

This brief clarifies how to use the biodiversity policy marker, and how to advance further mainstreaming, for contributions related to Health.

1. BACKGROUND

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 the work on biodiversity and ecosystems throughout the Agency's total operations.

As part of the implementation of the assignment, Sida has identified an internal need to clarify the use of the policy marker for biodiversity and the connection to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) on which the marker is based. This is to facilitate for program officers to come up with suggestions and ideas in the dialogue with partners during an intervention planning phase on how consideration of, and benefits from, integrating biodiversity in a program/project can be optimized.

Six sectors were identified as extra important for integration: Water and sanitation, Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, Health and Energy.

2. A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (CBD)¹

The Earth's biological resources are vital to humanity's economic and social development. As a result, there is a growing recognition that biodiversity is a global asset of tremendous value to present and future generations. At the same time, the threat to species and ecosystems has never been as great as it is today. Species extinction caused by human activities continues at an alarming rate.

In May 1992, an "Agreed Text of the Convention on Biological Diversity" was decided upon and the Convention was opened for signature on 5 June 1992 at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (the "Rio Earth Summit").

The Convention entered into force on 29 December 1993. The first session of the Conference of the Parties was held in 1994 in the Bahamas.

The establishment of CBD was inspired by the world community's growing commitment to sustainable development and has three main objectives:

1. The conservation of biological diversity
2. The sustainable use of the components of biological diversity
3. The fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources.

3. THE POLICY MARKER FOR BIODIVERSITY PROMOTES MAINSTREAMING OF THE CBD'S OBJECTIVES

Since 1998, the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) has monitored development finance flows targeting the objectives of the Rio Conventions² on biodiversity, climate change and desertification using the so-called "Rio markers". DAC members are requested to indicate for each development finance activity if the activity targets environmental objectives.

3.1 Sida's contributions are screened against criteria of the Rio markers

Sida's contributions are screened (for altogether eleven policy markers) against the criteria of each policy marker. A contribution can be marked with the code 0, 1 or 2 depending on to what extent it fulfils the criteria for that specific marker. As regards the criteria for the Rio marker on *biodiversity*, it has been formulated as follows:

*The project/programme promotes at least one of the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the following criteria apply:*³



¹ [Introduction \(cbd.int\)](#)

² The CBD, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) were initiated at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, hence the name.

³ Source: Sida Statistical Handbook

The project/programme contributes to one or more of the following:

- Protection or enhancing ecosystems (i.e. a forest or a river), species or genetic resources through in-situ or ex-situ conservation, or remedying existing environmental damage.

This means that the programme/project contributes to this purpose through:

- Protection against degradation of ecosystems or biodiversity, often place bound.
 - Enhancement of ecosystems, species or genetic resources through conservation action at a specific place (in-situ) or outside the natural environment (ex-situ).
 - To correct or improve (remedy) an existing environmental problem that effects biodiversity.
- Integration of biodiversity and ecosystem services concerns with recipient countries' development objectives and economic decision making, through institution building, capacity development, strengthening the regulatory and policy framework, or research.

This means that the programme/project contributes to this purpose through:

- Integration of biodiversity concerns into sectoral policy, planning and programmes; e.g. in water resources management.
 - Development of legislation and regulations to protect threatened species; development of incentives, impact assessments, and policy and legislation on equitable access to the benefits of genetic resources⁴.
 - Capacity building in taxonomy⁵, biodiversity assessment and information management of biodiversity data; education, training and awareness raising on biodiversity.
- Developing countries' efforts to meet their obligations under the Convention on Biological Diversity.

⁴ I.e. that the physical access to genetic resources is facilitated and that the benefits obtained from their use are shared equitably with the providers. E.g. if a plant contains material that can be used to produce drugs that cures dangerous diseases medical companies shall be able to use it but at the same time local communities that have managed the area where the plant grows shall be fairly compensated for their efforts.

⁵ Classification, especially of living organisms e.g. identifying species of bees that are important pollinators in agriculture.

This means that the programme/project contributes to this purpose through:

- Preparation of national biodiversity plans, strategies and programmes; biodiversity inventories and assessments.
- Establishment of protected areas and protecting endangered or vulnerable species and their habitats⁶.
- Research on ecological, socio-economic and policy issues related to biodiversity.

The Classification for the biodiversity – 0, 1 or 2 – depends on the extent of fulfilling the criteria.

According to the Sida Statistical Handbook, this is how the marker shall be classified:

2 – Principal objective

The main objective of the project/programme according to its documentation is to achieve one or more of the criteria; it would not have been implemented without that intention.

