



**Regions4**

Sustainable Development

# Mainstreaming Biodiversity: The Subnational Government Experience

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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UNIVERSIDADE  
**CATÓLICA  
DE SANTOS**

ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF  
**SUBNATIONAL GOVERNMENTS  
& BIODIVERSITY**

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## FOREWORD



**Iñaki Susaeta**  
Secretary General  
Regions4 Sustainable Development

The challenges life on earth is facing are undoubtedly impacting essential services needed for our own survival, from medicine and food supply to clean air and water. The threat of losing one million species of plants and animals in the near future compels us to take action. Our network, Regions4, has a long-standing tradition in advocating for regional leadership in the fields of biodiversity, climate change and sustainable development. We believe subnational governments and regions are the ultimate links between global ambitions and local implementation, and the present report is a testimony to that potential.

As coordinators of the Advisory Committee on Subnational Governments and Biodiversity (AC SNG) to the Convention on Biological Diversity, Regions4 is proud to represent the voice of subnational and regional governments that are courageously facing nature's most pressing challenges and implementing innovating solutions inside their territories.

The AC SNG is an example of what on-the-ground action and collaboration look like, demonstrated through both its success stories and its challenges. The broad and diverse membership of the AC SNG is, in itself, its biggest strength, from Southeast Asia's "last ecological frontier" to the vast forest and rainforest ecosystems of North, South and Central America, and passing through the magnificent wilderness of Africa and central Europe, this platform brings together extremely different realities that have a shared value of nature.

We hope to carry that shared appreciation of our natural resources into the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, and include a subnational and regional perspective into an ambitious new deal for nature and people. Our intention is that this paper facilitates a better understanding of the efforts subnational governments undertake to integrate biodiversity considerations into different sectors, and that the recommendations gathered in this document, help shape a more inclusive and supportive global biodiversity framework that recognises their essential contributions.



**Jean Lemire**  
Envoy for Climate Change and Nordic and Arctic  
Issues, Government of Québec

As we have entered the negotiations of a new global biodiversity framework for the post-2020 period, we have an important opportunity to raise global ambition on conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. This framework will require a "whole of society approach" to allow all sectors and all stakeholders to recognise themselves as enablers of its implementation. Efficient mainstreaming is the solution to ensure the transformational change needed to halt biodiversity loss, because it is not only an environmental challenge that we face – it is a sustainable development, economic, security, social and moral issue.

The notion of inclusiveness of all stakeholders, including subnational governments, is essential to effectively mainstream biodiversity into all spheres. Subnational governments can ensure both vertical and horizontal integration of biodiversity policies, while raising awareness and inclusiveness of civil society and other stakeholders, including the private and financial sectors.

It will be essential to better mainstream biodiversity into economic development, and better formulate environmental, social and economic arguments that promote funding mechanisms for the protection of nature. We also need to better interconnect biodiversity and climate change. Nature-based solutions can contribute significantly to climate change adaptation of local population and human health by reducing the vulnerability of the ecosystems upon which they depend.

As co-coordinators of the AC SNG, the government of Quebec is actively working to bring the voice of subnational governments into the agenda of the Convention on Biological Diversity. We are confident that this report can positively impact the future framework for biodiversity.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

According to the summary of the 2019 Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), biodiversity is declining faster than at any other time in human history and the biosphere – upon which all life on earth depends – is being altered to an unparalleled degree across all spatial scales.

The past 50 years have been crucial to the acceleration of negative trends affecting biodiversity all over the world. In response to the global crisis and to curb the loss of biodiversity, Parties agreed on a Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, including 20 ambitious conservation targets to safeguard biodiversity worldwide.

But, according to the latest information available, it is likely that most of these targets will not be met by 2020 if current trajectories remain the same.

The summary report from IPBES identified five direct drivers that have the most impact on terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems: changes in land and sea use, direct exploitation of organisms, climate change, pollution and invasion of alien species. They also concluded that “business as usual” is not an option and will instead drive societies and economies to more risk. They recalled that human exploitation of natural resources has pushed a million plant and animal species to the brink of extinction and concluded that it is only through transformative change across economic, social, political and technological systems that we can reverse and stop biodiversity loss.



On a more positive note, they also mentioned that *“it is not too late to make a difference, but only if we start now, at every level, from global to local<sup>1</sup>”*.

Fundamental, system-wide transformation across sectors involves a change in paradigms, goals and values. Including the most influential actors involved in implementation processes is essential to drive the transformative change we need so badly. Though international commitments are made on a global scale, it is only at the subnational level that implementation occurs, and subnational governments are, therefore, indispensable features of the post-2020 biodiversity framework dialogues and negotiations.

Led by the Advisory Committee on Subnational Governments and Biodiversity, a permanent structure officially recognised by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) through Decision X/22 of COP 10, this report aims to bring the voice of subnational governments into the post-2020 global biodiversity framework process and identify existing strategic actions that can help to achieve further progress on mainstreaming biodiversity.

The following report will present how subnational governments contribute to this much-needed transformative change and provides information on their importance in linking the different levels of government to the actions needed for mainstreaming biodiversity into and across all sectors of modern human life. We will explore the potential of subnational governments and advance solutions and ideas to overcome the impediments to embedding biodiversity considerations into all sectors, and to enthusiastically advance into new paradigms, goals and societal values.

