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From Many Voices to One Strategy: How the DRC is bringing biodiversity into the heart of national decision-making

When the Democratic Republic of the Congo began updating its National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) in 2023, Daniel Mukubi knew that this time, the process had to be different. Following the adoption of the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF) in 2022, the DRC set out to align its national biodiversity targets and actions with the new global framework. For Daniel, who works at the Ministry of Environment, Sustainable Development and New Climate Economy, the question was simple: "How do we do that for Congo?"

Previous NBSAP processes had produced important strategies, but they had largely been driven by the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development. This time, Daniel and his colleagues wanted to take a different approach. "We decided to be inclusive and follow the Whole-of-Government and Whole-of-Society approach."

Bringing government and society to one table

For the Whole-of-Government approach, the process, led by the Ministry of Environment, brought together representatives from ministries responsible for agriculture, mining, fisheries, finance, economy, land management, national planning, gender and national affairs, among others. Alongside them, the Whole-of-Society approach brought in civil society, women, youth, academia, Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, the private sector and other stakeholders. The different actors were represented in a national Task Force responsible for coordinating the NBSAP update and 7th national report preparation. Working groups focused on specific topics, while consultations at national and provincial level gave stakeholders opportunities to contribute. For Daniel, this was one of the most striking aspects of the process: "Everyone had so many ideas, exchanged experiences and knowledge. It was so inspiring being together in this process, seeing the expertise of so many actors. We were working together as a family."

Bringing so many perspectives together also required a change in how biodiversity was understood. Many sectors had not traditionally seen biodiversity as part of their

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responsibilities. The process therefore focused on showing ministries and other stakeholders how biodiversity connects to their own work and why their involvement matters.

A dedicated facilitator helped guide this process. Jo Mulongoy, an international consultant leading the technical preparation of the NBSAP, brought extensive experience from the Convention on Biological Diversity process, including

supporting African countries during the negotiations of the GBF. His role was not simply to draft the document, but to help turn the many contributions into one coherent, nationally owned strategy. “Every key sector and stakeholder group needed to be able to recognise its role in the strategy and feel ownership of its implementation,” Jo explains. “Stakeholders were not merely asked to comment on a finished document. They were involved throughout the process, their perspectives were reflected in the strategy, and they could recognise their own roles and responsibilities in it.” The draft NBSAP became a common reference point around which discussions could take place, helping bring different perspectives together and ensuring that the strategy reflected both global commitments and national priorities.

For Daniel, the difference was tangible. Working within and across sectors meant that the final strategy could draw on a much broader range of knowledge. It also allowed the DRC to go beyond the global targets and identify additional priorities that reflected the country’s specific context. The updated NBSAP clearly identifies the sectors responsible for priority measures, turning biodiversity commitments into concrete responsibilities.

A strategy that reaches beyond biodiversity in the DRC

The process also produced effects beyond the NBSAP itself. Daniel describes the document as “one of the most important documents of the country” and says its influence is already extending into other areas of government and society. The Ministry of Fisheries and the Ministry of Agriculture, for example, are now revising their own strategies after identifying gaps through the NBSAP process. Academia is also updating curricula and research related to conservation. For Daniel, this shows that the process was about more than producing a document: “This update process will change many things for our country from many angles.”

The DRC completed the process in just two years, becoming one of the first among the 11 countries of Central Africa to submit its final NBSAP to the United Nations. The experience has attracted attention from other countries, which are now asking the DRC how it managed to bring so many actors together and complete the process so quickly.
The process was supported by the project *Strengthening National Implementation of Global Biodiversity Targets*, implemented by GIZ on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD). The project strengthened the Task Force, facilitated the engagement of the different sectors and worked closely with Jo Mulongoy who guided the process. It also helped create conditions needed for implementation, including capacity development, access to biodiversity data and knowledge, and the National Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Platform. GIZ also supported seven other countries in applying the Whole-of-Government and Whole-of-Society approaches to biodiversity action: Laos, Colombia, Peru, Brazil, Namibia, Madagascar and Indonesia, working in total with over 3000 civil society actors and 72 ministries.

The experience in the DRC is part of a wider effort to make biodiversity action more inclusive and nationally owned. Independent institutions and people developed a common understanding of biodiversity as a shared national asset, underpinning economic development, food security, climate resilience and people’s well-being. That sense of shared responsibility is now at the heart of the next phase. The strategy is complete, but its success will ultimately depend on whether the commitments made on paper translate into action across government and society. For Daniel, that future is not an abstract one. As he looks ahead to the future his five children will inherit, the work of protecting the DRC’s natural wealth takes on a deeply personal meaning: ensuring that the country’s biodiversity is understood, valued and protected not only for today’s generation, but for theirs as well.

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