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Mainstreaming Biodiversity in Development Cooperation

Lessons learned from donor agency
experience

Author information

This report was written by:
Steve Bass, IIED Associate, UK

Dilys Roe, IIED, UK

Olivia Wilson-Holt, Consultant, UK

About the project

In 2022 PBL Netherlands Environment Assessment Agency contracted IIED to undertake a review of biodiversity mainstreaming in development cooperation agencies. IIED has a long track record of work on biodiversity mainstreaming and environment mainstreaming more broadly. This study builds on that work, as well as drawing on insights from work by others. The report is based on a review of experiences of donor agencies in Canada, European Commission, France, Germany, Norway, Sweden, and UK. It was compiled through a literature review as well as key informant interviews with agency staff in a subset of these.

For more information about this report, contact:
dilys.roe@iied.org

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International Institute for Environment and Development
Third Floor, 235 High Holborn, London WC1V 7DN, UK
Tel: +44 (0)20 3463 7399
www.iied.org

 [@iied](https://twitter.com/iied)

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Summary

Biodiversity mainstreaming – from a development perspective – can be understood as “a process of getting biodiversity concerns – potentials, needs and risks – fully reflected in development policies, plans and activities in order to achieve sustainable outcomes for both biodiversity and development” (IIED and UNEP-WCMC 2017).

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, adopted by Parties to the CBD in December 2022, is the latest articulation by the global community of the importance of biodiversity mainstreaming, advocating a “whole of government and whole of society” approach.

Development cooperation agencies have a key role to play in this whole of society approach. This report reviews the effectiveness of recent development cooperation practice, to inform the Dutch Government’s approach to biodiversity mainstreaming in development cooperation.

Development cooperation agencies have long recognised the importance of biodiversity mainstreaming, exemplified by the *Policy Statement on Integrating Biodiversity and Associated Ecosystem Services* adopted by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) in 2010. Since then, there have been a number of shifts in approaches to mainstreaming:

- From promoting biodiversity in general to its integration in specific economic sectors and the machinery of government.
- From a focus on ‘do no harm’ biodiversity safeguards to intentions to ‘do more good’ or approaches broadly described as ‘nature-positive’
- From a dominance of technical cases for action to also stronger societal demand for action on biodiversity
- From ‘parking’ biodiversity as a long-term agenda to a recognition of crisis, loss and real-world urgency

From thinking about nature, climate and development as separate issues to a recognition of their interconnectedness and the “triple challenge” of tackling climate change and biodiversity loss to also benefit poor or marginalised groups (the focus of development cooperation) Development cooperation agencies today have diverse motivations for mainstreaming biodiversity. These include: responding to the best available science on biodiversity value and loss; fulfilling international biodiversity policy commitments; high-level political interest and/or public pressure; a need to meet growing biodiversity spending targets; and a desire to deliver better development outcomes.

Biodiversity mainstreaming is not a one-off activity but requires a long-term approach with a mix of strategies, tools and tactics. These include:

- Ensuring biodiversity is reflected clearly in donor agency internal policies and strategies – sometimes in the form of a standalone biodiversity policy, but more often integrated into broader climate and environment strategies or even into the overarching development strategy
- Screening projects, programmes and portfolios for biodiversity risks – and ideally also looking for opportunities to enhance biodiversity while delivering development priorities.
- Establishing some kind of technical support facility or help desk on biodiversity – either building capacity in-house to provide this or out-sourcing to external experts
- Building the biodiversity skills and knowledge of in-house staff – including recognising environmental experts as development professionals
- Collaborating with environment ministries in both donor and recipient countries on the allocation and programming of development assistance funds – reducing risks and ensuring co-benefits by integrating biodiversity
- Supporting biodiversity mainstreaming activities in development partner countries – including institutional capacity development, policy reform and integrated planning

- Leading, supporting and influencing other government departments that are involved in foreign policy – notably trade and investment.

Collectively OECD DAC members have met the commitment made at CBD CoP12 in 2014 to double biodiversity-related international financial flows to developing countries. Overall, however, biodiversity-related development assistance has remained relatively stable over time at 4% of total development assistance. At CoP15 the commitment to increase international biodiversity finance was re-stated in a Joint Donor Statement.

For many donors, biodiversity ODA is delivered through dedicated biodiversity funding programmes and these, coupled with clear spending targets, have often provided a strong incentive to mainstream biodiversity in sector work. Indeed, the proliferation of biodiversity funds has often been the strongest proximate driver of increased attention to biodiversity. In some cases, funding for biodiversity is provided by wider portfolios particularly for climate and, for many sectoral projects (e.g. in water and agriculture) it is often not clear if the delivery of biodiversity co-benefits is deliberate or a fortunate coincidence.

The OECD-DAC's biodiversity "Rio Marker" continues to be the main indicator by which ODA for biodiversity is measured and monitored. Beyond this Rio Marker, there are no commonly used biodiversity mainstreaming indicators. Different donors use different sets of indicators and they are often not biodiversity-specific, nor do they cover the full mainstreaming process. Nevertheless, there have been biodiversity mainstreaming initiatives that have explored process, outcome and impact indicators, some of which could be more routinely adopted by donors.

Four key recommendations are made to advance biodiversity mainstreaming in development cooperation:

1. *Align with the 2022 Global Biodiversity Framework and maximise synergies between it and the Paris Agreement.* This would mean: screening existing and new investments and interventions to ensure they do not undermine biodiversity; as well as proactively seeking opportunities to invest in biodiversity and livelihoods that both sustain it and are sustained by it; further increasing the levels of development assistance available for delivering on the GBF; while also ensuring aid flows for *other* purposes do not undermine it. It would also mean ensuring alignment *between* Paris and Kunming-Montreal so that the one doesn't undermine the other.
2. *Commit to "Nature Positive".* No single definition or metrics currently exist but the Joint Donor Statement includes some pointers. From a development perspective we would suggest that a principle on "people-positive" which addresses issues of equity, rights and justice, should be included in this description. The *Principles for Locally Led Adaptation*, if further elaborated to encompass nature as well as climate, could be useful for this purpose.
3. *Support biodiversity mainstreaming initiatives in partner countries.* This means providing policy support to help developing countries mainstream biodiversity across other sectors in much the same way as is happening for climate change through the Paris Agreement.
4. *Address remaining in-house constraints to biodiversity mainstreaming.* This includes demonstrating mainstreaming achievements and encouraging learning within and between development agencies.

1. Introduction

Biodiversity mainstreaming is a multi-layered and dynamic activity with many possible purposes. As early as 2002, recognising that many economic development sectors and activities can be drivers of biodiversity loss, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) asserted that Parties should “Integrate, as far as possible and as appropriate, the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity into relevant sectoral or cross-sectoral plans, programmes and policies.” The rationale for the CBD’s call was very much one-way – i.e. that biodiversity should be safeguarded from development. Over the years, however, the concept of biodiversity mainstreaming has expanded to recognise that a reciprocal approach is needed – biodiversity does need to be protected, but at the same time development priorities should also inform biodiversity plans and activities so that the potentials of biodiversity to deliver development benefits can be realised, and so that trade-offs between biodiversity and development can be anticipated and managed.

Reflecting this understanding, in 2017 a joint initiative of IIED and UNEP-WCMC described biodiversity mainstreaming as “a process of getting biodiversity concerns – potentials, needs and risks – fully reflected in development policies, plans and activities in order to achieve sustainable outcomes for both biodiversity and development. It is more than applying ‘safeguards’ to make sure development processes do no harm to biodiversity. It is also about recognising the potential of biodiversity to achieve desirable development outcomes.”¹

Box 1. Nature’s development benefits – illustrative facts and figures

- **Homes:** Over 800 million people live in tropical forests and savannahs in developing countries (FAO and UNEP 2020).
- **Wealth:** In low-income countries, natural capital is the most important component of national wealth — at 47 percent in 2014 (Lange et al., 2018).
- **Food:** Grassland ecosystems provide grazing lands for livestock that supports millions of people, especially poor, marginalised groups (Coppock et al., 2017; Parr et al., 2014).
- **Jobs:** Forests provide more than 86 million green jobs and support livelihoods for many more people (FAO and UNEP 2020). 116 million people work in capture fisheries in developing countries, of whom more than 90 percent work in small-scale fisheries, with women making up almost 50 percent (World Bank 2012).
- **Income:** Forest products provide around 20 percent of income for rural households in developing countries (Angelsen et al., 2014).
- **Health:** Traditional medicine (using wild plants and animals) provides primary health care for up to 85% of the population in some African countries (Antwi-Baffour et al., 2014).

Adapted from Roe et al 2021

Reciprocal mainstreaming is particularly important in the context of development cooperation – the primary objective of which, as the term suggests, is development not conservation. The CBD itself notes that the overriding priority of developing countries is poverty reduction rather than biodiversity conservation. But the case must also be made clear of how the two are mutually dependent in any one context. Rural populations in poor countries rely disproportionately on local ecosystems and natural

¹ The CBD now more fully recognises the links between biodiversity and wider human endeavour in its [definition of biodiversity mainstreaming](#): “ensuring that biodiversity, and the services it provides, are appropriately and adequately factored into policies and practices that rely and have an impact on it”.

resources to meet essential, day-to-day livelihood and health needs. And “development” – certainly development that is sustainable – is underpinned by biodiversity and ecosystem services.

A depiction of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a “wedding cake” where the environmental SDGs underpin the social and economic SDGs depicts this relationship (Figure 1). The loss of biodiversity removes that underpinning, posing risks to hard-won development gains by compromising agricultural adaptive capacity, by exacerbating natural disasters, by reducing carbon storage, by marginalising biodiversity-dependent livelihoods and knowledge systems, or by damaging important global and local heritage (Roe *et al* 2019).

It is therefore imperative that biodiversity should be mainstreamed into development sectors in order to secure its contribution. The implication of this is that biodiversity mainstreaming will not solely be a technical affair, or even an economic affair, but also a cultural and deeply political one. Each mainstreaming context will differ institutionally, and not just in terms of species, etc. How mainstreaming is carried out will tend to reflect progress in how society – or decision-making elites – treat the relationship between people and nature. While there has been a general shift from *plundering* nature, to *stewardship* of nature, to understanding we are *part of nature* and need to thrive with it, not all actors have made that transition. Like issues of gender and equity, biodiversity is as much as development issue as an environmental one.

The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, adopted by Parties to the CBD in December 2022, continues to emphasise the importance of biodiversity mainstreaming. A “whole of government and whole of society” approach is advocated for implementation noting that “*Its success requires political will and recognition at the highest level of government, and relies on action and cooperation by all levels of government and by all actors of society.*” Development cooperation agencies have a key role to play in this – since action to support mainstreaming in developing countries depends not just on developing country domestic policy, but also on the incentives and disincentives for mainstreaming signalled by international aid, foreign relations, investment and trade policy. We can expect a considerable emphasis from 2023 on “Kunming-Montreal” alignment, just as we have had for “Paris alignment” and for outcomes of subsequent climate CoPs.