This includes identifying and analysing four main themes: capacity-building and training needs for mainstreaming biodiversity; opportunities to develop and strengthen partnerships; mechanisms to monitor the implementation of actions to advance the mainstreaming of biodiversity; and obstacles that block mainstreaming of biodiversity in regulations, processes, policies and programmes at the subnational level. The participating regions, members of the AC SNG, provided in-depth information and jointly worked with the authors of the report in reviewing its final conclusions.



1 IPBES. (2019, May 6). *Media Release: Nature's Dangerous Decline 'Unprecedented'; Species Extinction Rates 'Accelerating'*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ipbes.net/news/Media-Release-Global-Assessment>



## 2. CAPACITY-BUILDING AND TRAINING NEEDS FOR MAINSTREAMING BIODIVERSITY

### 2.1. TECHNICAL CAPACITIES WITHIN INSTITUTIONS

Technical capacities are among the principal needs for the successful implementation of any strategy, especially when it comes to mainstreaming biodiversity. The challenge of embedding biodiversity considerations into policies, strategies and practices of key public and private agencies that impact or rely on biodiversity is tremendous, and while political support is important, technical capacities to design and implement these processes are vital.

When designing and implementing biodiversity actions, technical capacities appear among the biggest strengths of subnational governments. Biodiversity agencies and divisions within public institutions are often composed of biologists, foresters, agricultural engineers, environmental scientists, geographers, geologists, urban planners, zoologists, economists and lawyers. Therefore, subnational governments can play a critical role in providing technical capacities for implementing biodiversity conservation actions.

As a result of the variety of expertise at the subnational level of government, and when discussing training needs for mainstreaming biodiversity, it seems pertinent to apply the new development paradigm of ‘capacity development’<sup>2</sup> – based on local ownership and partnership with beneficiaries in order to recognise existing capacities and articulate an endogenous process of change.

It is also noticeable that capacity-building is often linked to institutional partnerships and technical alliances, in which sharing information, technical knowledge and capacity are an important component of the cooperation agreement.

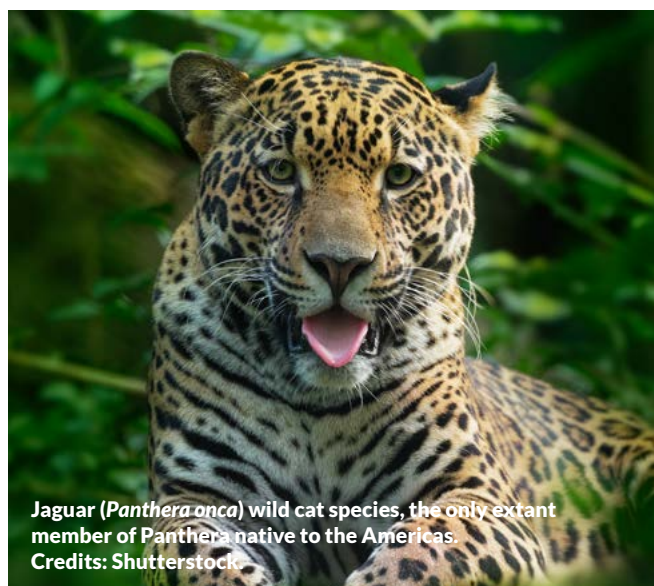
Foundations and research centres, either linked or sponsored by subnational governments, tend to set learning programmes to transfer expertise and technical skills to public officials and to the private sector.

#### REGION OF CAMPECHE

*Campeche (Mexico) is currently working with the Panthera Foundation to monitor the Jaguar Corridor of the Yucatan Peninsula. Monitoring activities are mainly focused on the Balam-Kú Natural Protected Area. The initiative is supported by local NGOs, the private sector and the Autonomous University of Juarez Tabasco. The objective is to provide technical equipment and build capacities of local communities and governments to provide a safe environment for the jaguars of the area.*

#### FIND OUT MORE AT:

<https://www.journeyofthejaguar.org>



**Jaguar (*Panthera onca*)** wild cat species, the only extant member of *Panthera* native to the Americas.  
Credits: Shutterstock

<sup>2</sup> OECD. (2006). *The challenge of capacity development: working towards good practice*. Retrieved from: [http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/capacitybuilding/pdf/DAC\\_paper\\_final.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/capacitybuilding/pdf/DAC_paper_final.pdf)

## 2.2. KNOWLEDGE GAPS AND FINANCING FOR CAPACITY BUILDING

Most subnational governments have channels to identify technical gaps and training needs. In most cases, annual reports on biodiversity evaluate implementation needs in relation to human resources, as well as provide advice and tentative training strategies and plans. Additionally, surveys and workshops are conducted to ascertain current local capacities to implement a new measure, programme or action. What seems to be the key to unlocking successful actions on the ground is the investment, or lack thereof, in fostering institutional capacities.

Though most Subnational Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans<sup>3</sup> (SBSAPs) consider investing in capacity development, most rely on international support networks and agencies to address their technical capacity gaps.

