



With the support of



Report of the regional meeting on Business and Biodiversity

19-20 March 2019



External report for businesses

March 2019

Background

The regional meeting on Business and Biodiversity in Central and West Africa was held on 19th and 20th of March, 2019 in Ouagadougou. The meeting was financed by the French Development Agency (FDA) and organized by the International Union for Conservation of Nature –West and Central Africa Programme (IUCN -PACO) in collaboration with IUCN Headquarters and IUCN Dutch Committee.

The regional meeting took place within the framework of the implementation of the IUCN Headquarters' global strategy for business engagement at the regional level. This implementation will be operationalized with a regional approach for business engagement. One of the objectives of the meeting was to validate the various building blocks of the approach such as the priority sectors and countries. Another objective was to develop a collaborative action framework with invited businesses around biodiversity – related topics. The outcomes of the discussions conducted during the meeting enabled us to define the strategic directions of the approach.

highlights of the meeting

Day 1: Understanding the links between business and biodiversity

- *The beginning: links between business and biodiversity*

The meeting started with a presentation on biodiversity and its relationships with businesses made by the IUCN-PACO regional coordinator for business and biodiversity. The presentation defined the concept of biodiversity and ecosystem services. It also helped to show the importance of biodiversity and ecosystem services to businesses. Indeed, the latter depend on a wide range of ecosystem services for their operations and supply chain. Yet, businesses have an adverse impact on biodiversity resulting into natural resources depletion and cost increase. All of which contribute to creating hazards to the businesses. Conversely, if businesses could mainstream the environmental dimension into their strategic operations, they would create opportunities.

- *IUCN's vision: The global strategy for business engagement*

In 2012, IUCN through its Business and Biodiversity programme has developed a global business engagement strategy aimed at helping businesses to be part of the solution for biodiversity conservation and sustainable management. By combining economic and environmental data, we can develop a sound business case for biodiversity conservation. However, mainstreaming biodiversity in the business strategy will be achieved gradually and given the wide scope of challenges facing us, this will not be enough; hence the need for global and crosscutting change. The IUCN global strategy suggests three avenues towards changing business practices:

- Reducing area-bound and ad hoc impacts by working directly with the businesses;
- Transforming value chains;
- Influencing public and financial policies.

- *Implementation: the regional approach for business engagement*

Since September 2018, IUCN-PACO has developed a regional approach for business engagement which is an implementation plan of the global strategy at the regional level. The approach is based on three priority sectors of the countries in the region: agribusiness, extractive industries and infrastructure. In this region, the private sector is characterized by a large number of small and big enterprises. The major difficulty in engaging small enterprises comes from the predominance of the informal sector. Large enterprises are often branches of multinational parent companies that have a corporate social responsibility (CSR) policy. According to the successful theory of change, the first step towards change is communication and awareness raising for biodiversity mainstreaming. This work should be backed by the development of business cases building on success stories. This would facilitate exchanges with the East and Southern Africa region (ESARO). After the awareness raising step, the next step consists of sharing knowledge and existing tools on biodiversity mainstreaming in business practices.

- *Giving the floor to businesses : the round table discussion*

After the introduction to IUCN and the regional approach, the representatives of eight companies attending the meeting made presentations on their respective core activities, actions undertaken in terms of biodiversity mainstreaming and the opportunities and risks resulting from such mainstreaming. The companies represented three sectors of activity: agribusiness, extractive industries and fishing.

Following the presentations made by the businesses, the participants identified their common challenges to biodiversity mainstreaming. For extractive industries, the common challenges relate to:

- Governance,
- Dissemination of best practices
- Adoption of a customized legal framework in a country where the sector is not regulated.

As for the agribusiness sector, the major challenges observed are:

- Conflicts with the local communities
- Decreasing agricultural production (the case of shea butter and sorghum)
- Land degradation.

Finally, for the fishing sector, the challenges are:

- Use of inappropriate fishing techniques
- Non-compliance with the regulation.
- *A step towards action: identifying the impacts and dependencies of businesses/ developing a business case for biodiversity mainstreaming*

A first step towards action to mainstream biodiversity in the business strategy is to identify the business impacts and dependencies in terms of biodiversity. This is also an initial step towards awareness. Eco-Bénin is a local NGO and a member of IUCN that supports companies in Benin in this exercise within the «[Café RSE](#)» initiative (corporate social responsibility). The exercise consists of indicating the level of impacts and dependencies of the company's activities on ecosystem services. Five business representatives carried out the exercise the outcomes of which are available in the annex of the present report.

Once the impacts and dependencies were identified, the second step was to develop a business case for biodiversity mainstreaming. In fact, an enterprise may be aware of its impacts and dependencies but one should have sound arguments to convince the Management that measures should be taken in favor of biodiversity. Such measures are most often of financial nature and therefore it is important to give evidence that the cost of the measures will yield positive returns (operational, regulatory, reputation, etc.) on the activity of the enterprise. Two business representatives participated in the exercise. The results are also shown in the annex.