This report is intended to help inform the Dutch government (and other interested countries’) to improve their approach to biodiversity mainstreaming in development cooperation. Based on literature review and consultations with key informants, it explores the experiences of a number of OECD donor agencies and identifies key lessons that could help inform policy and practice.

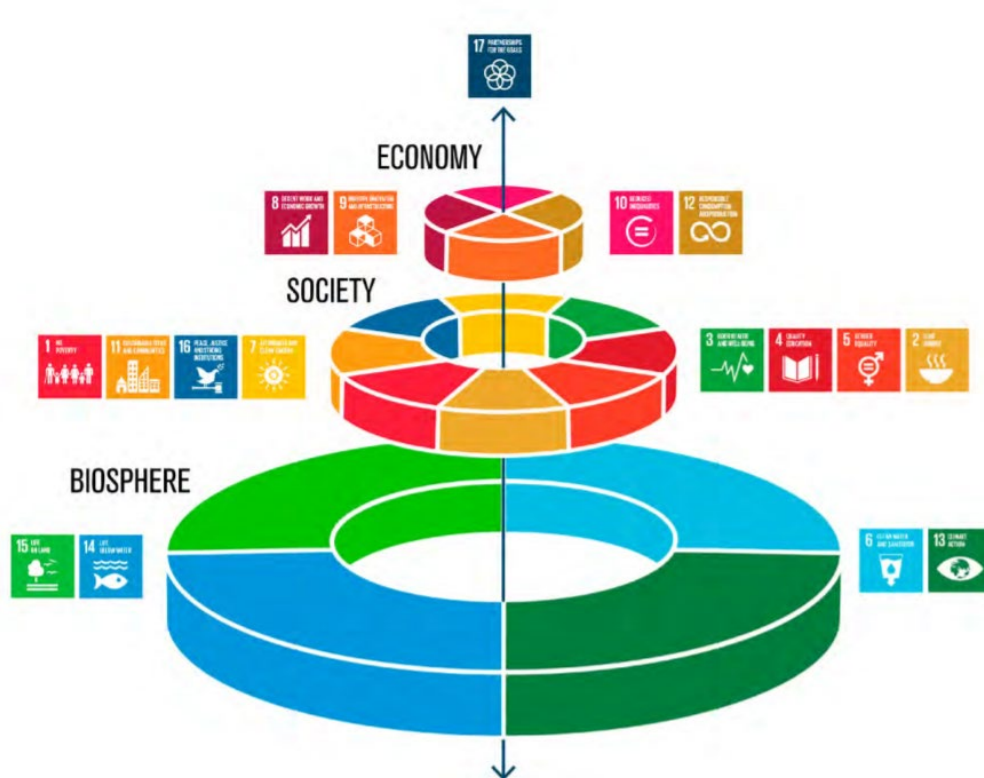


Figure 1: Biodiversity and ecosystem services underpin the delivery of the SDGs. Source: Stockholm Resilience Centre. <https://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/research-news/2016-06-14-the-sdgs-wedding-cake.html>

How this report was compiled

This report was compiled in response to a Terms of Reference issued by PBL – Netherlands Environment Assessment Agency. The study sought to answer the following key questions:

- What rationale do donors have for mainstreaming biodiversity in development cooperation?
- What tools, strategies, policies and approaches are applied to mainstream biodiversity in development cooperation and how are synergies ensured or trade-offs prevented with other domains of foreign policy?
- How has mainstreaming worked in practice?
- What MEL approaches and indicators have been applied to monitor results and enhance learning?

IIED has a long track record of work on biodiversity mainstreaming and environment mainstreaming more broadly. This has included facilitating a peer learning process on DAC member approaches to environment mainstreaming – resulting in the OECD report *Greening Development Co-operation: lessons from the OECD Development Assistance Committee* (2019).

This study builds on that work, as well as drawing on insights from the work of OECD, CBD, GEF, EC, and others. It is based on a literature review of experiences of donor agencies in Canada, European Commission, France, Germany, Norway, Sweden, and UK. To supplement the literature review, key informant interviews were carried out with relevant staff from the development cooperation agencies of a subset of these – UK, Sweden and European Commission, countries where key contacts were known and available for interview within the study period. IIED would like to thank all who gave time for interviews and provided their insights into mainstreaming approaches and lessons.

2. Why do donors mainstream biodiversity in development cooperation?

2.1 International biodiversity science consensus and policy commitments

Donor agencies have long recognised the importance of biodiversity mainstreaming. In 2010, the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) adopted a *Policy Statement on Integrating Biodiversity and Associated Ecosystem Services*. This identified two priorities for better biodiversity mainstreaming: supporting partner countries; and implementing necessary changes in development co-operation agencies' work (OECD DAC, 2010).

At the 12th Conference of the Parties (CoP) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Korea in 2014, Parties adopted a commitment to double biodiversity-related international finance flows to developing countries by 2015 (against average annual biodiversity funding over the years 2006-10), and to at least maintain this level until 2020.

CBD CoP13 in 2016 then adopted the *Cancun Declaration on Mainstreaming the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity for Well-being*. This committed Parties to mainstream biodiversity across all sectors and at all levels of government – both in domestic policy but also international policy, including development assistance policy.

Just as the Climate CoPs reflected seriously on the scientific evidence concerning climate change through the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, growing scientific consensus on biodiversity values and threats has helped to drive international biodiversity policy commitments. The 2005 *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment* - involving 1360 scientists worldwide - was the first global assessment of the consequences of changes in ecosystems and biodiversity for human well-being, concluding that changes due to human activities were more rapid in the past 50 years than at any time in human history, increasing the risks of abrupt and irreversible changes. It offered a state-of-the-art scientific basis for action on conservation and sustainable use. The threat of 'tipping points' in biodiversity collapse and how these link to social and economic systems failures was highlighted by interdisciplinary research on *nine 'planetary boundaries'*. One of these boundaries is 'loss of biosphere integrity (biodiversity loss and extinctions)' (Rockstrom *et al* 2009).

Most recently, the *Inter-governmental Science – Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)*, established in response to growing threats to biodiversity, made a ground-breaking global assessment on the state of the world's ecosystems. Released in 2019, this appears to have succeeded where previous efforts have failed in drawing more political attention to biodiversity loss. If not yet elevating biodiversity to the same level of urgency as climate change, this report has attracted widespread media and public attention. In turn, these have increased demands on governments to take action. Biodiversity is thus rising up the political agenda, perhaps exemplified by the *Leaders Pledge for Nature* agreed at the UN Biodiversity Summit in 2020. With over 90 endorsing countries (including the Netherlands) the Leaders Pledge is essentially a manifesto for biodiversity mainstreaming both domestically and internationally and not just in development cooperation policy but also in trade and investment policy including:

- putting “biodiversity, climate and the environment as a whole” at the heart of national and international development and cooperation
- mainstreaming biodiversity into relevant sectoral and cross-sectoral policies and into key policy forums including the G7 and G20, “ensuring that across the whole of government, policies, decisions and investments account for the value of nature and biodiversity....”.
- aligning financial flows to take into account the value of nature and biodiversity
- mobilising funding from all sources, public and private
- transitioning to sustainable patterns of production and consumption and sustainable food systems

The G7 2030 Nature Compact, agreed in 2021, also includes a clear focus on biodiversity mainstreaming, with an objective to “ensure that our international development assistance does no harm to nature and delivers positive outcomes overall for people, climate and nature” as well as encouraging all development banks and other international finance institutions to “embed nature into their analysis, policy dialogue and operations” (G7, 2021)

The Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) is thus the latest international policy framework to emphasise biodiversity mainstreaming. Target 14 directs Parties to:

“Ensure the full integration of biodiversity and its multiple values into policies, regulations, planning and development processes, poverty eradication strategies, strategic environmental assessments, environmental impact assessments and, as appropriate, national accounting, within and across all levels of government and across all sectors, in particular those with significant impacts on biodiversity, progressively aligning all relevant public and private activities, fiscal and financial flows with the goals and targets of this framework.”

Of specific relevance to development cooperation agencies, Target 19 (a) calls for an increase in *“total biodiversity related international financial resources from developed countries, including official development assistance..... to at least US\$ 20 billion per year by 2025, and to at least US\$ 30 billion per year by 2030.”*

In summary, the trends in treatment of biodiversity are both more urgent and more promising than in 2010 when the OECD had urged greater attention to biodiversity in development cooperation. There has been a general shift:

- From rather general principles (2010); to horizontal integration across sectors and vertical integration across geographies (2016); to also embedding in the finance, investment, trade, market and machinery of government (today).
- From a focus on ‘do no harm’ safeguards to intentions to ‘do more good’ intentions of various types e.g. ‘nature-positive’
- From a technical case for action to also societal concern and demand for action – David Attenborough documentaries and Extinction Rebellion alike have mobilised many people
- From ‘parking’ biodiversity as a long-term agenda to its framing in terms of crisis, loss and real-world urgency, given imminent tipping points
- From thinking about nature, climate and development as separate issue to a recognition of their interconnectedness and the “triple challenge” of tackling climate change and biodiversity loss to also benefit poor or marginalised groups (the usual intended beneficiaries of development assistance)

2.2 Political leadership

In some cases, beyond these global biodiversity commitments there may be specific biodiversity demands made by governments to their development cooperation agencies. In Sweden for example, in 2020 the government issued an “Assignment” to Sida – the Swedish development cooperation agency - laying out tasks that would result in Sida strengthening and embedding its approach to biodiversity and ecosystems throughout its operations during 2020-2023 (see Sweden Snapshot box).

In the UK, personal interest of Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Minister Zac Goldsmith was instrumental in UK leadership of the Leaders Pledge for Nature in 2020 and in increasing commitment to nature within the UK ODA budget.² In the Government Response to The Economics of Biodiversity:

² Personal observation from authors’ engagement with UK govt processes

The Dasgupta Review³ (HM Treasury, 2021), the UK government committed to ensuring that all new UK bilateral aid spending does no harm to nature. It also made a positive commitment in the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy⁴ (HM Government, 2021) to investing in nature and a nature-positive economy. This relatively recent government interest in nature is also strongly reflected in the UK public and media – something which reinforces the political pressure to be seen to be doing something about biodiversity – as well as climate change.

2.3 Financial drivers

A strong political mandate for biodiversity mainstreaming is often accompanied by an increased allocation of ODA and associated spending targets. A key informant in the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO) highlighted that the 2021 doubling of UK aid allocated to climate and environment through its International Climate Finance (ICF) included £3 billion specifically ear-marked for “nature”. This has driven officials to specifically target biodiversity. Similarly, a key informant interview with the EU highlighted that spending targets have been a key driver for mainstreaming. Proven to be effective in the recent past for climate, they are now including biodiversity. In 2021, for example, an EU “State of the Union” address included a pledge to double spending on biodiversity in developing countries – a doubling that was also reflected in Sida’s plans.

