

NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN - INDIA

**INTEGRATING MONITORING AND EVALUATION INTO
BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLANS
A Concept Note¹**

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) are two important elements of any Strategy and Action Plan. M&E enable an impact assessment of any project's interventions. They help determine whether the goals and objectives of the project have been achieved and what would be required to improve the project. M&E should be planned for and thought out as part of the strategy and action plan and thus should be an inherent part of every project proposal submitted. Built into the strategy should also be a feedback mechanism to ensure that the results of M&E are being incorporated into further implementation of the action plan. A M&E plan should be designed to keep in mind that, it is important to learn from each activity, including failures and successes. The M&E component should therefore also be an integral part of the overall budget.

The essential difference between these two terms is that *monitoring* refers to an ongoing process of assessing whether the process of planning and implementation is going on target; whereas *evaluation*, usually at the end of specified phases or the end of the project/process, is an assessment of whether the various goals and objectives have been achieved .

Important things that need to be kept in mind while developing a M&E plan are the following:

1. Indicators that can be measured to show change need to be established at the very beginning. Indicators should be such that show change in environmental factors, shifts in capacity (people, institutions, facilities, and funding), and successes and failures of action. For instance, the *trends* in *population* of threatened species, or the *increase* or *decline* of ground flora *diversity* in a forest, could be key biological indicators. Another indicator could be the *intensity* and *range* of threats (see separate note on Threat Assessment) to biodiversity. Yet others could be the *extent* of public participation in conservation programmes, or the *numbers* of women participating in these programmes, or the *degree* to which people's livelihoods are linked to the conservation and sustainable use of biological resources.
2. Indicators need not necessarily be quantitative, they can also be qualitative, so long as they are clearly defined in a way that is acceptable to all those involved in the exercise. Perhaps a mix of quantitative and qualitative indicators would be ideal.
3. Institutional structures to carry out the M&E are critical. In this, it is important also to determine whether the M&E institutions will be from within the implementing agencies, or outside of it, or even a combination of both. All relevant parties must agree on who will monitor and evaluate, and how.
4. M&E methods should be based on the following criteria:
 - 4.1 Accuracy and reliability: How accurate is the data being collected? To what degree can this method be repeated?
 - 4.2 Cost-Effectiveness: What does the method require in terms of resource investment? Are there cheaper ways to get the same data?
 - 4.3 Feasibility: Does the implementing agency have people who can use the method, or do outsiders need to be involved (this also relates to the point above about internal vis-à-vis external M&E agencies).

¹ This note has been prepared by Seema Bhatt, Member, TPCG, with inputs from other members of the TPCG.

4.4 Appropriateness: Does the method make sense in the context of the project? Is it culturally suitable?

4.5 Participatory nature: How much does the method lend itself to meaningful participation from all major parties? In particular, are those communities and people who are most closely related to or dependent on biodiversity, able to participate in M&E? Are their indicators and values being used, in addition to those of formal scientific bodies and experts? (Note: A separate note on Community Based Monitoring is being commissioned by the NBSAP project, and will be made available to all executing agencies when ready).

**ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS TO BE INCLUDED IN A
MONITORING AND EVALUATION PROGRAMME**

(Adapted from: *National Biodiversity Planning. Guidelines based on Early Experiences Around the World.* World Resources Institute, in cooperation with UNEP and The World Conservation Union (IUCN). 1995.)

The following are some indicators that should be included in a monitoring and evaluation plan:

*status and trends of the area's use of terrestrial, aquatic, coastal, and marine resources, habitats, species, population, genes, biodiversity services, and threats to biodiversity;

*changes in selected social, political, and economic factors that have a bearing on biodiversity;

*changes in human, institutional, facility, and funding capacity, including cultural practices and norms, technology, training and education, information availability, management, and monitoring capacity;

*changes in the policy and legal framework for natural resources, including protected areas and species, access to genetic resources, land tenure, physical and intellectual property rights, benefit and cost sharing, trade and environment impact assessment;

*changes in the use of biological resources and their sustainability, including natural-resource based industries, and exploitation of resources for subsistence and livelihoods;

*trends in the monetary and non-monetary values of biodiversity and current expenditure and investments:
and

*impacts of implementing the activities and policies of the biodiversity plan(s), vis-a-vis conservation, sustainability, and equity.