1 – Significant objective

At least one objective to achieve a criterion above is explicit in the project/programme documentation; however, it would have been implemented even without that intention.

0 – Not targeted

The project/programme has been screened against the criteria above but has been found not to fulfil them.

4. EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES TO FACILITATE BIODIVERSITY MAINSTREAMING IN HEALTH (SECTOR CODE 120)

This section provides suggestions on how biodiversity can be mainstreamed and thus help promoting the objectives of the CBD in contributions related to Health. The activities could, if implemented into a project/programme, qualify the contribution to be classified as "1" – significant objective – for the Rio biodiversity marker.

Biodiversity at all levels is linked to access to clean water and food of good nutritional value, which are fundamental for healthy populations. Thus, the proposed activities under this heading all relate to these issues.

⁶ The natural home or environment of an animal, plant, or other organism.

4.1 Importance for Biodiversity⁷

Millions of people in developing countries die each year from preventable diseases such as malaria, undernutrition and diarrheal disease. Intact and biologically diverse ecosystems play an important role in promoting health and preventing diseases by providing essential goods and services. This includes wild food, natural medicines, clean air and not least water.

A study by the World Bank concluded that exposure to environmental health risks in early childhood leads to permanent growth faltering, lowered immunity and increased mortality. At the same time lack of clean water and sanitation, hygiene and inadequate water resources management account for half of the causative factors behind childhood and maternal underweight.⁸ A rich biodiversity has the potential to filter water and pollutants, modulate the yield and nutrient content of crops, reduce pests and disease, and thereby protect against foodborne, waterborne and soilborne diseases.

4.2 Examples of activities

- *Sustain and improve biodiversity in watersheds upstream of settlements.* Recent research⁹ has found that reduced tree cover upstream is associated with a higher probability of diarrheal disease among children in downstream communities.
- *Make sure to preserve biodiverse forests in rural areas to support adequate nutrition.* For rural populations that are difficult to reach through conventional treatment systems, wild foods from intact ecosystems might provide an excellent source of essential micronutrients. USAID-funded research¹⁰ has found that high exposure to forests causes children to have at least 25 percent greater dietary diversity compared to lack of exposure. This results is comparable to the impacts of some nutrition-sensitive agricultural programs. Specifically, proximity to forests could help reduce vitamin A and iron deficiencies¹¹.

- *Reduce and limit unsustainable agricultural practices and promote sustainable biodiverse nutritious agriculture.* Soil and water pollution from overuse of fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides is a serious problem affecting ecosystem services, underpinned by biodiversity, and thus health and will in the long-term affect food security while biodiverse agriculture and forestry systems such as agroforestry can contribute to both biodiversity and nutritious food.

4.3 Justification for applying the Rio marker for biodiversity

The linkages between the WASH and Health sectors are evident, thus there are certain similarities between the activities suggested under this heading and the ones proposed in the Water and Sanitation guide.

If implemented in a project/programme the above activities are delivering on the first criteria of the biodiversity marker and the contribution could thus be classified as 1 – significant objective – for the biodiversity marker.

4.4 Case studies to draw inspiration from

Brazil – Interconnections between human and ecosystem health – Rio Doce Basin after the Fundão Dam failure¹²

Fighting marine plastic pollution to promote Biodiversity and human health¹³

Benefitting human and environmental health in south western Uganda¹⁴

GLOSSARY*

“Biological diversity” – means the variability among living organisms from all sources including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems.

“Ecosystem” – means a dynamic complex of plant, animal and micro-organism communities and their non-living environment interacting as a functional unit.

* Convention on Biological Diversity, Article 2. Use of Terms.

7 USAID. Biodiversity Integration Reference Sheets <https://biodiversitylinks.org/what-we-do/integration> [Accessed 2021-06-10]
8 World Bank 2008. *Environmental Health and Child Survival: Epidemiology, Economics, Experiences*. World Bank, Washington, D.C. USA.
9 Herrera D. et al 2017. *Upstream watershed condition predicts rural children's health across 35 developing countries*. Nat Commun 8, 811 (2017). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-017-00775-2>
10 Ranaivo A. et al 2018. *Impacts of forests on children's diet in rural areas across 27 developing countries* Science Advances 15 Aug 2018 : EAAT2853
11 Ibid.

12 <https://www.iucn.org/papers-and-briefs/rio-doce-panel-issue-paper-5-en>
13 <https://www.iucn.org/news/marine-and-polar/202103/high-impact-small-scale-marplastics-projects-results-circular-economy-work-fight-against-plastic-pollution>
14 <https://www.iucn.org/news/commission-environmental-economic-and-social-policy/202007/benefitting-human-and-environmental-health-south-western-uganda>