2.4 Development drivers

There is increasing recognition amongst donors that, as well as being good for nature, mainstreaming biodiversity into development cooperation can actually deliver better on development objectives and/or prevent the erosion of already achieved development gains for example in food security, health, local economic development (Roe et al., 2019). The EU notes that the aim of mainstreaming is to bring about real change in internal EU development cooperation procedures and investments, in support of improvements in developing country processes and institutions, that ultimately lead to better outcomes on the ground. These include analysing biodiversity data and engaging Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPs&LCs) with biodiversity knowledge so as to deliver livelihood benefits e.g. in agriculture and health.

Indeed, the more that development cooperation staff involve IPs&LCs, the more biodiversity risks and potentials are highlighted. Eight [principles for locally led adaptation](#) have been developed to help ensure that local communities are empowered to lead sustainable and effective adaptation to climate change at the local level. Many donor agencies have signed up to these including Danida, Sida, USAID and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Although developed in the context of climate change adaptation, such principles equally apply to biodiversity investments.

Beyond this, the UK and EC also report increasing interest in biodiversity among 'mainstream' development professionals who are keen to explore the effectiveness and efficiency gains of nature-based solutions, such as the 'green infrastructure' provided by wetland flood management over 'grey' solutions based on concrete, steel and fossil fuels.

3

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1002824/Dasgupta_Response_web_July.pdf

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[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/975077/Global_Britain_in_a_Compulsive_Age- the Integrated Review of Security Defence Development and Foreign Policy.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/975077/Global_Britain_in_a_Compulsive_Age-_the_Integrated_Review_of_Security_Defence_Development_and_Foreign_Policy.pdf)

Snapshot: Biodiversity in UK Development Cooperation

Background: The UK's Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) is responsible for the oversight of all ODA, even that which goes through other government departments in a drive to improve coordination. The FCDO manages over 70% of the UK ODA budget with 8% managed by Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), 8% by the Home Office and the remainder spread across a variety of other departments including the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

In 2021, just over 6% of total ODA was allocated to the environment with 195 active programmes of which 148 programmes are implemented by FCDO, 24 by BEIS, 22 by DEFRA and 1 by the Ministry of Defence.⁵

Biodiversity priorities: There is no specific biodiversity/environment/nature strategy but the Strategy for International Development, updated in May 2022, includes a priority to “take forward UK leadership on climate change, nature and global health” and “put the UK commitments made during the UK’s Presidency of G7 and COP26.... at the core of its international development work”.⁶ Furthermore, the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy made tackling climate change and biodiversity loss the UK government’s number one international priority.⁷ Nevertheless, a review by the Independent Commission on Aid Impact (ICAI) found that the UK lacks a clear overall strategy to guide its efforts on deforestation and biodiversity loss.⁸ The FCDO is currently planning an internal Nature Facility (helpdesk) with IIED support.

Biodiversity funding: In 2019/20, UK funding for international biodiversity totalled £175 million. This figure equates to a real-term increase of 91% since the time series began in 2001/02 and 14% in the latest year for which data have been compiled, and a real-term decrease of 16% over the last five years. Annual changes in this measure are influenced greatly by the irregular nature of (i) contributions to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and (ii) other Official Development Assistance (ODA) funding.⁹ In 2019, the UK Prime Minister committed to double International Climate Finance (ICF) contribution to at least £11.6 billion between 2021-2026, including investing at least £3 billion of ICF in development solutions that protect and restore nature.

⁵ <https://devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk/sector/14/projects>

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-governments-strategy-for-international-development>

⁷

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/975077/Global Britain in a Competitive Age- the Integrated Review of Security Defence Development and Foreign Policy.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/975077/Global_Britain_in_a_Competitive_Age_-_the_Integrated_Review_of_Security_Defence_Development_and_Foreign_Policy.pdf)

⁸ <https://icai.independent.gov.uk/html-version/international-climate-finance-uk-aid-for-halting-deforestation-and-preventing-irreversible-biodiversity-loss-2/#section-0>

⁹ [https://incc.gov.uk/our-work/ukbi-e2-biodiversity-expenditure/#:~:text=In%202019%2F20%2C%20UK%20public.five%20years%20\(Figure%20E2ii\)](https://incc.gov.uk/our-work/ukbi-e2-biodiversity-expenditure/#:~:text=In%202019%2F20%2C%20UK%20public.five%20years%20(Figure%20E2ii))

3. What tools and approaches are used to mainstream biodiversity?

From the perspective of development cooperation, biodiversity mainstreaming requires:

- A focus on both a country's *development priorities and plans* and its environment and *biodiversity priorities and plans*, with a deep understanding of their links
- Ensuring both that development programming does not have a negative effect on biodiversity (*“do no harm”*) and seeking opportunities where development programming can make positive gains for biodiversity (*“do more good”*)
- Ensuring that biodiversity-linked programming does not have a negative effect on people and that *“nature positive”* means not just good for nature but *good for people too*
- Action both *within the donor country* (including setting a budget for biodiversity-related ODA, deciding the programming focus on biodiversity, and ensuring policy coherence with other interventions like trade and investment policy) and also *in the partner country* (including financing, policy and institutional support and capacity development).
- Prioritising both *scientific and economic information* on the state and trends of biodiversity and its relationship with development, and means for biodiversity-dependent/impacted *stakeholders to engage* in analysis, dialogue and decision-making
- Development cooperation support through both *bilateral* programming but also through *multilateral* investments, notably the Global Environment Facility (GEF) which remains the key financial mechanism for supporting implementation of the CBD.

These requirements add up to a range of balancing acts between biodiversity and developmental objectives. Thus biodiversity mainstreaming is not best treated as a one-way and one-off ‘campaign’ *pushing* biodiversity but as a reciprocal and continuing activity that *integrates* biodiversity and development equally, and that responds to learning and changed contexts. The following sections highlight some of the approaches that have been used to date – noting most development cooperation agencies use a mixture of different approaches.

3.1 Getting the internal policy framework right

Most donor agencies do not have a dedicated biodiversity policy or strategy – instead they include biodiversity as one element of a broader climate and/or environment policy. The OECD notes that this can help biodiversity mainstreaming since a stand-alone biodiversity strategy may enforce silo thinking – unless biodiversity has already been well mainstreamed (OECD, 2018). Interviewees noted that, initially at least, biodiversity may be welcomed more warmly through the ‘climate door’ or the ‘gender’ door than it would be if there were as dedicated biodiversity entry point. Sweden, for example, has a Climate and Environment Policy (May 2022) which outlines three strategic areas that Sida will support: 1) Climate adaptation and mitigation; 2) Sustainable use, restoration and conservation of forest, land, water and marine resources (i.e. effectively biodiversity); and 3) Reduction of air, soil and water pollution.¹⁰ Norway similarly bundles climate and environment together as one of five main strategic priorities of Norwegian development assistance¹¹ (Norad, 2021).

France is one country that *does* have a specific biodiversity strategy. The Agence Française de Développement (AFD) clearly highlights biodiversity as one of its 20 priority intervention sectors and notes that “AFD Group is committed to fostering nature-positive development”. In 2019 it developed a

¹⁰ https://cdn.sida.se/app/uploads/2022/05/30135810/10206291_Sida_Climate_and_Environment_Policy_may-2022_ENG_web.pdf

¹¹ <https://www.norad.no/globalassets/publikasjoner/publikasjoner-2021/norads-strategy-towards-2030.pdf>

biodiversity road map with two main targets: (i) to increase AFD's finance for biodiversity to EUR 1 billion by 2025; and (ii) to ensure that 30% of its climate finance is nature positive¹² (AFD, 2021).

Other agencies have clear statements on biodiversity and/or flagship biodiversity initiatives. In the EU, for example, the *European Consensus on Development* which guides development co-operation activities includes an objective of integrating environment and climate. But there is also an EU Biodiversity Strategy which, while being predominantly internally focussed, includes a strong international dimension. There are also programmes that aim to increase the influence of the European Green Deal in supporting e.g. circular economies and 'bioeconomies' in development countries through programmes such as NaturAfrica and the Green Economy Coalition's national dialogues.

German Development Cooperation is guided by BMZ's Development Policy 2030 Strategy¹³ which recognises climate change, the destruction of the environment, and growing resource scarcity among the main challenges for international development¹⁴. While not explicit within this policy, it has for many years clearly documented its specific biodiversity objectives. Its most recent, '*Biological diversity – our common responsibility*' (2021),¹⁵ outlines Germany's comprehensive biodiversity framework up to 2030, with strong targets and goals as well as effective implementation mechanisms. These include:

- Rights – respecting human rights and in particular the rights of indigenous peoples in the context of nature conservation measures
- Consent – making the principle of Free Prior Informed Consent mandatory.
- Consumption – Addressing the drivers of biodiversity loss such as agriculture, fisheries and forestry, shifting our consumption patterns towards more sustainability and making global supply chains sustainable.
- Trade – ensuring that, from 2030 onwards, all trade in and use of wildlife on land, in freshwater habitats, and in the oceans is exclusively pursued in ways that are legal and sustainable.
- Institutionalisation – integrating biodiversity goals into sector policies, sector planning, and financing instruments for consistent public and private sector action, plus stronger integration of natural threats into financial management.

In the UK, despite strong political interest in recent years, there is no specific development cooperation policy on biodiversity, nor on the environment or climate more broadly. Instead, the UK has one overarching strategy - *UK Government's Strategy for International Development*¹⁶ - which was updated in May 2022. One of the four priorities of the strategy is now to "take forward UK leadership on climate change, *nature* and global health" (our emphasis). A recent report by the UK's Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) noted, however, that the lack of a clear strategy to guide efforts on deforestation and biodiversity loss meant that individual scattered contributions lacked the combined impact that might have resulted from a clearer strategic focus¹⁷ (ICAI, 2021). Our consultations also revealed constraints due to:

- Environmental mainstreaming relying too much on expert (FCDO internal) environment advisers and formal procedures to keep it alive, rather than creating demand and inspiring 'mainstream' players in FCDO
- Lack of oversight and monitoring of the diverse mainstreaming approaches applied; and the lack of a single biodiversity metric that would make biodiversity targets effective, of the type that climate change has in 'tonnes of CO₂'
- Dominance of economists and economic paradigms in setting the prevailing aid paradigm, which still do not see the relevance of biodiversity

¹² <https://www.afd.fr/en/ressources/biodiversity-activity-report-2021>

¹³ <https://www.bmz.de/resource/blob/23770/71cf4bb9fee375d369a42c1abf29b64d/strategiepapier452-10-2018-data.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://www.bmz.de/resource/blob/23770/71cf4bb9fee375d369a42c1abf29b64d/strategiepapier452-10-2018-data.pdf>

¹⁵ <https://www.bmz.de/resource/blob/96212/6332e37a40db965edb7497b6302d3591/factsheet-biological-diversity-en-data.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-governments-strategy-for-international-development>

¹⁷ <https://icai.independent.gov.uk/review/halting-deforestation-and-preventing-irreversible-biodiversity-loss/review/>

- Excessive policy churn, which reduces the potential for learning and consistency over the kinds of time period that are meaningful for biodiversity change.