### REGION OF LOMBARDY

*The region of Lombardy (Italy) recently launched LIFE GESTIRE2020, an innovative project for the conservation of biodiversity, co-financed by the European Commission in the framework of the LIFE+ Programme. The aim is to achieve the biodiversity conservation goals set out in the Habitats and Birds Directives. Using an integrated and multi-funding approach, GESTIRE2020 is a complex project that consists of 64 actions that consider the training of public officials in all of its stages, including preparatory actions, concrete actions, monitoring actions, communication actions and management actions.*

#### FIND OUT MORE AT:

<http://www.naturachevale.it/en/the-project/life-gestire-2020/the-projects-phases-objectives-and-actions/>

It is worth noting that stronger subnational economies tend to have the financial capacity to foster and strengthen information and monitoring systems related to biodiversity. However, it represents a small portion of the total amount invested by these subnational governments in comparison to the rest of its institutional capacities.

## 2.3. SUBNATIONAL INITIATIVES TO BUILD INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITIES

Numerous subnational governments have a clear understanding of their capacity and training needs for mainstreaming biodiversity. One of the main concerns is related to communication and awareness. It is perceived that decision makers could potentially ignore, or not fully understand, the severity of any given environmental crisis if the message is not delivered in an accessible manner.

Additionally, there is the challenge of highlighting the value of biodiversity and ecosystem services and embedding it into decision-making processes at all levels. The lack of a structured approach to estimating the wide range of benefits provided by ecosystems and biodiversity, as well as the inability to demonstrate at all times their values in economic terms, seem to be two of the biggest needs for successfully mainstreaming biodiversity.

Among the initiatives to alleviate the above-mentioned needs, there is the creation of multi-sector platforms and communication channels that intend to incorporate the interest of sectors possibly facing environmental challenges like agriculture, livestock, forestry, fisheries and tourism. As it has been mentioned, initiatives led by international organisations and knowledge exchange platforms are also key in responding to challenges related to the integration of biodiversity at the subnational level.

<sup>3</sup> Find all SBSAPs submitted to CBD at:  
<https://www.cbd.int/nbsap/related-info/sbsap/>





## 2.4. COLLABORATION AND SUPPORT FOR CAPACITY BUILDING

Even though the needs for collaboration and support on capacity-building topics are numerous, they could potentially be met by relying on a robust system of knowledge and technical expertise exchange that could connect and financially support technical experts from different regions of the world. North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation hold tremendous potential for subnational governments willing to grow their areas of knowledge and influence within their own regions.

International collaboration to assist subnational governments in addressing global biodiversity challenges such as wildlife trafficking, invasive alien species and biosecurity are among the highest pressures on biodiversity that could potentially bring together experts from different regions of the world affected by the same problem.

### REGION OF GOSSAS

*The Government of Gossas (Senegal) actively collaborates with Senegal's CBD Focal Point, the National Parks Directorate, to foster technical capacities of agents of the Departmental Council. The training and capacity-building programmes are mainly focused on biodiversity and wildlife management. National-subnational collaboration is part of the Sustainable Development Plan 2016-2020 that considers biodiversity and climate change actions in the region.*

Furthermore, there is an urgency to develop or strengthen already existing support networks for capacity-development specifically addressed to subnational governments.

Noteworthy examples of subnational collaboration are, among others, the Regions4 Biodiversity Learning Platform and the Group of Leading Subnational Governments for the Aichi Biodiversity Targets (GoLS), both part of the subnational platform to the Convention on Biological Diversity, namely the Advisory Committee on Subnational Governments and Biodiversity.

## REGION OF AICHI

*The government of Aichi (Japan) leads an initiative called “Group of Leading Subnational Governments toward Aichi Biodiversity Targets” (GoLS) to contribute to reaching the Aichi Targets. Together with the ANAAE, Campeche, Catalonia, Gangwon, Ontario, Québec and São Paulo, subnational political leaders get together to enhance their own actions on the grounds, share opinions and promote open dialogues with the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity.*

### FIND OUT MORE AT:

<http://kankyojoho.pref.aichi.jp/gols/>





### 3. OPPORTUNITIES TO DEVELOP AND STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR, INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES, CIVIL SOCIETY AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

#### 3.1. ONGOING MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS

Given the intersectoral and trans-disciplinary nature of mainstreaming biodiversity initiatives, partnerships are pivotal in the implementation of such processes. Subnational governments' experiences indicate that enabling platforms for indigenous and local communities, social engagement and public-private partnerships are among the first steps to develop strong and sustainable collaborations.

Multi-stakeholder platforms have proven to be a very effective mechanism to develop a shared vision for any kind of mainstreaming biodiversity process. This kind of inclusive, consultative processes enables the development of the required tools to achieve the established biodiversity conservation objectives. Additionally, subnational governments reported that involving stakeholders early in the process, and in important decision-making moments of design and implementation, provides shared ownership of the initiative – especially among individuals like private landowners or local and indigenous communities.

While the private sector appears to be a valuable partner to public institutions at the subnational level, it is still yet to be actively involved in some regions in mainstreaming projects.

