of each group

Each working group, and each ecoregional, state-level or sub-state level nodal agency, will have to undertake the following in relation to their stated scope (theme or geographical unit):

1. Assessing existing reports, action plans (what already exists in written/published form, what aspects of these are relevant for the current exercise, what major issues remain to be covered, etc.), and determination of priority issues/actions to focus on during planning process (e.g. if considerable work/planning already exists on wild animal diversity, the process could focus more on wild plant diversity and domesticated biodiversity);
2. Identifying available information and data (as above);
3. Identifying available expertise and experience, both in formal and informal sectors (who has worked and is working on the subject, what kind of expertise/experience do they have, what kinds of expertise/experience is lacking, etc.);
4. Soliciting inputs from a wide range of individuals/agencies, through:
 - i. letters,
 - ii. public meetings,
 - iii. workshops,
 - iv. advertisements,
 - v. print, radio, TV, artists (including performing arts), folk and electronic media;
 - vi. use of existing public events such as festivals; and
 - vii. organising state level biodiversity festivals or *melas* (please see Concept Note for National Biodiversity Festival).
5. Capacity-building exercises where relevant (e.g. for the local/sub-state/state level participants, on authentication of data, monitoring, etc.);
6. Analysing all relevant sectoral plans, policies, and laws (how comprehensive and relevant are existing plans, policies, laws, what gaps exist in their coverage, what contradictions and complementarities exist between different plans, policies, and laws, etc.), and identifying ongoing or proposed programmes and projects that could help in the implementation of the action plans;
7. Identifying ongoing processes (e.g. state forestry projects or environmental action programmes) which the NBSAP process can link up to over the next few months, and leverage information, funds, and expertise from;
8. Making the most economical use of the resources available within the NBSAP process, and identifying extra sources of funding or other support for the process;
9. Documenting the planning process at all stages and levels (see attached Framework for Process Documentation).

Proposed process for each group

The most important aspect of the NBSAP process is its participatory nature. Each executing agency and person must make special efforts to open out the process to as many people and organisations as possible. The following sectors should be involved, *as relevant*:

1. Governmental agencies, both environment-related and developmental, that have a bearing on biodiversity, including the armed forces and the police;
2. Citizens' groups: activist, research, advocacy, educational/training, and other kinds of NGOs and institutions;
3. Local communities in rural areas, including relevant institutions (*gram sabhas*, tribal councils, *panchayats*, forest protection committees, women's committees, etc),
4. Independent experts working on aspects related to biodiversity;
5. Private corporations and entities, especially those dealing with or having an impact on biological resources;
6. Politicians;
7. Media (print, electronic, and folk, including artists);

Maximum participation should be ensured through:

1. making the process of working fully transparent;
2. inviting public inputs at every step through public announcements, advertisements in newspapers, radio and TV, etc.;
3. making all relevant information available to the public, through both written/published and oral means;
4. using local languages in all key documents and events (particularly in state/substate processes);
5. allowing for a diversity of opinions and approaches to be reflected in the whole process and in the final action plans;
6. using festivals and other cultural occasions where people come together;
7. making publicly available interim/draft action plans and using a transparent process to consider comments and inputs that come in.

State-level processes, in particular, should ensure the following:

1. providing high-level official authority to the process, e.g. by launching the process through an announcement by the state chief minister, environment-related minister, or chief secretary;
2. ensuring maximum coordination among various line agencies / departments, e.g. by providing a key role to the state planning board/cell in the State Steering Committee;
3. encouraging sub-state level processes (e.g. for districts, biologically defined regions, or other units) by soliciting action plans (or facilitating plans that are solicited by the central NBSAP coordinating team);
4. allowing room for self-initiated processes of making action plans, e.g. by grassroots organisations and village-based institutions;
5. respecting the results of 'lower' level (e.g. sub-state) information and action plans, integrating them into 'higher' level (e.g. state and national) action plans;
6. being sensitive to inter-state issues, and ensuring linkages with the NBSAP ecoregional plan process relevant to the state;
7. ensuring the participation of all sectors in the State Steering Committees, and in the state-level Thematic Working Groups if any;
8. translating all key documents into local language(s), asking grassroots groups to spread them widely;
9. committing at the very start, to devote attention and resources to the implementation of the action plan; and

10. documenting the whole process (or commissioning process documentation to an independent agency).

Ecoregional and *sub-state level processes* should ensure, in particular, that they coordinate with the relevant state steering committees, both to avoid duplication as also to exchange relevant information and analyses. While retaining their independent functioning, sub-state level processes should keep the relevant state level nodal agency fully informed of their work.

Relationship with TPCG and NPD

The executing agency will relate to the TPCG and the NPD in the following manner:

1. The executing agency will seriously consider all recommendations made to it by the TPCG and NPD, regarding the *process* of the NBSAP, and reject or change any of these only with credible and explicitly stated reasons;
2. The executing agency will regularly send reports to the TPCG about its activities. This will include:
 - (i) a comprehensive report half-way through its term; and
 - (ii) brief reports every two months which can be used for a proposed NBSAP newsletter;
3. A designated member of the TPCG will be in regular touch with the executing agency;
4. The TPCG and NPD will endeavour to provide all required assistance and guidance, to the extent possible, to the executing agency;
5. A draft of the action plan will be submitted to the TPCG and NPD, and their comments on this draft will be seriously considered and incorporated in the final version.

Expected outputs and follow-up

(Note: Please also see the separate note on Format of Action Plans)

The final action plans should contain the following:

1. Statement of the issues or problems;
2. Identification of ongoing plans, programmes and initiatives regarding these issues;
3. Identification of key actors involved;
4. Identification of major gaps in coverage;
5. Delineation of steps needed to plug gaps and enhance the effectiveness of ongoing plans, programmes and initiatives;
6. List of measures and strategies needed to implement these steps in the short, medium and long term;
7. Prioritisation of these measures in terms of their importance and urgency;
8. Identification of key elements needed for implementation: institutional structures, funds, expertise/human resources, policy/legal measures, monitoring, and others;
9. Specific proposals (prioritised according to importance and urgency);
10. Time frame for implementation;
11. Full list of references or bibliography;
12. Detailed process by which plan was produced.

All action plans should incorporate and engage with the following cross-cutting themes:

1. people's participation and empowerment (participation at all stages, including in defining objectives and goals, conceiving plans, implementing them, etc.);
2. gender and equity;
3. indigenous knowledge and practices;
4. international issues.

All action plans should be accompanied by appropriate maps, photographs, and references.
Please also check that the plans are checked thoroughly for grammar and spelling.

While all the above are important components of the action plans, there should be a special focus on producing **proposals for implementable projects**, programmes and processes, along with the resources (human, financial, technical, institutional) that are needed for implementing them. These proposals should preferably fit into existing or future state and national level plans (including 5-year plans) and budgets (including annual budgets).

It is important to realise that considerable amount of conservation, sustainable use, and equitable benefit-sharing action related to biodiversity can be achieved through a re-orientation or revision of existing plans, programmes and budgets (e.g. through changes in agricultural policies that affect crop and livestock diversity). Indeed, if such re-orientation is not done, biodiversity concerns will not get taken care of, as other sectoral plans and programmes will continue to pull in opposite directions. The action plan should identify current incentives and disincentives towards biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, and propose steps to strengthen the former (incentives) while removing the latter (disincentives). Integration of biodiversity concerns into plans and programmes should therefore be the focus of the action plans. **Only aspects that cannot find support through this process should be built into fresh proposals for funding.**