Arguably, however, this diversity of approaches has also meant that the UK has usefully avoided a single-issue or “magic bullet” approach to biodiversity which could generate useful lessons for a more focussed strategy in the future.

3.2 Screening for biodiversity risks

As well as prioritising investment in biodiversity as a development cooperation strategy, many donor agencies screen investments against biodiversity risks. Sometimes this screening is biodiversity-specific, but in most cases biodiversity may or may not be considered as part of a wider climate and environment risk screening or safeguarding process. For example, the Canadian development agency CIDA has an Environmental Integration Process (EIP) which includes a screening process applied to all of its development assistance initiatives.¹⁸ Similarly, Sida conducts environmental assessments across its portfolio to screen for potential negative and positive impacts on biodiversity.¹⁹ Sida’s “[Green Toolbox](#)” contains tools and documents to support the assessment and integration of the environment and climate change issues in Sida’s operations. It includes guides for partners as well as a step-by-step guide for environmental integration, tools such as learning briefs and information on linkages with other Sida perspectives and sectors.²⁰

The UK FCDO has a “Programme Operating Framework (PrOF)” which provides the mandatory rules and guiding principles for implementing FCDO programmes and projects. One rule is that all new programmes (and the projects, interventions or events within them) must align with the Paris Agreement and must consider how they will impact climate change and biodiversity loss, with mitigation measures identified where necessary.²¹ A “Climate and Environment PrOF Guide” provides further details and highlights the environmental risks and opportunities to land, water and air that must also be considered for “nature-proofing and environmental protection”. The five categories of environmental impacts to consider include waste efficiency, pollution, land degradation, water resources, and biodiversity.

Generally, screening procedures are carried out by the development agency but sometimes also by grant recipients. For example, all grant recipients of Norwegian development assistance must assess potential negative effects of the projects and programmes on the climate and the environment and implement relevant mitigating measures.²²

In most cases, the screening process is intended to assess risks of a development intervention on the environment (or occasionally specifically on biodiversity) – i.e., a “do no harm” safeguarding approach. In other cases, the screening also checks if the development intervention is itself at risk from environmental degradation. For example, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation’s Climate, Environment and Disaster Risk Reduction Integration Guidance (CEDRIG) is intended to assess whether a development activity poses a risk to environment, and also whether the activity is at risk from environmental degradation and climate variability (OECD, 2018).

Other approaches offer different advantages in opening doors to biodiversity. For example, multi-dimensional poverty assessment mechanisms that include cross-cutting criteria such as environment (if not yet biodiversity) in their criteria for poverty and/or wellbeing, are used by Sida. Recent risk assessment processes include business, finance and insurance innovations that highlight both biodiversity risk and biodiversity as a means of reducing other risks.

¹⁸ https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/funding-financement/environmental_integration_process-processus_integration_environnement.aspx?lang=eng

¹⁹ https://cdn.sida.se/app/uploads/2022/07/14103843/Guide_How-to_conduct_an_environmental_assessment_webb.pdf

²⁰ <https://www.sida.se/en/for-partners/methods-materials/green-toolbox>

²¹ FCDO Programme Operating Framework - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

²² <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/ud/grants/id620650/>

3.3 Mainstreaming facilities and helpdesks

A number of development agencies have some kind of facility or helpdesk to assist with biodiversity mainstreaming. These may be in-house or out-sourced. Sida has an out-sourced Helpdesk for Environment and Climate Change. Contracted to two universities, it provides advice and guidance to help Sida's staff integrate environmental considerations at policy, programme and project levels. The Helpdesk provides on-demand support including strategic guidance on environmental integration for policies, programmes and projects; analyses such as country portfolio assessments from a biodiversity/climate/environment point of view; information material such as country background papers on the state of biodiversity; facilitation and dialogue support for interacting with biodiversity stakeholders; help in developing country, regional and thematic strategies that integrate biodiversity; and support to develop bespoke tools and methods for environmental integration.²³

The EC has a technical assistance facility (the Environment and Climate Change Mainstreaming Facility, now known as the “Greening Facility”), which has been operational since 2015.²⁴ This offers remote and on-site assistance to EU staff and national partners for integrating environment and climate change into all phases of the cycle of operations:

- Raising awareness – engaging with stakeholders and exchange good practices on mainstreaming.
- Building capacities – organising training courses on greening EU development cooperation, greening national development, and related themes
- Reviewing Action Documents for the integration of environmental aspects
- Development of tools and methodological support for their implementation – studies, action documents, guidelines, and sector notes
- Monitoring and evaluation including financial tracking of EU cooperation in environment.

There is also an EU facility associated with its flagship Biodiversity 4 Life Initiative (see EU Snapshot box) which ran from 2014 to 2020. The B4Life Facility was set up in September 2015 to provide technical assistance to staff in the Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA, formerly DG DEVCO), to EU Delegations, and also to government officials in developing countries. It responds to requests for support via its in-house experts or via short-term external expertise. The facility aimed to:

- Increase the quality and coherence of programmes and projects targeting ecosystems, biodiversity and climate change
- Improve the visibility of these actions
- Facilitate the sharing of knowledge, to raise understanding of the fundamental links between healthy ecosystems, biodiversity conservation, and development

The B4Life Facility is due to end in 2023. A future phase will be coordinated with the work of the Greening Facility to better support mainstreaming across sectors – with more support available for delegations to do this.

The UK FCDO currently has an outsourced Climate Mainstreaming Facility and is in the process of establishing a similarly outsourced Nature Facility (the latter being developed with IIED support). The Nature Facility is intended to support FCDO staff at headquarters and in country offices to screen for biodiversity risks in planned interventions (do no harm) but also to explore opportunities for nature positive investments (do good) including nature-based solutions.

²³ <https://sidaenvironmenthelpdesk.se/>

²⁴ <https://www.switchtorgreen.eu/mainstreaming-facility/>

These facilities/help desks have tended to be used by in-house advisers. For Sida's Helpdesk, 40% of clients have an environment background and/or role, the Helpdesk helping them to access more specialist technical advice and information on recent innovations. However, it is increasingly the case that non-environment advisers and country offices are using it.

While some help desks have a demand-driven mandate, in practice their successes tend to be due to their taking a strategic balance between demand-driven versus supply-push activities. They have all needed at least to raise interest e.g. through sector briefings and webinars, and in some case to create demand behind the scenes. One interviewee suggested they would not have got far by waiting for demand ('people don't know what they need to know') so the tactic has been to anticipate themes and moments of potential demand.

3.4 Building development agency staff capacity

Some development agencies have sought to up-skill staff on biodiversity issues and/or to provide biodiversity focal points within the agency. AFD, for example, has a "Green Task Force" which brings together a network of biodiversity focal points at headquarters and at country and regional offices and acts as a community of practice for biodiversity mainstreaming. In Germany, GIZ, a state-owned technical assistance agency which operates under the political supervision of the aid ministry BMZ, provides consulting services to BMZ's sectoral divisions through its 'sector initiatives'.²⁵ In the UK, FCDO has a cadre of professional Climate and Environment Advisors with a "Head of Profession" responsible for ensuring technical quality standards and continuous professional development. As well as professional environment staff including biodiversity officers, Sida maintains an environment network for all staff with an interest in environment.

3.5 Involving environment ministries in development cooperation

In some countries, a proportion of ODA is managed by the environment ministry. In the UK, the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) manages a portion of the International Climate Fund (ICF) and administers various international biodiversity grant schemes including the Darwin Initiative, the Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, the Biodiverse Landscapes Fund and the Global Centre for Biodiversity and Climate. Similarly in Germany, until 2022 the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) controlled about 20% of the country's biodiversity ODA. Notably, it administered the International Climate Initiative (IKI) which finances climate and biodiversity projects (now administered by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK) in association with the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV).²⁶

3.6 In country biodiversity mainstreaming activities

Some development co-operation agencies support developing countries to create and strengthen their institutions and capacity for the achievement of national and subnational biodiversity priorities. Examples include:

- Germany has funded an initiative (implemented by GIZ) to support the Peruvian government to create a legal and institutional landscape for mainstreaming including developing its National Environmental Action Plan 2010-2021.
- The UK, funded through its Darwin Initiative, and Germany have supported an initiative by IIED and UNEP-WCMC to build the capacity of eight African countries to develop more effective National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs). This revolved around a learning-

²⁵ <https://donortracker.org/country/germany>

²⁶ <https://www.bmz.de/resource/blob/96212/6332e37a40db965edb7497b6302d3591/factsheet-biological-diversity-en-data.pdf>

and-leadership group involving biodiversity, finance and development actors from each country (See Box 2).

- The EU has been a pioneering and patient supporter of four programmes for in-country mainstreaming: the UNDP-UN Environment Poverty Environment Initiative and its follow-up programme Poverty Environment Action for the SDGs²⁷ (PEA), the Global Climate Change Alliance Plus initiative²⁸ (GCCA+), the Green Economy Coalition²⁹ (GEC) and the Switch to Green Flagship³⁰ initiative. All four have been going for over a decade, resulting in strengthened capacity in-country to integrate biodiversity issues, some institutional reform, increased finance flows, greater societal demand and support for biodiversity in development, and early changes in sustainable development outcomes.

In addition, beyond the activities of bilateral agencies themselves, they have also supported the World Bank's Wealth Accounting and the Valuation of Ecosystem Services (WAVES) programme to help partner countries develop biodiversity accounts within natural capital accounts; and the UNDP Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN), to assist countries in conducting biodiversity expenditure reviews and finance needs assessments (OECD, 2018).

²⁷ <https://www.unep.org/regions/asia-and-pacific/regional-initiatives/poverty-environment-action-sustainable-development>

²⁸ <https://www.gcca.eu/>

²⁹ <https://www.greenecomycoalition.org/>

³⁰ <https://www.switchtogreen.eu/home/>

Box 2. Lessons from the African Leadership Group on Biodiversity Mainstreaming

The African Leadership Group on Biodiversity Mainstreaming has helped members across eight countries to successfully mainstream biodiversity in different ways, as well as to ‘development-proof’ their NBSAPs. Discussion among group members, particularly at the ALG’s annual meetings, revealed several important characteristics that could be replicated:

- **Inclusion** – Participation of people from biodiversity, finance and development authorities as ‘co-equals’ in the group; also deliberately bringing in those from civil society and business.
- **Recognition** – Group members being seen as ‘mainstreaming champions’, whether they be from biodiversity or development sectors, from authorities or other stakeholders.
- **Shared voice** – Co-production and co-promotion of constructive narratives and principles for integrating biodiversity and development – in the ALG’s case, annual declarations on biodiversity mainstreaming at the CBD CoPs.
- **Focus** – Group members taking a lead in defining and identifying priority mainstreaming entry points, targets and implementation plans for mainstreaming.
- **Group dynamic** – Informal nature and relatively small size of the group so that they can get to know one another; plus the idea of all group members being champions.
- **Peer approach** – Enabling group members both to learn from one another in a ‘safe space’ but also be motivated to compare well with colleagues (i.e. peer pressure).
- **Purposive meetings** – Face-to-face meetings and workshops to share mainstreaming progress made, lessons learned, challenges and develop solutions.
- **Demand-driven tools** – Co-development, testing and implementing tools and guides to meet country mainstreaming capacity needs.
- **Technical and financial facilitation** – For the ALG, this was provided by IIED and UNEP-WCMC, enabling activities to take place in spite of ALG members’ busy schedules and providing an independent means for cross-country lesson learning and guidance development.