#### REGION OF QUÉBEC

*In 1984, Québec (Canada) created the Québec Wildlife Foundation to mitigate substantial wetland losses and prevent aquatic and terrestrial habitat degradation. The Foundation takes on a broad partnership approach that now has become a key element of its modus operandi. This has resulted in the mobilisation of many local stakeholders for concerted action on wildlife projects and the subsidy of around 400 projects yearly that aim to: protect and improve terrestrial and aquatic wildlife habitats; contribute to the recovery of threatened and vulnerable wildlife species; enhance agricultural biodiversity; promote low-impact activity and public access to natural habitats; control invasive alien species; and foster private woodlot owner commitment to protect and enhance wildlife habitats.*

#### FIND OUT MORE AT:

<http://www.fondationdelafaune.qc.ca>

Both a larger role for private sector partners and more effective engagement of key private initiatives are still strongly needed to increase the impact of mainstreaming policies and programmes.







## REGION OF SÃO PAULO

The Greener Ethanol Protocol was signed in São Paulo (Brazil) by the State Secretariat for the Environment, State Secretariat of Agriculture and Food Supply, and the Environment Agency of State of São Paulo, and the Brazilian Sugarcane Industry Association and the Organisation of Sugarcane Producers of the Centre-South Region of Brazil. The goal is to consolidate the best sustainability practices in the sugarcane production chain, to overcome the challenges from the mechanisation of sugarcane harvest, through technical directives that will help fulfil objectives such as land restoration, reforestation, and biodiversity conservation. Among the actions taken are the protection of pollinators and wild fauna, soil conservation and better agronomic practices and recovery of bodies of water to increase water production.

### FIND OUT MORE AT:

<https://www.infraestruturameioambiente.sp.gov.br/en/greener-ethanol/>

Some examples show that a strong legal framework can foster alliances with the private sector. A shared and collectively-built protocol or agreement on the use and exploitation of a particular product can single-handedly change the trajectory of trends in land-use and deforestation.



## 3.2. HOW GLOBAL INITIATIVES CAN HELP SUBNATIONAL GOVERNMENTS

In terms of partnerships, subnational governments acknowledged that a participatory approach to decision making is essential to the engagement of key stakeholders. In most cases, it has been proven that sustainable partnerships must consider a one-on-one matching process to link the right stakeholders with the right initiatives and opportunities to maximise results.

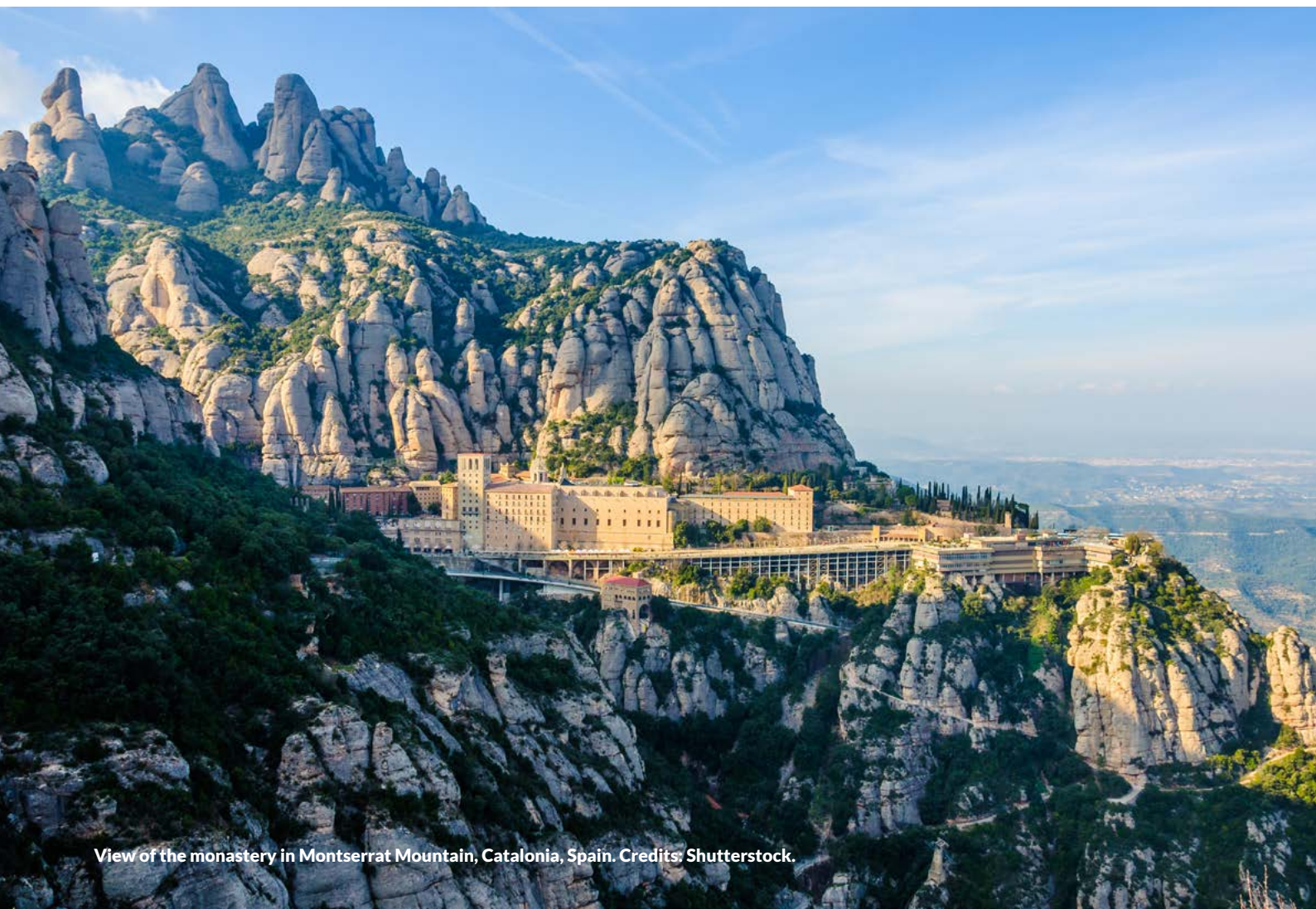
Additionally, academia and research institutions represent a great opportunity to develop robust and sustainable partnerships, particularly in technical topics such as information sharing, data and monitoring of biodiversity. Current examples show the potential of ongoing initiatives that engage academia, private and public institutions in information-sharing mechanisms. Such platforms could grow and accommodate international research institutions, other subnational governments and, ideally, UN Conventions.

