

## **Integration of biodiversity, poverty eradication and sustainable development in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

### **Best practices on integration biodiversity values into national development strategies and planning processes**

By analysing the sectoral and cross-sectoral strategies at all levels in BiH, it is noticeable that there are good examples of biodiversity integration.

One of the major documents that is based on national sustainable development priorities and which integrates the values of biological diversity is the National Environmental Action Plan for BiH (NEAP). The goal of the NEAP is the identification of short-term and long-term priority activities and the creation of a basis for the preparation of a long-term environmental protection strategy in accordance with the economic development of BiH and its socio-political organization. It is one of the first comprehensive documents on environmental protection in BiH, where the values of biological diversity have been recognized as the fourth priority. One of the guidelines for setting priorities was the fact that NEAP should be used as a tool for poverty reduction and the fact that main resource for poverty reduction i.e. economic activities and employment of population are natural resources.

Biodiversity values are also integrated in the draft Development Strategy of BiH under the strategic objective "sustainable development". The priorities found under this strategic objective include the conservation and rational management of natural resources. In order to achieve sustainable development, as part of this priority, the Development Strategy of BiH also provides support to biological diversity protection measures and sustainable use of genetic resources. The reason for including these measures into this document is a rich genetic pool of varieties and breeds in agricultural production which the authorities should pay attention to. Unfortunately, the Strategy has not yet been officially adopted by the BiH Council of Ministers.

Among the priorities and objectives of the Strategic Plan for Harmonization of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Development of BiH (2008-2011) are: conservation of natural biological diversity systems, conservation of indigenous plant and animal species, as well as conservation of traditional products and products with geographical origin.

At the entity level, within the draft Development Strategy of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2010-2020), the priorities in the agriculture, food production and rural development sector include the measures for biological diversity protection and sustainable use of genetic resources, and these are: establishment of natural parks and protected areas; financial support for the creation of programs for the protection of indigenous and traditional plant and animal species, and the establishment of bio-indicators. In addition to the above measures, the Development Strategy of the FBiH has emphasized that the management of biological diversity of the FBiH reserves a special place for long-term protection priorities. But, the Strategy has not yet been officially adopted in FBiH.

A positive example of the integration of biological diversity into sectoral planning documents is the draft Spatial Plan of the Federation of BiH (2008-2028), which has not yet been adopted. The Spatial

Plan of the FBiH represents an overarching strategic document on the basis of which the use of space will be defined and development plans will be made to define objects and areas of natural heritage, and objectives of spatial development, protection, use and purpose of land. Within the Spatial Plan, it is inevitable to specify proposals for protection and improvement of the state of the environment in FBiH, and a strategic environmental assessment has therefore been created in this document.

The values of biological diversity are also integrated in the entity strategies for environmental protection. In the Environmental Protection Strategy of the FBiH (2008-2018), with the goal which relates to environmental protection, promotion and encouragement of sustainable use of natural resources through the establishment of an integral management system for nature – biological and geomorphological diversity, operational objectives are defined for the establishment and strengthening of the institutional framework in the FBiH in order to enable protection of biological diversity.

The Nature Protection Strategy of Republic of Srpska emphasizes that the entire territory of the RS is considered an area with high-quality natural environment, in which it is possible to ensure and carry out protection and conservation measures for biological diversity resources, as well as the balance of natural processes.

Two programs have been adopted in Republic of Srpska: the Conservation of Plant Genetic Resources Plan (2008) and the Program for Conservation of Forest Genetic Resources (2012). These programs provide the basis for conservation and sustainable use of plant genetic resources of RS and the connection of all bodies involved in this issue with relevant institutions in BiH and the region.

Strategic Plan for Rural Development of RS and Mid-Term Agricultural Sector Development Strategy in FBiH (2006-2010) that will be replaced with the new Rural Development Strategy of FBiH include the values of biological diversity under their objectives.

Within the Environmental Protection Strategy of Brcko District (2013-2023) biological and geomorphological diversity in Brcko District have great potentials to generate environmentally profitable and sustainable projects for the reduction of the rising poverty, for reconstruction, and improvement of the economy, the development of new biotechnologies based on the indigenous gene pools and following of the European Union (EU) integration paths. The sustainable protection of the environment and promotion of a balanced use of natural resources through the establishment of an integrated system for the management of bio- and geodiversity have been adopted as the general objective of the Environmental Protection Strategy of the BD BiH.

### **Best practices on building resilience of ecosystem function and services to climate –change risks**

As ecosystems play a key role in the global carbon cycle and in adapting to climate change, while also providing a wide range of ecosystem services that are essential for human well-being, Bosnia and Herzegovina is taking significant steps to tackle the issue of climate change. The Council of Ministers adopted the Climate Change Adaptation and Low-Emission Development Strategy, by which implementation the Bosnia and Herzegovina development vision to becoming a sustainable country with preserved natural ecosystems, sustainable natural resources management and high level of climate resilience by 2025 could be achieved.

## **Best practices on integrating biodiversity into poverty eradication and development**

Pilot project „Assessment of the Ecosystem Services of the Hutovo blato Nature Park“ was conducted by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) for the first time in BiH in the area of ecosystem services according to the Protected Area Benefits Assessment Tool (PA-BAT). The assessment showed that Hutovo blato is one of the most productive ecosystems in BiH and that its conservation is not only important for all living organisms that depend on it, but also for the economy of the entire region. The ecosystems of Hutovo blato provide a whole range of economically significant services of great importance for human wellbeing and economy, including tourism, agriculture and fishing, water purification, and mitigating natural hazards such as floods.

*Although there are positive examples of integrating the values of biological diversity into various sectoral strategies in BiH, considerable efforts are still needed in order to fully integrate ecosystem and biodiversity values into planning and development processes. The revised NBSAP BiH (2015-2020) should serve as an effective mechanism in terms of promoting and supporting integration of biodiversity into other sectors. This document emphasizes the need of full integration of biodiversity issues into the development and functioning of economic sectors, developmental models, policies and programmes (integration of biodiversity into inter-sectoral plans, such as the plans of sustainable development, poverty reduction, climate changes, trade, as well as into specific sectoral plans such as the plans of agriculture, fishery, forestry, mining, energy, tourism, transport, etc.).*

*The specific constitutional order of BiH has resulted in difficult adoption and implementation of certain documents at both the national and sub-national levels of the government. The nature and environmental protection issues are primarily the issues of sectoral policies, which further complicate the process of planning, implementation and monitoring of all activities involving the protection of nature and environment. It is necessary to continue seeking for harmonisation of the existing policies at all levels, as well as better coordination, cross-sectoral collaboration, implementation and monitoring.*

*In addition, there is no professional institution at the state level in charge of the issues of evaluation and revaluation of natural values and the development of legislative and institutional frameworks for sustainable management. The existing professional and scientific institutions and state administration bodies are not sufficiently networked in order to provide adequate protection and improve the level of biological diversity conservation. It is necessary to develop and strengthen the capacities at all levels as the current capacities for the implementation of sectoral policies and the development of legislation in line with EU requirements are not sufficient.*

*As the importance of biodiversity for poverty eradication and development is becoming more recognized, Bosnia and Herzegovina will take further efforts to mainstream biodiversity and ecosystem services into poverty eradication and sustainable development processes.*