Source: Musasa, 2016 (cited in IIED and UNEP-WCMC, 2017)

3.7 Beyond development assistance policy

Biodiversity mainstreaming not only means ensuring that biodiversity risks and opportunities are taken into consideration in development cooperation policy and programming. It also means ensuring that the other international policies of donor countries – including international environmental policy, trade, finance and investment policy, and so on – are not undermining biodiversity mainstreaming objectives.

Little information is available to determine how development cooperation agencies ensure synergies and manage trade-offs with other areas of foreign policy, but **trade policy** does stand out as one key area of focus. In the EU for example, an OECD review of mainstreaming (OECD, 2018) notes that, “the Commission will ensure full implementation and enforcement of the biodiversity provisions in all trade agreements, including through the EU Chief Trade Enforcement Officer. The Commission will better assess the impact of trade agreements on biodiversity, with follow-up action to strengthen the biodiversity provisions of existing and new agreements if relevant.” Indeed, most interviewees noted rising political interest in trade in Sweden, the EU, and the UK – and the need to actively ensure that trade standards and their application recognise biodiversity and associated equity issues. It is

particularly important that trade supports, and does not squeeze out, local producers and local biodiversity.

Snapshot: Biodiversity in German Development Cooperation

Background: Under the overall guidance of the Chancellery, which is responsible for determining policy guidelines, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) sets development priorities. Germany's two major state-owned development agencies, GIZ and KfW operate under the political supervision of the BMZ. Both play key roles in policy development, priority setting, and implementation:

- GIZ plans and executes Germany's technical cooperation with partner countries. GIZ also provides consulting services to the BMZ's sectoral divisions through its 'sector initiatives'.
- KfW Development Bank leads on Germany's bilateral financial cooperation with partner countries. It receives funding from the BMZ and raises its own funds on capital markets using its own resources.

In addition, the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK) has, since 2022, administered the International Climate Initiative (IKI) (previously this was managed by the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV)).

Biodiversity funding: The German government has continuously increased its financial contribution for biodiversity in recent years: from an average of 194 million euros between 2006 and 2010 to an average of 633 million euros between 2016 and 2020.³¹ Furthermore at the 2022 UNGA, Germany announced plans to more than double aid to biodiversity. Germany's contribution to international biodiversity financing is split between BMZ which provides about 80 per cent, and the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU), which contributes about 20 per cent.³²

Biodiversity priorities: There is no specific biodiversity policy, but BMZ and GIZ have both produced a number of documents describing their work on biodiversity and highlighting its significance as a development issue.³³

³¹ <https://www.bmz.de/resource/blob/96212/6332e37a40db965edb7497b6302d3591/factsheet-biological-diversity-en-data.pdf>

³² <https://www.bmz.de/resource/blob/96212/6332e37a40db965edb7497b6302d3591/factsheet-biological-diversity-en-data.pdf>

³³ Investing in biodiversity – a matter of survival:

<https://www.bmz.de/resource/blob/55822/7815117b8ec880fd0c526ff0cd6a5e7e/materialie530-biodiversity-data.pdf>

Biological diversity – our common responsibility:

<https://www.bmz.de/resource/blob/96212/6332e37a40db965edb7497b6302d3591/factsheet-biological-diversity-en-data.pdf>

Environment – Policy – Advice for Mitigating Climate Change, Conserving Biodiversity and Creating a Cleaner Environment:

https://www.giz.de/en/downloads/giz-2021_en_environment-policy-advice.pdf

Ensuring a human rights-based approach in GIZ projects for the conservation and sustainable management of natural resources:

https://www.giz.de/expertise/downloads/2020-GIZ_Guiding%20Framework_Human%20Rights_Biodiversity%20Conservation.pdf

Sustainable forest management and international forest policy: <https://www.giz.de/expertise/html/60096.html>

4. How does biodiversity mainstreaming work in practice?

4.1 What resources do donors allocate to biodiversity and its mainstreaming?

CBD COP12 in 2014 committed to double biodiversity-related international financial resource flows to developing countries by 2015 against average annual biodiversity funding over 2006-10 as a baseline), and to at least maintain this level until 2020. ODA has long been considered a key element of these financial resource flows.

The OECD recently completed an analysis of trends in ODA funding for biodiversity between 2011 and 2020 (Casado-Asensio et al., 2022). It found that, collectively, DAC members have delivered on the biodiversity-related development finance commitments. By 2015, development assistance targeted at biodiversity had doubled from the 2006-10 baseline, and then remained above that level over 2016-20. Nevertheless, the report notes that this overall increase in biodiversity funding masks a decline in assistance that is marked as “principal” – i.e., specifically targeted at biodiversity. However, the growth in development assistance where biodiversity is marked as “significant” rather than “principal” may reflect greater mainstreaming of biodiversity into other development assistance sectors. Overall, the authors note that biodiversity-related development assistance as a share of total development assistance has remained relatively stable over time at 4%.

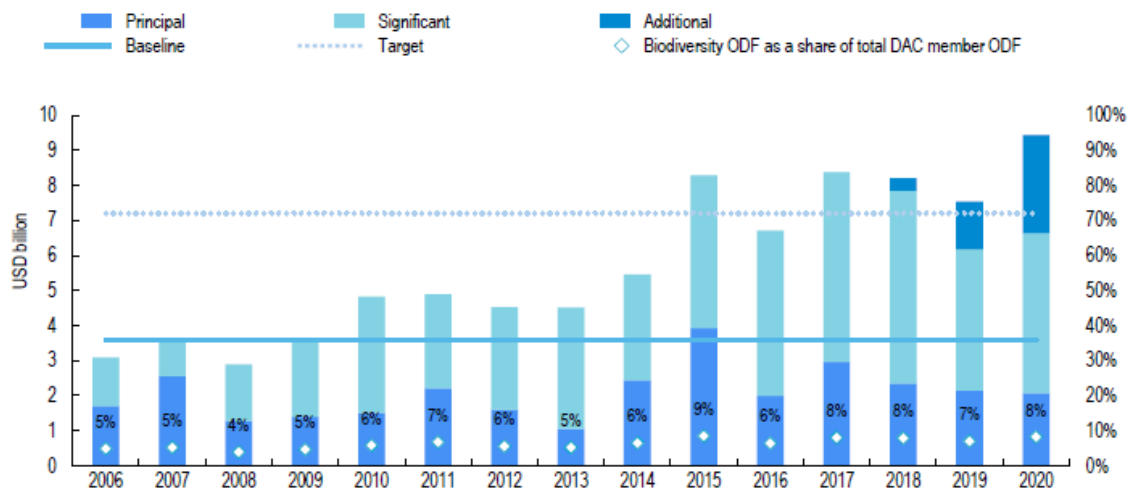


Figure 2: Trends in value of DAC members resource allocations marked as targeting biodiversity 2006 – 2020 (Source: [Casado-Asensio et al 2022](#)).

Note: Activities marked as principal must have biodiversity as fundamental in the design of, or the motivation for, the action. Activities marked as significant have other primary objectives but have been formulated or adjusted to help meet biodiversity concerns. In turn, activities reported against SDGs 14 and 15 and not marked with the biodiversity marker, are here included as “additional” biodiversity-related development finance (but could not be assigned a principal or significant objective).

Individual donors mirror the broad trends described by the OECD, and many have made commitments to double aid for biodiversity. For example:

- European Commission: Over 2014-2020, the European Commission reported that up to €1 billion was earmarked for biodiversity and ecosystems, including wildlife conservation. The biodiversity component of development projects in other sectors, like agriculture and food, security, and energy added to that figure³⁴. Overall, during that period, the EC doubled its

³⁴ https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/climate-environment-and-energy/biodiversity-and-ecosystems_en#our-financial-instruments

development assistance allocation for biodiversity. Under the Multi-annual Financial Framework 2021-27 it has set an ambition to dedicate 7.5% of annual spending in 2024 and 10% in 2026 and 2027 to biodiversity objectives.³⁵

- France: AFD's commitments dedicated to biodiversity stood at €589 million, i.e. 5.2 % of total commitments. This has risen by almost 90% since 2017. AFD aims to increase its biodiversity or nature-positive finance to €1 billion a year by 2025 (from €589 million in 2021) and to devote 30 % of its climate finance to 'biodiversity-friendly, operations'³⁶ (AFD, 2021).
- Germany: BMZ notes that it has provided more than 400 million euros per year (since 2013) for biodiversity and has increased this to 600 million euros in 2021³⁷. At UNGA 77 in 2022, the German government announced plans for a major increase in its international biodiversity funding to 1.5 billion euros per year by 2025³⁸.
- Norway: has pledged up to 3 billion NOK (~285 million EUR) a year to help save the world's tropical forests while improving the livelihoods of those who live off, in, and near the forests through the International Climate and Forest Initiative.³⁹ Norway has also been the biggest funder of the Amazon Fund, now being revived with the recent changes in Brazilian government.
- Sweden: In 2021, just over 2 billion SEK (~184 million EUR) (of the 44.5 billion SEK in Sida's budget for 2021) was spent on biological diversity, compared with just over 1.8 billion SEK (~165 million EUR) in 2020. The proportion of initiatives marked for biological diversity has increased from 11.3% in 2020 to 13.1% in 2021⁴⁰ (Sida, 2022).
- The UK: £1.2 billion (~1.4 billion EUR) of ODA was spent on protecting forests and biodiversity between 2015 and 2020, largely through the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, but also the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs⁴¹ (ICAI, 2021). In 2019 the UK government announced that it would double its allocation of aid for International Climate Finance to £11.6 billion for 2021-2026. In 2021 it announced that it would commit at least £3 billion (~3.5 billion EUR) of that ICF allocation to "climate change solutions that protect and restore nature and biodiversity".⁴²

In the Joint Donor Statement issued at CBD CoP15 in December 2022,⁴³ donors reaffirmed some of the commitments highlighted above, including a commitment from The Netherlands to increase its total biodiversity related development finance by 50% in 2025, resulting in a target of EUR 150 million for 2025.