### REGION OF CATALONIA

*To strengthen collaboration between Public Administration and research centres, Catalonia launched Prismatic, a stakeholder platform for the knowledge and management of natural resources and biodiversity coordinated by the Centre for Ecological Research and Forestry Applications (CREAF). Prismatic is a digital space that collects scientific knowledge on natural heritage and biodiversity, generated by research centres and other entities. This platform is designed to generate dialogue among managers, public agencies and scientists.*

#### FIND OUT MORE AT:

<http://www.prisma-tic.cat/>



View of the monastery in Montserrat Mountain, Catalonia, Spain. Credits: Shutterstock.



## REGION OF PALAWAN

The Palawan (Philippines) Knowledge Platform for Biodiversity and Sustainable Development (PKP) is a tool for strengthening partnerships on biodiversity with the participation of international organisations, as well as subnational government agencies, private groups, NGOs and local universities. The PKP, a localized clearing house mechanism whose creation was assisted by the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity pursuant to the UN CBD, is an active community of over 30 stakeholders that facilitates, coordinates, maintains and enhances the sharing of biological and socioeconomic data and information that supports the goals of the Strategic Environmental Plan for Palawan. Towards this end, it annually conducts a national research conference which has recently been internationalized with UNESCO-Philippines as a major collaborator. The PKP is currently undertaking a collaborative study looking into the presence of mercury in wildlife (flora and fauna) and humans in Puerto Princesa City, where an abandoned mercury mine is situated.

### FIND OUT MORE AT:

<https://pkp.pcsd.gov.ph> and <http://en.abconservation.org/2019-international-conference-on-biosphere-and-sustainability/>

Furthermore, transversal issues, such as water, watershed management, ecotourism and agroforestry, for instance, are examples of opportunities to develop new partnerships. Committees and working groups to align efforts in a particular topic of interest to many parties involved have proven to be excellent opportunities to invite stakeholders not typically involved in decision-making, such as academia, civil society, and non-governmental organisations.

Global initiatives and platforms, such as the IPBES, have the greatest potential to strengthen subnational initiatives. On repeat occasions, subnational stakeholders have argued that they could significantly benefit from the creation of a technical transfer mechanism focused on the subnational experience on implementing biodiversity actions on the ground.



### 3.3. MECHANISMS TO MONITOR AND EVALUATE MAINSTREAMING ACTIONS

Appropriate monitoring and assessment methodologies are fundamental to ensure the effectiveness of any mainstreaming biodiversity initiative. All planning frameworks should provide clear information about the desired goals, a set of strategies, a basis for monitoring and the funding needed to support not only the initiative, but the monitoring, assessment and capacity building involved in the process.

Monitoring can be defined as the gathering of data to enable detection of changes in the status, security and utilisation of biological diversity for the purpose of improving the effectiveness of management of that biodiversity. It is, therefore, a continuing process throughout the implementation and often extends beyond project completion<sup>4</sup>.

Monitoring can be done in different ways, according to the objective proposed. It is crucial that the method is standardised in order to track biodiversity activity accordingly and to effectively build scientific knowledge. In some subnational territories, there is a need for the establishment of models of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. In these cases, subnational actions can be improved if across-the-board standards were established regarding suitable biodiversity monitoring protocols. This reveals the necessity of capacity building in this area. The decisions about which indicators are to be chosen should consider those that are more reliable and objective so that they can show the real progress of the implementation of the actions and also explain the eventual difficulties in their implementation.

The number of indicators should be sufficient to safely reflect the implementation progress of the initiative. On the other hand, even if technical and financial resources were sufficient, indicators design also embodies the importance of involving stakeholders as well as project managers and technical experts. Involving a wide range of actors ensures that future adjustments, management interventions and data collection is accessible and effective.

