



Editorial

Nepal's Biodiversity Vision 2050: "Biodiversity for Resilience and Prosperity"

The 21st century is confronting a triple crisis worldwide: biodiversity loss, climate change, and pollution. These issues weaken ecological integrity and societal stability, which ultimately threaten human survival. Rapid decline in species and genetic diversity, restricted ecosystem services, and threats to livelihoods and public health are evidence of these crises. Additionally, political instability, economic crises, conflicts, and social pressures have further intensified these threats.

In Nepal, biodiversity is an integral part of daily life, underpinning economic growth, livelihoods, and human health. The country's abundant forests, rivers, wetlands, grasslands, agricultural lands, and mountains serve as important ecological assets, forming the backbone of its culture, economy, and lifestyle. Effective management of these resources is crucial for ecological health and global benefits, while also supporting Nepal's future prosperity. Nepal's formal conservation effort began about six decades ago with the establishment of Chitwan National Park in 1973. Over the past twenty years, these initiatives have gained further momentum through active engagement in the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan processes under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) framework.

Nepal has demonstrated a strong commitment and played a vital role in global biodiversity conservation efforts by signing the CBD at the Earth Summit on June 12, 1992, ratifying it on November 23, 1993, and officially becoming its Party on February 21, 1994. To fulfill its commitments, Nepal introduced its first Biodiversity Strategy, the Nepal Biodiversity Strategy (NBS), in 2002, providing a comprehensive framework for preserving its unique natural heritage. This strategy integrated legal, institutional, and community approaches to combat biodiversity threats, aligning with national development goals. Key achievements included adopting landscape-based conservation methods, involving local communities, raising public awareness, and establishing a monitoring system to evaluate progress toward the CBD's goals: biodiversity conservation, sustainable use, and equitable sharing of benefits from genetic resources and traditional knowledge.

Later, the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) (2014–2020) was developed to provide a strategic framework for the conservation and sustainable use of the country's biodiversity. The plan aimed to support local livelihoods, promote environmentally friendly development, and ensure the fair and equitable sharing of benefits derived from the utilization of biological resources across all sectors. It is considered essential for turning the CBD's Aichi Targets into actionable national goals. Over time, Nepal's NBSAP has helped protect landscapes, ecosystems, and species, especially in maintaining wildlife populations and ecosystems. Currently, forests cover 46.08% of the land, cropland 22.59%, grasslands about 11.71%, and

wetlands around 5%, making Nepal a global biodiversity hotspot. The plan also highlighted the vital role of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs), who have relied on biodiversity for their cultural and subsistence needs and have also contributed to sustainable resource management.

Despite these efforts, progress remains insufficient to address the drivers of biodiversity loss and threats. Land use change, habitat fragmentation, forest encroachment, the proliferation of invasive alien species, pollution, overexploitation, and climate change continue to deplete ecological resources. Although the indicators for measuring results for the NBSAP (2014–2020) were appropriate, external factors—notably the COVID-19 pandemic, political transitions, and shocks from earthquakes and economic blockades—affected the achievement of outcomes. Moreover, issues in design, particularly regarding alignment with the Aichi Targets, limited progress reviews, and monitoring, hindered progress. Poor inter-sectoral and inter-governmental coordination, along with inadequate funding, also hindered advancements. Additionally, insufficient mainstreaming of biodiversity into development planning further obstructed progress.

Nepal's Constitution, promulgated in 2015, transformed the country into a federal democratic republic with three levels of government: federal, provincial, and local. The Constitution grants substantial powers to provincial and local governments over biodiversity, natural resources, environment, forests, and regional development, showing that conservation is no longer solely a federal responsibility. It also guarantees citizens' right to live in a clean and healthy environment (Article 30) and emphasizes the need for sustainable resource use, which the NBSAP must uphold.

The adoption of the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) during the Conference of the Parties (CoP) of the CBD in 2022 redefined the 2050 vision, which is living in harmony with nature. It set new goals for 2030, including restoring biodiversity, managing and using biodiversity sustainably, ensuring fair and equitable sharing of benefits, and strengthening implementation mechanisms. Consequently, revising the NBSAP is essential to develop a shared vision among all levels of government, especially to achieve the national targets, align them with the GBF, and contribute to the national development vision, “Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali.” Furthermore, NBSAP aims to provide citizens with constitutional rights to live in a clean and healthy environment.

The Ministry of Forests and Environment is now finalizing the Nepal Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP 2025-2030), aligning with the country's constitutional framework, the GBF, and other multilateral environmental agreements related to climate, desertification, agrobiodiversity, and wetlands. This NBSAP will further support the three objectives of the CBD in a balanced way, while also including the objectives of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing. The NBSAP revision adopted a result-based planning and budgeting approach, along with participatory and consultative methods, to ensure evidence-based and result-oriented decision-making.

The NBSAP vision for 2050 is “Biodiversity for resilience and prosperity,” with a 2030 mission of “Collectivism for biodiversity and human well-being.” To achieve the 2030 mission, seven strategic objectives or pathways are proposed, focusing on protecting, conserving, and restoring biodiversity; promoting sustainable use; integrating biodiversity considerations across sectors and government; ensuring equitable and inclusive biodiversity governance; strengthening capacity at all levels of government, sectors, and IPLCs; improving coordination and collaboration across sectors, levels of government, and with IPLCs; and enhancing financial flows. NBSAP identifies three guiding principles: collectivism, green, inclusive, and resilient development, as well as a human rights-based and social justice approach, as uncompromising principles. Considering the country's current biodiversity status, along with stakeholders' needs and aspirations, especially those of IPLCs, 36 national action targets, along with their respective monitoring indicators, are proposed.

NBSAP is our commitment to conserve, restore, and sustainably manage biodiversity and contribute to nature-positive development. A transformative approach is necessary to achieve the national vision, focusing on managing biodiversity sustainably for the nation's prosperity while balancing both conservation and development needs. A shared vision among all actors, stakeholders, and IPLCs for conservation-friendly development must be developed. Instead of creating an institutional silo, NBSAP should prioritize integrating biodiversity agendas into various thematic and sectoral committees and all levels of government. The emphasis should be on mainstreaming biodiversity agendas across all levels and sectors, thereby strengthening shared accountability for reaching national targets. An institutional mechanism should be reinforced in this context. Additionally, issues of insufficient financing need to be addressed by mobilizing domestic resources through innovative and sustainable funding mechanisms, utilizing different financial and economic instruments such as grants, equity, and de-risking. Key priorities include expanding conservation beyond protected areas, enhancing area-based conservation measures outside protected zones, ensuring full and equitable participation of IPLCs, women, and youth—all while promoting fair benefit sharing—and embedding biodiversity considerations across all sectors. The plan should also incorporate a human rights-based and social justice approach to ensure no one is left behind.

NBSAP shall serve as the strategic framework that guides all sectors to live in harmony with nature or halt and reverse biodiversity losses, strongly emphasizing green, resilient, and inclusive development, and work collectively to achieve the national vision. Most importantly, it should not remain merely a plan but a living, inclusive, result-based framework that facilitates conservation-friendly decisions, inspires communities, and mobilizes adequate resources. The plan shall adopt a “whole-of-government, and whole-of-society” approach, engaging federal and provincial ministries, local governments, IPLCs, NGOs, and the private sector during the planning, monitoring, and implementation of the NBSAP.

Collective action is essential for balancing conservation and development needs, encouraging all stakeholders to collaborate in finding a sustainable balance. We anticipate that this NBSAP will enhance cooperation, mobilize financial resources, address the fundamental causes of biodiversity loss, and help achieve the national biodiversity vision.

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