³⁵ https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/biodiversity/eu-action-biodiversity-financing_en#:~:text=Overall%2C%20the%20contribution%20to%20biodiversity,EU%20budget%20augmented%20by%20NextGenerationEU

³⁶ <https://www.afd.fr/en/ressources/biodiversity-activity-report-2021>

³⁷ <https://www.bmz.de/en/issues/biodiversity/background/new-biodiversity-targets-114092>

³⁸ <https://www.bmuv.de/en/pressrelease/a-strong-partner-in-global-nature-conservation-germany-to-increase-international-biodiversity-finance-to-15-billion-euros-per-year-by-2025>

³⁹ <https://www.norad.no/en/front/thematic-areas/climate-change-and-environment/norways-international-climate-and-forest-initiative-nicfi/>

⁴⁰ <https://cdn.sida.se/app/uploads/2022/04/13124600/Sida-Reporting-2021-Government-Assignment-Biodiversity.pdf>

⁴¹ <https://icai.independent.gov.uk/review/halting-deforestation-and-preventing-irreversible-biodiversity-loss/review/>

⁴² Prime Minister commits £3bn UK climate finance to supporting nature - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

⁴³ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1125333/joint-statement-on-nature-finance.pdf

4.2 How do donor countries apply the Rio-marker for biodiversity?

Since 1998, the OECD DAC has used the “Rio markers” to monitor levels of finance targeting the three Rio Conventions on biodiversity, desertification, and climate change. There are four “Rio markers” which track finance allocated to biodiversity, desertification, climate change mitigation, and climate change adaptation.

As with all four Rio Markers, in the case of the biodiversity marker, donor agencies tag their activities according to whether they are targeting the objectives of the CBD as the activity’s *principal objective* (i.e. biodiversity objectives are the motivation for the activity); as a *significant objective* (i.e. while the main motivation is not biodiversity, the activities help meet biodiversity objectives); or *not targeting the objective* (the activity has no relation to biodiversity). In practice, marking is not always consistent or fully informed as to the activity’s relevance to the CBD.

In France (and similarly in Germany and Sweden), AFD uses the Rio biodiversity marker to identify projects with positive impacts on biodiversity. AFD experts then analyse the co-benefits in the projects in order to work out what proportion of their finance is specifically allocated to biodiversity and what proportion delivers co-benefits. This system is due to be updated with a new approach which is intended to give a more accurate classification of the nature of the impacts and AFD’s financial commitment⁴⁴ (AFD, 2021).

In addition, donors may now also report activities against the SDGs. Those SDGs which are often cited as most relevant to the status of biodiversity are SDGs 14 and 15 which may encompass biodiversity activities that are not necessarily covered under the Rio Markers scheme. Moreover, other SDGs such as for health can be just as relevant to biodiversity. The European Commission has an International Co-operation and Development Results Framework which cites results statements and indicators related to each of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as an indicator tracking contributions against the Rio conventions⁴⁵ (European Commission, 2018).

4.3 How far have donor countries dedicated development funding for biodiversity and are they using it to promote biodiversity on its own?

One key mechanism for mainstreaming biodiversity in development cooperation has been biodiversity-specific, aid-funded grant mechanisms. In the UK, the Darwin Initiative was established in 1992 to support developing countries meet their international biodiversity commitments. Since 2012, the Initiative has been financed via the UK aid budget alone. For the UK, allocation of development finance is regulated by the International Development Act (2002), which specifies that such finance must contribute to poverty alleviation and sustainable development. As a result, the Darwin Initiative was required to shift from having a pure biodiversity focus to a dual focus on achieving both biodiversity and poverty reduction objectives. Since 1992, the Darwin Initiative has awarded over £164m to more than 1,143 projects across 159 countries.⁴⁶ In 2016 the UK also set up an Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund – also financed from the aid budget and so also with a mandate for poverty alleviation. Moreover, the UK is currently in the process of launching a Biodiverse Landscapes Fund and a ‘Blue Planet Fund’ as well as various biodiversity-linked research funds such as Reducing Environmental Degradation in Africa and Asia (REDAA):

- The £100 million Biodiverse Landscapes Fund (BLF) runs from 2022 to 2029 and is focussed on five priority landscapes in Africa, South America and Southeast Asia. It is intended to protect and restore biodiversity, reduce poverty and reduce the impact of climate change⁴⁷
- The £500 million Blue Planet Fund is intended to support developing countries in protecting the marine environment and reducing poverty⁴⁸

⁴⁴ <https://www.afd.fr/en/ressources/biodiversity-activity-report-2021>

⁴⁵ <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-13082-2018-INIT/en/pdf>

⁴⁶ <https://www.darwininitiative.org.uk/about-us/>

⁴⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/biodiverse-landscapes-fund>

⁴⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/blue-planet-fund/blue-planet-fund>

- The £35 million REDAA fund will catalyse demand-responsive and locally led research, innovation and action that helps people and nature to thrive together ⁴⁹

Other donors have similar dedicated funding schemes for biodiversity including:

- Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative (NICFI) is a fund dedicated to forest conservation. It aims to contribute to the reduction and reversal of tropical forest loss to enable a stable climate, preserved biodiversity and sustainable development. ⁵⁰
- The French Global Environment Facility (FFEM), created in 1994, supports climate, environment and biodiversity projects in developing countries, with a EUR 120 million budget for the 2019-22 period. ⁵¹
- BMZ is one of the founders of the Legacy Landscapes Fund, an innovative financing instrument for protected areas. ⁵² In addition, with its Green Value Initiative, BMZ supports African countries and development institutions to integrate the value of natural assets in decision making and to mainstream natural capital issues into policies and planning. ⁵³ BMZ strengthens marine protection and management of coastal economic areas through three dedicated initiatives: the Blue Action Fund ⁵⁴, Save our Mangrove Now ⁵⁵ and MeerWissen ⁵⁶ – African-German Partners for Ocean Knowledge.
- The EU Biodiversity 4 Life initiative, which ran from 2015 to 2020, acted as an umbrella framework bringing together all EU cooperation activities that target biodiversity as principal objective. It supported mainstreaming biodiversity into EU development cooperation at 1) the local level through protected area conservation, and livelihood improvement activities; 2) the national level in partner countries through institutional strengthening, law enforcement and governance; and 3) the international level through fighting wildlife trafficking, international negotiations and protecting global ecosystems. ⁵⁷

Interviewees reported that the existence of dedicated biodiversity funds – and instructions to spend such funds wisely and in good time – has often acted as a good general incentive to mainstream biodiversity in sector work. Indeed, such funds have often been the strongest proximate driver of increased attention to biodiversity.

4.4 How do donors mainstream biodiversity in their climate, water and food security portfolios?

For a number of donors, funding for biodiversity is linked to funding for climate – for example the majority of UK development assistance for biodiversity comes via its International Climate Finance allocation as discussed above. One key mechanism for mainstreaming biodiversity in climate portfolios is through donor's increasing interest and investments in nature-based solutions (NbS) for climate change adaptation and mitigation. Sida voluntarily reports on the level of integration of biodiversity in its bilateral climate finance. In 2021, approximately 34% of the bilateral climate finance was considered to integrate aspects of biodiversity compared to 32% in 2020. The amount has steadily increased since 2018. ⁵⁸

⁴⁹ <https://www.redaa.org/>

⁵⁰ <https://www.nicfi.no/how-do-we-work/>

⁵¹ <https://www.ffem.fr/en>

⁵² <https://www.bmz.de/en/issues/biodiversity/legacy-landscapes-fund>

⁵³ <https://www.bmz.de/en/issues/biodiversity/green-value-initiative>

⁵⁴ <https://www.bmz.de/de/themen/biodiversitaet/meeresschutz/blue-action-fund-70838>

⁵⁵ <https://www.mangrovealliance.org/save-our-mangroves-now/>

⁵⁶ <https://www.bmz.de/en/issues/biodiversity/marine-conservation/meerwissen-african-german-partners-for-ocean-knowledge-89012>

⁵⁷ <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/b4life/wiki/biodiversity-life-b4life>

⁵⁸ https://cdn.sida.se/app/uploads/2022/09/27191205/10206562_Sida_Biodiversity_related_support_2021_web.pdf

Investment in forest conservation and management is an obvious entry point for nature-based mitigation approaches and a number of donors have long made significant investments in REDD+ policies and programmes: for example, Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative mentioned above. Much of the UK's biodiversity support has also been in the forestry sector.

It is less easy to clearly determine how donors currently mainstream biodiversity in their water and food security portfolios, beyond the routine screening and finance tagging (Rio marker) processes already described. Where the Rio marker has been used to identify projects with biodiversity co-benefits, it is not clear if these are a happy coincidence or a result of strategic, targeted interventions. For example, AFD has identified water and agriculture projects as those that, in general, generate the most biodiversity co-benefits⁵⁹ but it is not clear how deliberately these co-benefits have been targeted.

Interviewees report that interest in biodiversity is on the rise in other sectors, notably:

- Health – in relation to pandemic causes and prevention through e.g. One Health working across humans and nature
- Humanitarian aid – with impacts on biodiversity of initiatives to achieve food, energy and water security, as well as the impacts of migration on ecosystem and livelihood vulnerability and resilience.
- Infrastructure and urban development – providing cheaper and more sustainable nature-based solutions to developmental and climate needs

These 'new' sectors currently lack knowledge about nature but their interest has increased their openness to biodiversity mainstreaming. and

Some donors prioritise key development sectors for biodiversity mainstreaming. For example, in Norway, priority sectors for integrating climate and environment objectives are clean energy, food security, forest protection and oceans (NB the focus is on environment mainstreaming, not biodiversity mainstreaming specifically) (OECD, 2021). Other donors seek alignment through a variety of sectoral action plans. For example in Germany, one of the goals of BMZ in relation to their investments in biodiversity is to implement strategies for the sustainable management of the agricultural and forestry sectors, in particular, and of fisheries – which is key to achieving global food security. BMZ also recognises the importance of mainstreaming biodiversity into food production⁶⁰. BMZ has a Water Strategy (2017), a Forest Action Plan (2017), and a Marine Conservation and Sustainable Fisheries among other instruments. It also recently adopted the strategic programme, Maßnahmenprogramm Nachhaltigkeit – Weiterentwicklung 2021, which aims to ensure government administration is sustainable and aligned with climate and environmental targets (OECD, 2021). Meanwhile, the EU has the European Green Deal which covers a number of key sectors including biodiversity and food systems – mainly focussed internally in the EU but also with an international element – and from which a number of policies and action plans stem in e.g. bioeconomy, circular economy, and related green jobs and sustainable livelihoods.⁶¹

Sida has perhaps the clearest approach to biodiversity mainstreaming in its other sector portfolios. It has produced six briefs that clarify how to use the biodiversity Rio marker, and how to advance further mainstreaming, for contributions related to Water and sanitation, Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, Health and Energy. Each brief includes examples of activities to facilitate biodiversity mainstreaming in these six sectors.⁶²

⁵⁹ <https://www.afd.fr/en/actualites/can-we-mainstream-biodiversity-all-projects>