### 3.4. RECOGNISING OPPORTUNITIES FOR STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

It is appropriate to identify the public and private stakeholders involved or impacted by the initiative. As learnt from the subnational experience, it is advisable that stakeholders are formally organised in working committees, whose structure should be determined according to the local context and the priorities set for the area under consideration<sup>5</sup>.

Although public authorities are responsible for conducting the monitoring of biodiversity, the contribution of civil society and other actors including, especially, indigenous and local communities, ensures broader participation and ownership of different stakeholders. The involvement of these actors gives greater legitimacy of action, enables the expanding information about what is being done and in which manner, and facilitates both the necessary information and engagement of the population.

The practice shows that working committees involved in the implementation are also responsible for monitoring, which reinforces the idea of the importance of a collective approach. A clear mandate of public authorities within these committees is essential, as well as training and knowledge sharing with the stakeholders involved.

4 Global Environment Division. *Guidelines for Monitoring and Evaluation for Biodiversity Projects*. 1998, p. 2.  
Available at: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTBIODIVERSITY/214584-1110959186651/20611829/270310Guidelines0for0monitoring.pdf>

5 Ministère du développement durable, de l'environnement et de la lutte contre les changements climatiques.  
*Subnational governments in action for biodiversity – Case studies*, 2016, p. 39.

The experience shows challenges in collecting and interpreting data, as it is difficult to standardise the data and measures collected.

Additionally, the continued involvement of the same individuals over time guarantees that more knowledge will be acquired and increases the possibility of a greater exchange of information and experience.

Monitoring processes encompass governance, which is not limited to institutional arrangements within an organisation, but rather embodies the need for governing bodies that meet the needs of entire regions. Also, good governance allows the development of instruments capable of producing effective results for all, including non-governmental organisations, communities beyond local actors impacted by the initiative, academia and the private sector.

Therefore, governance is a key element in the processes of both implementation and monitoring of all mainstreaming interventions, considering that various stakeholders from different backgrounds are involved, often also in decision-making processes.

As seen, it is important to increase investments in monitoring and evaluation of all mainstreaming interventions, not only at the project level, but also at the subnational level – given that many ministries and sectors are often involved alongside the directly-affected communities.

Mainstreaming projects by individuals within civil society represent an opportunity to align efforts with broader initiatives taken at the subnational or national level of government. Additionally, individual efforts represent great opportunities for learning that could potentially be better optimised to build a stronger body of knowledge of mainstreaming practices.

### 3.5. SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

The participation and support of the local populations and civil society are strategic, because they maintain direct and ancestral contact with their surroundings and can provide a way to engage civil society in biodiversity conservation.

Both scientific, civil society and traditional knowledge play an important role in defining management actions and guiding conservation. Scientific monitoring, civil society and traditional knowledge are critical especially when projects are implemented in biodiversity hotspots with agricultural ecosystems and agrobiodiversity central to the livelihood of small-scale farmers, rural communities and indigenous peoples.

### 3.6. DATA CREATION AND EVALUATION

Monitoring indicates progress and directs the focus on implementation issues and conflicts. It is, therefore, fundamental that following the identification of the problems, a working committee evaluates the causes of implementation blocks and makes informed decisions on the appropriate route to take. Periodic assessments are crucial for generating knowledge on the evolution of implementation actions.

Evaluation and knowledge generation continue to be a challenge as well as an opportunity. Knowledge sharing and learning could potentially strengthen future actions on mainstreaming and can help increase ownership. Evaluation and report generation can potentially serve as a bridge between public authorities, implementers and society, and – if properly synthesised – these experiences can improve future interventions.

## 4. OBSTACLES THAT BLOCK MAINSTREAMING OF BIODIVERSITY IN REGULATIONS, PROCESSES, POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

### 4.1. UNDERSTANDING BIODIVERSITY AS AN IMPEDIMENT TO DEVELOPMENT

Many of the obstacles faced by subnational governments when it comes to mainstreaming biodiversity are coincidental among the regions. It is important to highlight that, in many cases, it is perceived that biodiversity hinders development, which gives rise to a conflict between the protection of ecosystems and economic development.

This supposed conflict is reflected in sectoral policies formulation, when decisions tend to allocate financial resources to fields other than the protection of biodiversity, especially in the so-called “economic sector”, given the need for development, which is a factor that occurs in all regions.

This distortion derives from the lack of information and professional qualification in sectors that could, in their decisions, consider biodiversity as an ally to economic activities, but due to a lack of knowledge, the economic possibilities and ecosystem services that biodiversity offers are not taken into account.



Closeup of a young man with a pile of olives in his hands freshly collected during the harvesting in an olive grove in Catalonia, Spain.  
Credits: Shutterstock.



The difficulty in understanding biodiversity as a relevant and essential ally is an issue that stands out. On the contrary, it is the variety of life on earth that ensures food security, human health, clean air and drinking water and often drives the development of various economic activities, such as agriculture, fishing, livestock, tourism and forest management.

Limited knowledge in the economic sector on biodiversity and its relationship to economic development is an issue. It can be pointed out that many sectors need training in how to consider biodiversity as an integral part of many economic activities, in order to assure that its components are used in a sustainable manner.