- *Collaboration between businesses and the conservation world*

The business representatives and IUCN came together to discuss on areas of collaboration. The group work made it possible to define the role of each and every one in making the collaboration successful, as well as the requirements for collaboration. The main ideas are shown in the following table:

Businesses	Governments	NGOs/CSOs	IUCN	Requirements
Sharing experiences	monitoring and evaluation	Mediation between government and local communities	Sharing of best practices	Transparency Confidentiality Appropriate legislative and regulatory framework

Day 2: overcoming the barriers to biodiversity mainstreaming

- *A stepping stone for businesses: the 2020 World Conservation Congress*

Businesses being part of the solution for biodiversity conservation, IUCN feels that they should be involved in the preparation and participation of major regional and world events such as the regional forum of Members, the World Conservation Congress, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Every four years, IUCN organizes the World Conservation Congress. This world event is considered as the Olympic games of conservation. The objective of the Congress is to define the priorities and guide conservation and sustainable development actions. The Congress has three main components: the assembly of members, during which IUCN members vote for priority actions; the forum which is a world space dedicated to innovation and conservation science; and the exhibition where exhibitors may present their works to Congress participants and to the public. Businesses in the region may thus increase their visibility by highlighting their actions in favor of biodiversity conservation and share their experiences with other businesses. For more information, here is the link to the upcoming World Conservation Congress scheduled to take place from 11th to 19th June, 2020 in Marseille (France): <https://www.iucncongress2020.org/>.

- *Materializing collaboration : collaborative areas of work and action plan*

The large IUCN family (staff and members) presented eight collaborative area of work to be implemented with the businesses in the region.

1. **Involving businesses in the conservation of the Volta Basin:** IUCN through its *WISE UP to climate* project has worked in the Volta Basin which flows in six West African countries (Burkina Faso, Ghana, Benin, Togo, Mali and Côte d'Ivoire).
2. **Business engagement in the Shared Resources, Joint Solutions (SRJS) project:** this four year – project (2016-2020) is being implemented by IUCN – the Netherlands, World Wild Fund (WWF) the Netherlands and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands. The vision of the project is to achieve sustainable management of landscapes in such a way that they provide the basic ecosystem services upon which the local communities depend and economic development at large. To strike the balance among the interests of the various stakeholders, the programme is building the capacity of the civil society so as to make them act as countervailing power for governments and businesses.
3. **Business engagement in the Great Green Wall for the Sahel and Sahara Initiative:** developing business cases to convince enterprises to engage with the Great Green Wall Initiative. This Initiative is carried by the African Heads of State whose States are located in the Sahelo-Saharan zone. The objective is to implement actions towards combating desertification, climate change and land degradation.
4. **The « Business and Biodiversity» Network:** the goal of the project is to create space for exchanges on best practices and success stories in the area of biodiversity mainstreaming in the region. The network provides an opportunity for businesses that wish to share their experiences in terms of best practices, but also to learn lessons about the right approach to implementing such practices.
5. **Engaging parliamentarians in Senegal:** this initiative aims at sensitizing the parliamentarians on the need to monitor environmental policies. It is a two-pronged approach: awareness raising among people's representatives about issues around biodiversity and capacity building.
6. **BESNet (Business and Environmental Stewardship):** BESNet is a network of businesses engaged in the promotion of and support for mainstreaming the natural capital in both value chains and production of businesses. It was originally established to promote the active participation and contribution of the private sector in sustainable management of the Atewa mountain chain forest reserve and of watershed. The network has become useful overtime and now covers all businesses in Ghana in terms of accounting for the natural capital, advocacy and support for their sustainability and long term security.
7. **Ecotourism in Guinea-Bissau:** this project aims at creating tourism that reconciles biological diversity conservation and socio-economic development of the communities and economic actors / enterprises.
8. **Eco Restore:** The main objective of this project is to provide solutions to farmlands degradation and decrease in agricultural production. To achieve this, business cases should be developed in view of mobilizing the funds required for the implementation of the solutions.

Next steps

In addition to [individual actions](#), the next steps are summarized in the table below.

Activities	Timeline	Support
Refine and confirm the sub-sectors	20 April 2019	Country Programme, Regional Thematic Programme, members, partners, George
Identify and approach businesses	01 July 2019	Country Programme, Regional Thematic Programme and members
Map businesses according to ADKAR (theory of change) and Café RSE	30 September 2019	Nadine, Eco Benin, BEES
Support businesses based on their needs (ADKAR results)	November 2019	Nadine, other IUCN programmes (water) as required
Finalize case studies on value chains and regional status of business and biodiversity)	November 2019	George, country programme, Nadine
Set up a working group for the business and biodiversity network	15 April 2019	IUCN, Eco Bénin, UICN – the Netherlands, Birdlife through Naturama
Develop a strategy for engaging stakeholders (businesses, CSOs...)	30 June 2019	IUCN, Eco Bénin, UICN – the Netherlands, Birdlife through Naturama
Develop a charter of the network	30 June 2019	IUCN, Eco Bénin, UICN – the Netherlands, Birdlife through Naturama
Launch the Business and Biodiversity Network	November 2019	Working Group

For more details on the discussions can be found in the annexes.