⁶⁰ <https://www.bmz.de/resource/blob/55822/7815117b8ec880fd0c526ff0cd6a5e7e/materialie530-biodiversity-data.pdf>

⁶¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

⁶² <https://cdn.sida.se/app/uploads/2022/04/15084322/Biodiversity-Marker-Guide-Agriculture.pdf> (Agriculture example)

Snapshot: Biodiversity in Swedish Development Cooperation

Background: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) oversees development policy and financing and decides on core funding to multilateral organizations. The Department for International Development Cooperation is a key development-related unit within the MFA and is responsible for overall governance and evaluation of development cooperation as well as coordination to draft the ODA budget. Sida administers and implements MFA development policy implementation in cooperation with civil society organizations, embassies, and other government agencies and manages about 48% of Sweden's total ODA financing, amounting to SEK27.7 billion in 2022 (US\$3.0 billion).⁶³

Biodiversity priorities: Sweden has a clear strategy on environment within development cooperation⁶⁴ and Sida has its own climate and environment policy⁶⁵ supported by an Environmental Action Plan and associated targets, as well as various publicly-available "green tools" and an outsourced Helpdesk provided by universities to support its implementation.⁶⁶

In October 2020, Sida received an assignment from the government regarding biological diversity and ecosystems for the years 2020-2023. The assignment instructs Sida to strengthen and deepen its work on biodiversity and ecosystems throughout its operations. Six sectors have been identified as extra important for integration: Water and sanitation, Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, Health and Energy and guides have been prepared showing examples of activities to facilitate biodiversity mainstreaming in each of these sectors.⁶⁷ Sida has established a number of regional initiatives on biodiversity. A "Team Environment" with a regional office in Nairobi focusing on environment, climate and biodiversity was established in 2021.⁶⁸ Given the intrinsic relationship between biodiversity and climate change, Sida also voluntarily reports on the level of integration of biodiversity in its bilateral climate finance.

Biodiversity finance: Sida's biodiversity-related ODA has tripled compared to the base year 2010. In 2021, it amounted to 1.97 billion SEK – an increase on 2020 of 8%.⁶⁹ In 2021, approximately 34 percent of the bilateral climate finance was considered to integrate aspects of biodiversity compared to 32 percent in 2020.

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[https://donortracker.org/country/sweden#:~:text=Sida%20manages%20half%20of%20Sweden's%20ODA%20budget&text=4%20billion%2C%20or%20US%246.2,\(1.0%25%20of%20GNI\)](https://donortracker.org/country/sweden#:~:text=Sida%20manages%20half%20of%20Sweden's%20ODA%20budget&text=4%20billion%2C%20or%20US%246.2,(1.0%25%20of%20GNI))

⁶⁴ <https://www.government.se/country-and-regional-strategies/2018/06/strategy-for-swedens-global-development-cooperation-in-the-areas-of-environmental-sustainability-20182022/>

⁶⁵ https://cdn.sida.se/app/uploads/2022/05/30135810/10206291_Sida_Climate_and_Environment_Policy_may-2022_ENG_web.pdf

⁶⁶ <https://www.sida.se/en/for-partners/methods-materials/green-toolbox>

⁶⁷ See for example <https://cdn.sida.se/app/uploads/2022/04/15084322/Biodiversity-Marker-Guide-Agriculture.pdf>

⁶⁸ <https://cdn.sida.se/app/uploads/2022/04/13124600/Sida-Reporting-2021-Government-Assignment-Biodiversity.pdf>

⁶⁹ https://cdn.sida.se/app/uploads/2022/09/27191205/10206562_Sida_Biodiversity_related_support_2021_web.pdf

5. What MEL approaches and indicators can monitor biodiversity mainstreaming results and enhance learning?

The OECD emphasises that “The need to monitor and evaluate mainstreaming efforts cannot be underestimated. It is not possible to identify how to allocate human, financial and technical resources more effectively, in order to achieve desired objectives, without assessing the impact of interventions over time. The use of indicators is a key component of this.” (OECD, 2019).

The experience of bilateral agencies is that the old assumption about mainstreaming – that it was simply a one-off exercise to get biodiversity into analysis and plans – falls apart when the mainstreamed activity is not then budgeted for, invested in, or implemented. Understanding this has led to engaging with ministries of finance who budget and with sector ministries and local governments who spend. It has also begun to encourage a more comprehensive approach to monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of biodiversity mainstreaming across the policy cycle. The OECD further notes that this kind of M&E is in its infancy and suggests indicators are needed for the whole process of mainstreaming from inputs (e.g. finance), to processes (e.g. establishment of inter-ministerial committees), outputs (e.g. national assessments and other studies), outcomes (e.g. new or more ambitious policies), through to impacts (e.g. changes in the state of biodiversity and ecosystem services).

As discussed above, all DAC members use the Biodiversity Rio Marker for tracking inputs in terms of finance flows. Some donor agencies supplement this with more detailed environment or climate change indicators that they use for reporting and/or evaluation. However, these are not often biodiversity-specific, nor do they cover the full mainstreaming process across the decision-making cycle. For example:

- Environment and climate change are reflected in the EU Results Management Framework (OECD, 2021).
- In Norway, assessing environmental indicators is mandatory in all programme assessments (OECD, 2021).
- In the UK, under the UK FCDO Programme Operating Framework, new bilateral and multilateral programmes wholly or partly funded by International Climate Finance are required to include all relevant portfolio KPIs in their monitoring framework. The 17 KPIs including biodiversity-relevant but not biodiversity -specific KPIs: the area where deforestation has been avoided, the value of ecosystem services generated or protected, and area of land that has received sustainable land management practices.⁷⁰ This is a more stringent requirement for ICF3 than previously, introduced to improve the comprehensiveness of reported results (OECD, 2021).

Ideas for additional biodiversity mainstreaming indicators can be drawn from successful mainstreaming initiatives. For example, the initiative led by IIED and UNEP-WCMC to support in-country mainstreaming in Africa identified a series of high-level indicators at different stages of the mainstreaming cycle (Figure 3, taken from IIED and UNEP-WCMC, 2017); and the UN Poverty-Environment Action for SDGs Initiative identified indicators for successful environmental mainstreaming around the policy cycle (UNPEA, 2023 forthcoming).

These indicators can be summarised as:

- Process or activity indicators of biodiversity mainstreaming: These measure the activities carried out to deliver the desired outputs of mainstreaming, checking e.g. meetings held;

⁷⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-climate-finance-results>

demand for biodiversity data and information; participant composition including representation of poor groups and BD interests; the stage reached in the decision-making cycle:

- **Input indicators:** These measure the resources used in a biodiversity mainstreaming intervention, checking e.g.: a cross-institution BD mainstreaming team is in place; budget for BD mainstreaming is secure; relevant skills and data are available.
- **Output indicators:** These measure the products or services resulting from mainstreaming activities, checking e.g. studies of biodiversity value, dependence and impact; policies, plans and budgets that have integrated biodiversity; biodiversity coverage in natural capital accounts.
- **Outcome indicators:** These are used for monitoring the real-world changes that outputs produce, checking e.g.: the use of biodiversity data and studies; public awareness and support for biodiversity; biodiversity skills and capacity in development agencies; investment and public procurement aimed at biodiversity objectives.
- **Impact indicators:** These consider how the context is changing as a result of the outcomes, checking e.g. hectares of land proven to be protected or sustainably managed (in KBAs); changes in species diversity and populations of key indicator species.

Figure 3 provides an example of how these indicators might be used to reflect the progress of in-country biodiversity mainstreaming efforts in national and sectoral development plans.

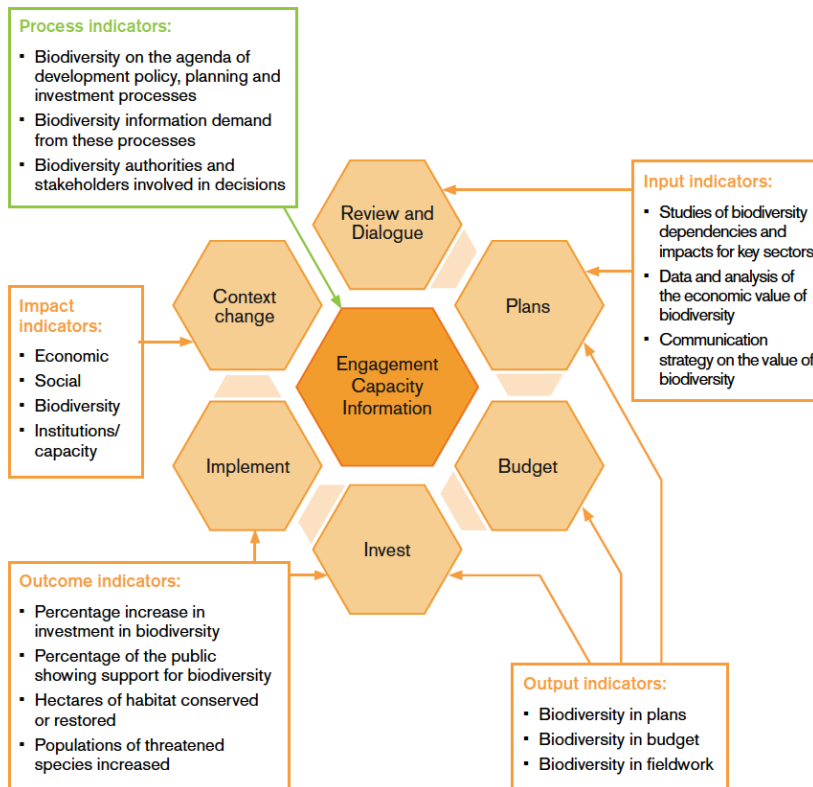


Figure 3: Potential biodiversity mainstreaming indicators for in-country mainstreaming in Africa (Source: [IIED and UNEP-WCMC 2017](#))

Snapshot: Biodiversity in EU Development Cooperation

Background: Together with the Council, the European Parliament (decides on the annual EU budget, which includes funding for international development. The European Commission's Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA; formerly the Directorate-General for Development and International Cooperation, or DG DEVCO) is responsible for the implementation of the EU's development policy.

Biodiversity priorities: EU development policy includes the European Consensus on Development within which protecting the environment, managing natural resources, and tackling climate change' is one of four frameworks for action.⁷¹ The EU has issued a number of communications on biodiversity-related policy.⁷² For example, The EU Communication on Stepping up EU Action to Protect and Restore the World's Forests was adopted in 2019 and aims to protect and improve the health of existing forests, especially primary forests, and significantly increasing sustainable, biodiverse forest coverage worldwide. The EC Green Deal is now seen as a model for influencing how nature is handled in development in partner countries, with an emphasis on circular- and bio-economies and associated green jobs.