## 4.2. LACK OF INSTITUTIONAL ARTICULATION TO ADDRESS COMMON PROBLEMS IN THE VARIOUS SECTORS OF GOVERNMENT

There are two kinds of institutional articulation: among entities at the same level, federal or subnational, called horizontal articulation and the one occurring among the various levels of government, federal, subnational, municipal, known as vertical articulation.

The more articulated the institutions are, the better the effects will be from the decisions taken by each one, which impacts biodiversity actions at all levels but fundamentally, mainstreaming interventions.

Though there is a tendency for central authorities to concentrate financial resources, it is widely acknowledged that subnational governments have the potential to stay tuned to citizens' expectations, raise awareness and trigger behavioural change. Additionally, they promote policy coordination, coherence and vertical integration and are, in sum, an essential nexus between the national and the local levels.

Indeed, their privileged position enables the collaboration with national and local governments, businesses and financial institutions, civil society and NGOs, universities and academia, tailoring their actions to the particular circumstances of populations and territories which makes them an essential link to the accomplishments of global and national goals on biodiversity.

Generally, national authorities tend to have more resources; however, they usually have a lower level of involvement in implementation processes, and therefore are further from accomplishing results. On the other hand, subnational authorities are better placed to implement actions, and therefore, accomplish goals and targets, but tend (in some regions) to have less available resources for implementation, including technical and financial capital.

Additional difficulties are found in reaching a common understanding of biodiversity targets, especially if those are exclusively globally and nationally acquired and defined. In some countries, national methodologies, including NBSAPs, don't translate to the subnational context. Excluding local and subnational implementers from this process obstructs cooperation and prevents the achievement of goals.

## 4.3. LACK OF ALIGNMENT BETWEEN PUBLIC POLICIES

The lack of alignment between the various public policies emerges, partially, from insufficient to non-existent articulation between the agencies, either in a horizontal perspective, within entities of one level of government, or in a vertical perspective, across various levels of government.

It is also the product of a paradigm that mistakenly considers the protection of biodiversity as a threat to the development of economic activities.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL BIODIVERSITY MAINSTREAMING PRACTICE AT THE SUBNATIONAL LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT

Subnational governments have made impressive progress in integrating biodiversity issues and concerns into regulations, processes, policies and programmes, and have indeed achieved positive results. However, it is also observed that there are still many challenges to overcome toward increasing the success rate of the practice of embedding biodiversity considerations into and across sectors. From what we have perceived, the lessons learned and, more importantly, the possible solutions to overcome challenges, have a wider application and can be useful to other subnational authorities.

Mainstreaming practices have, in practice, emerged as linked to global or national concerns on biodiversity loss, and are, therefore, connected to global goals and targets related to its sustainable use. From the experiences gathered on mainstreaming practices at the subnational level of government, it can be observed that national and international institutions could play a bigger role in supporting subnational actions regarding: capacity-building and training needs; opportunities to develop and strengthen partnerships; mechanisms to monitor its implementation and obstacles that hinder its integration.

The following conclusions were summarised around particular needs and conditions, or the lack thereof, for the mainstreaming practice at the subnational level of government; they appear to be intrinsically related and, in many cases, one depends on another. Thus, the same themes may be recapitulated in different approaches as a way of exposing their interdependence. Finally, each conclusion will be summarised around key determinants for successful biodiversity mainstreaming practice at the subnational level of government.

## NEEDS AND CONDITIONS FOR THE MAINSTREAMING PRACTICE AT THE SUBNATIONAL LEVEL

### CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

**There is a clear need for capacity development at the institutional and community level. Additionally, the lack of awareness on the value of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the economic and productive sector continues to be a shared worry.**

- It is necessary to empower the technical and administrative staff involved in the project's development and implementation, as well as in monitoring and evaluation, as a basic condition to improve mainstreaming biodiversity at the subnational level. Capacity-building activities should be continuous to keep people up to date on best practices related to the implementation of planned actions.
- It is necessary to build and develop capacities with local populations, to enable cooperation and participation on biodiversity projects at the local and subnational level. It is observed that when local communities are engaged in the implementation of the projects, their success rate increases. Additionally, increasing local capacities can also aid in the creation of knowledge and best practices related to a sustainable use of natural resources.
- Lack of awareness on the importance of ecosystem services and biodiversity within sectors, apart from the environmental, is a challenge that impacts all areas of the mainstreaming practice and can severely affect its outcomes. There is a need to include knowledge of ecosystem services into university curriculums as well as within the private sector.
- A platform for technical and knowledge exchange focused on the subnational experience of implementing biodiversity actions is a shared necessity for subnational governments across the globe.





## PARTNERSHIPS

**The intrinsic nature of the mainstreaming practice makes partnerships another key determinant of its success. In this regard, national governments and Parties to the Convention play a fundamental role, from the experiences assessed in this report.**

- There is a lack of technical, administrative and also political articulation that is, in some cases, an obstacle to the implementation and monitoring process.
- National-subnational alliances are among the principal elements for a comprehensive implementation of biodiversity targets and goals. There is a need to develop and, in some cases, strengthen partnerships between these two levels of government. Additionally, partnerships with local communities, including indigenous and traditional peoples also play a fundamental role and may, when successfully represented, improve project implementation and monitoring.
- Academia, NGOs and research institutions are hubs for technical development, information sharing, and knowledge creation that need stronger public support and recognition.
- Engaging the private sector is also a key element for the successful implementation of mainstreaming projects. Private sector stakeholders at a subnational scale are yet to be more actively involved. Their effective engagement continues to be strongly needed, particularly in light of the urgency for transformative change across economic systems.
- Multi-stakeholder platforms can play a role in developing a shared vision for any kind of mainstreaming biodiversity process can become a powerful means to integrate biodiversity at the subnational level of government.

## MONITORING AND EVALUATION MECHANISMS

**Appropriate monitoring and assessment methodologies are fundamental to ensure the effectiveness of biodiversity initiatives. Monitoring systems should be systematised to test the effectiveness of mainstreaming interventions at all levels, from the project level to mainstreaming strategies.**

There is a need to strengthen monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and to make a more effective use of the data and information they produce.

- Monitoring and data should better support learning and innovation not only at the subnational level but also at the community level.
- Community-based monitoring systems continue to be a necessity in most of the regions. Engaging the local communities in measuring, collecting and processing of information will increase the accountability and social ownership of biodiversity interventions.
- In some cases, there is a lack of institutional structures, which weakens the development of strong working groups.



Green Sea Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) swimming around Palawan. Credits Marcello Rabozzi, Pixabay.

## GOVERNANCE

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**Good governance and strong institutional leadership are determinant factors for mainstreaming success, and it encompasses all the above-mentioned processes. Governance is a complex process associated with participation, consensus, accountability, transparency, responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, inclusiveness and a pursuit of the rule of law , and good examples of it can be found at the subnational level of government.**

- There is a lack of vertical integration that makes it impossible to, in some cases, predict and anticipate the impacts of rapid urbanisation, extreme weather events, and invasive alien species, to name a few, on biodiversity.
- From a horizontal approach, there is a need for greater technical and administrative articulation between the various agencies that play a direct or indirect role on biodiversity.
- There is a need for better policy alignment at the subnational level of government. Biodiversity mainstreaming is still a newly-emerging paradigm that needs further consideration.
- There is a need for more effective engagement of local communities, including traditional peoples to strengthen good governance at the subnational level.

Given our analysis, we can summarise and conclude with the following key determinants of effective biodiversity mainstreaming at the subnational level of government, as a form of recommendation for a successful mainstreaming practice. We believe that with greater support, the subnational experience can positively influence the accomplishment of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. It is hoped that these conclusions help increase knowledge of the mainstreaming practice and that shine a light in its challenges and opportunities.

## KEY DETERMINANTS OF EFFECTIVE BIODIVERSITY MAINSTREAMING AT THE SUBNATIONAL LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT

### CAPACITY BUILDING

- I. Availability of science-based information, knowledge and resources to successfully build and develop capacities at the subnational level of government and with local communities.
- II. A strong link with international research institutions and financial mechanisms that recognise the unique role of subnational governments in integrating biodiversity considerations into different sectors.

### PARTNERSHIPS

- I. Effective communication with stakeholders to make the case for biodiversity and ensure their effective enrolment in project development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- II. Robust and stable governance structures for stakeholder engagement. Transparent information channels for civil society engagement.
- III. Knowledgeable and aware civil society.

### MONITORING

- I. Effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Strong stakeholder engagement in data collection.
- II. Adequate use of evaluation results and informed decision making.

### GOVERNANCE

- I. Democratic, transparent governance structures.
- II. Strong institutions and legitimate participation mechanisms for stakeholder engagement.
- III. Reliable communication channels and equal engagement opportunities for all stakeholders.



## ABOUT



Regions4 (formerly known as the nrg4SD) is a global network that solely represents regional governments (states, regions and provinces) before UN processes, European Union initiatives and global discussions in the fields of climate change, biodiversity and sustainable development. Regions4 was established in 2002 at the World Summit in Johannesburg and currently represents over 40 members from 20 countries in 4 continents. Through advocacy, cooperation and capacity building, Regions4 empowers regional governments to accelerate global action. For more information visit: [www.regions4.org](http://www.regions4.org)

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### ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF SUBNATIONAL GOVERNMENTS & BIODIVERSITY

The Advisory Committee on Subnational Governments and Biodiversity (AC SNG) is a permanent structure officially recognized by the CBD through Decision X/22 of COP 10 that aims at bringing the voice of regions to the biodiversity agenda. Regions4 (formerly the nrg4SD), together with the government of Quebec, coordinates the AC SNG. Its partners are the Regions4 Biodiversity Learning Platform, the Group of Leading Subnational Governments to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, the European Committee of the Regions and the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies. Among its current members are the subnational governments of Aichi, Andra Pradesh, Auvergne-Rhone-Alpes, Basque Country, Campeche, Catalonia, Fatick, Gangwon, Goias, Gossas, Lombardy, North Rhine Westphalia, Ontario, Palawan, Paraná, Québec, São Paulo, Sichuan, Wales and Walga.



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