In terms of mainstreaming, INTPA has a unit (F1) which provides oversight of integrating environment including biodiversity. There is a Greening Facility offering technical support to officers in Brussels and globally involved in INTPA's work. Moreover, a "Biodiversity for Life" initiative has provided the umbrella framework for EU-funded biodiversity conservation initiatives. Food security was one of three major themes and included⁷³:

- Promotion of sustainable agricultural practices, such as agroforestry and conservation agriculture
- Development of environmentally friendly agro-products
- Promotion of the use of eco-labelling for biodiversity-based food products

Biodiversity funding: In the 10 years up to 2016, total EU funding for biodiversity through international development cooperation totalled €1.67 billion, rising from €650 million in the first five years (2006-2010), to €1.02 billion in the second (2011-2015)⁷⁴ and €3.5 billion to 2020.⁷⁵ In September 2021, the European Commission President announced that the EU would double its external funding for biodiversity particularly for the most vulnerable countries.

⁷¹ https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/european-development-policy/european-consensus-development_en

⁷² See for example: EU Communication (2019) on Stepping up EU Action to Protect and Restore the World's Forests https://ec.europa.eu/environment/forests/eu_comm_2019.htm ; and European Union support for sustainable use and conservation of nature in developing countries https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/climate-environment-and-energy/biodiversity-and-ecosystems_en

⁷³ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/2e26b18c-82a4-4275-b23f-bc1c601e2853/language-en>

⁷⁴ https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/climate-environment-and-energy/biodiversity-and-ecosystems_en

⁷⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/financing_en.htm

6. What lessons have been learned from experiences of mainstreaming biodiversity in development cooperation?

Our literature review, notably of OECD DAC progress reviews (OECD 2018) and OECD peer learning exercises (OECD 2019), coupled with our key informant interviews, highlight some key lessons across initiatives for mainstreaming biodiversity in development cooperation:

- *The benefits of mainstreaming only become apparent over long periods of sustained engagement* – at least 10-15 years. Given that a typical development co-operation project cycle is only 3-5 years, this represents a challenge for securing ongoing support.
- *A wide variety of approaches to mainstreaming* have been employed by different donor agencies with varying degrees of success. There is no one-size-fits-all approach. Each agency is likely to be operating in slightly different contexts which will influence the mix of strategies employed.
- *A strong political mandate is key* to making a significant – as opposed to incremental – difference in mainstreaming. Countries where biodiversity had risen dramatically up the political agenda were those where the mandate came from the highest level – the Prime Minister, President etc.
- *Spending targets are possibly the most powerful, immediate driver* of mainstreaming across all staff. Even those with no technical awareness or interest in biodiversity are clear on the need to meet financing commitments, and thus look for opportunities to enhance biodiversity spending and secure good value for money.
- *Investment in biodiversity and mainstreaming expertise is essential*, whether in the form of upskilling in-house staff and employing technical specialists, or utilising out-sourced technical support in the form of mainstreaming facilities or helpdesks. However, building an in-house community of practice is a best bet to ensure sustainability and long-term capacity. A technical assistance facility can then support this in-house capacity to achieve more systematic and streamlined mainstreaming.
- *Engaging with partner countries' biodiversity and mainstreaming capacity* – in government, business and civil society – is a sure way of both understanding local contexts and ensuring better 'fit' of mainstreaming activities.
- *A robust and diverse set of tools and mechanisms is now available* and can be applied at different stages of the development cooperation programming and activity cycle, from planning to implementation. Effective means can include: technical support helpdesks; in-house learning forums; sector guidance on biodiversity dependence and impact and nature-based solutions; environmental economic and multi-dimensional poverty analysis; aid portfolio analysis and country dialogues; biodiversity mainstreaming spending targets; and public expenditure reviews and dialogues.
- *Mainstreaming needs to be presented as an orderly and continuing way to add value to development* by addressing a cross-cutting concern – in this case, biodiversity. It is sometimes best treated as 'multiple mainstreaming', e.g. combining biodiversity with other issues, particularly climate change or gender, to help elevate it up the political agenda.
- *The specific outcomes and benefits of environmental mainstreaming* – intended and actual – need to be clear and increasingly visible in each case. Only then will staff be motivated to act, feeling less 'mainstreaming fatigue' but instead ready to pursue biodiversity priorities and collective responsibilities for achieving them.

We hope that these lessons will be useful in informing the Netherlands Government’s approach to biodiversity mainstreaming. We also take this opportunity to suggest four recommendations that could offer a major step forward:

1) Align with the new Global Biodiversity Framework and maximise synergies between it and the Paris Agreement. Ahead of the UNFCCC CoP26, DAC members committed to align development cooperation with the goals of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. To take biodiversity mainstreaming to the next level, a similar approach may well be required to align with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF).

Aligning with the GBF would mean wider uptake of some of the mainstreaming activities already proven by some donor agencies – specifically, screening existing and new investments and interventions to ensure they do not undermine biodiversity, as well as proactively seeking opportunities to invest in biodiversity and livelihoods that both sustain it and are sustained by it. It would also mean further increasing development assistance available for delivering on the GBF, and ensuring aid flows for *other* purposes do not undermine it, and helping to mobilise non-aid sources of finance within developing countries – including private sector finance, tax revenue, debt swaps and philanthropy.

It would also be important to ensure alignment *between* Paris and the GBF (or between Net Zero and Nature-Positive): supporting appropriate nature-based solutions to climate change (noting that not all are good for biodiversity or good for local people) would be a good example of such alignment. The Paris Agreement recognises the importance of ecosystem integrity and biodiversity protection; and this is also reflected in the GBF target to increase contributions to climate change mitigation, adaptation and disaster risk reduction from nature-based solutions and ecosystems-based approaches.

2) Commit to “Nature Positive” ODA. Nature Positive is a term that gained popularity and profile in the years of negotiation of the GBF up to CoP15. It is intended as a broad parallel to the Net Zero narrative for climate ambitions. The term didn’t make it into the final version of the GBF - but the mission of the GBF is consistent with the definition used by early proponents of the term (Locke *et al* 2020): “halting and reversing nature loss” (Figure 4).

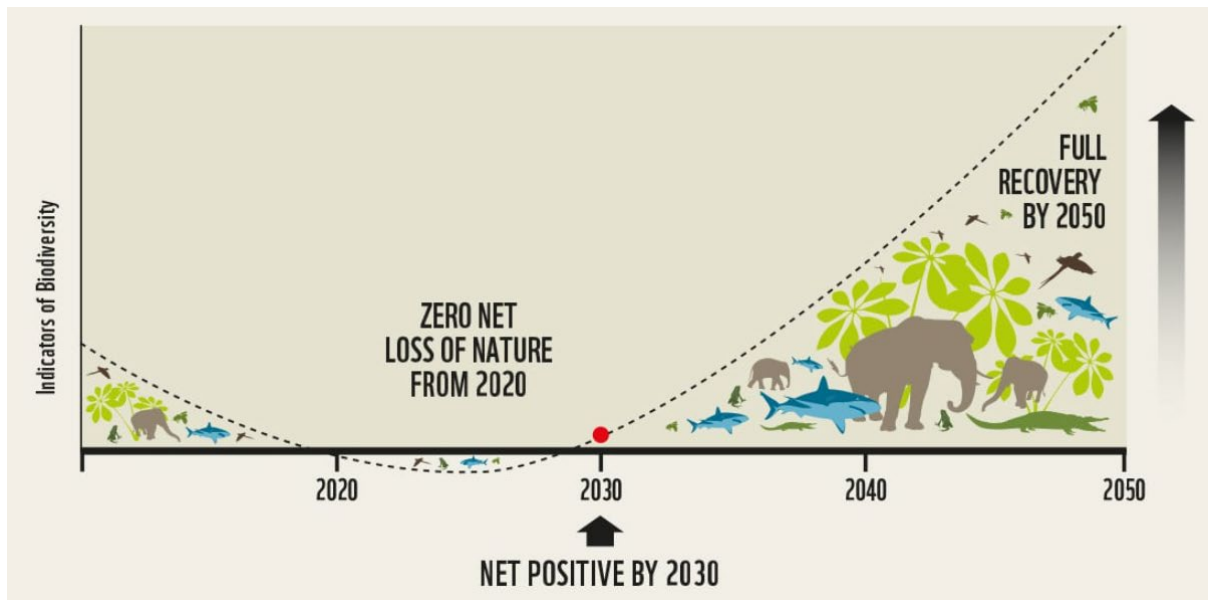


Figure 4: Visual depiction of the meaning of “Nature Positive” (Source: A Global Goal for Nature: Nature Positive by 2030. www.naturepositive.org)

The concept of “Nature Positive ODA” is mentioned by the UK government in its May 2022 International Development Strategy to which notes an intention to “build on our 2021 commitment to ensure all new UK bilateral aid spending does no harm to nature by taking steps to ensure UK bilateral ODA becomes ‘nature positive’, aligning with the international goal to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030, and the post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, once agreed”. The UK strategy does not include a definition of Nature Positive ODA but the Joint Donor Statement issued at CoP15 describes it as “avoiding, reducing, or mitigating nature-related risks and impacts, including to natural capital accounts at project level and portfolio level; taking steps to assess the risks across our financial systems from biodiversity loss including in macroeconomic models and forecasts; supporting recipient countries in their transition to a net zero nature-positive economy; and increasing finance for projects aligned with this international mission.” From a development perspective we would suggest that a principle on “People Positive”, which addresses issues of equity, rights and justice, should also be included in this description. The Principles for Locally Led Adaptation, if further elaborated to encompass nature as well as climate, could be useful for this purpose.

3) Support biodiversity mainstreaming initiatives in partner countries. This means providing policy support to help developing countries to mainstream biodiversity across other sectors, supporting dialogue and technology transfer, and building capacity – in much the same way as is happening for climate change through the Paris Agreement.

4) Identify and address remaining in-house constraints to biodiversity mainstreaming. While colleagues in bilateral and multilateral agencies report much progress, many gains could be made by addressing remaining systemic blocks to biodiversity:

- Demonstrating biodiversity mainstreaming achievements and impacts to date – the results of biodiversity mainstreaming have had very low visibility, aside from spending levels
- Encouraging and supporting an informal ‘learning and leadership group’ on biodiversity mainstreaming among development cooperation actors – there is too little opportunity for exchange, as begun in this exercise, and for engaging actors in developing countries. The OECD-DAC’s ‘Friends of Biodiversity’ informal group may offer a useful platform

It should be noted that we found considerable appetite among other donor colleagues for working together on these four themes.

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In 2022 PBL Netherlands Environment Assessment Agency contracted IIED to undertake a review of biodiversity mainstreaming in development cooperation agencies. IIED has a long track record of work on biodiversity mainstreaming and environment mainstreaming more broadly. This study builds on that work, as well as drawing on insights from work by others. The report is based on a review of experiences of donor agencies in Canada, European Commission, France, Germany, Norway, Sweden, and UK. It was compiled through a literature review as well as key informant interviews with agency staff in a subset of these.



International Institute for Environment and Development
Third Floor, 235 High Holborn, London WC1V 7DN, UK
Tel: +44 (0)20 3463 7399
www.iied.org

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