

# INTERACT-BIO DIALOGUE SUMMARY: PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEE

Mainstreaming biodiversity concerns into decision making at national, state and local levels

19 March 2019 | Godavari Conference Hall, Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, New Delhi



**INTERACT-Bio**  
Integrated action on biodiversity



## 1. Framing the context

The second instalment of the national dialogue took place at a meeting of the Project Steering Committee (PSC) on the 19th of March 2019 at Narmada Conference Hall in the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEFCC). The dialogue was held under the Chairmanship of Dr J. R. Bhatt, Advisor, MoEFCC, with national and sub-national administrators concerned with planning, promotion, co-ordination and overseeing the implementation of India's biodiversity and forest management policies and programmes. The dialogue centred on updates under the project, strategies that would improve the ecosystem services to the urban regions of Kochi, Panaji and Mangaluru and challenges arising from the same.

This dialogue was next in a series aimed at promoting and strengthening biodiversity mainstreaming. These dialogues are intended to bring together national, subnational and local actors for a vertically and horizontally integrated dialogue on the importance and benefits of biodiversity conservation, as well as providing an opportunity for knowledge sharing and information exchange on the mainstreaming of biodiversity and ecosystem services.

There is an urgent need for the assessment and appreciation of the ecosystem services provided by biodiversity within and around city-regions and to formulate and implement sustainable strategies, which offset investments

in conventional infrastructure that has high carbon lock-in and leverage ecosystem services in a sustainable and inclusive manner to make Indian cities safe and resilient.

Rapid urban and economic growth in India is placing ever increasing stress on ecological systems. Urban sprawl and escalating demands for resources is leading to land use changes and encroachment in and around city-regions, causing environmental degradation, pollution, and loss of critical habitats. Sub-national BSAPs have not yet been developed in any city in the country, though Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs) have been formed in several of them. There is an urgent need for the assessment and appreciation of the ecosystem services provided by biodiversity within and around city-regions and to formulate and implement sustainable strategies, which offset investments in conventional infrastructure that has high carbon lock-in and leverage ecosystem services in a sustainable and inclusive manner to make Indian cities safe and resilient.

The dialogue thus seeks to contribute to the global conversation having direct impact on sustainable development goal (SDG) 11, to make cities and human settlements more inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable as it seeks to understand what steps a city can take to harness nature and its benefits. It also has impacts on SDG 13 climate action as the project cities, are coastal and therefore at risk from sea level rise.



The dialogue also has links with the Strategic Plan (2011-2020) contributing directly to Aichi Target 2, which promotes the integration of biodiversity values into national and local development and planning processes.

## 2. Emerging themes

### 2.1. Updates on planned restorative actions within urban ecosystems

Sub-national authorities within the cities of Kochi and Panaji and State Biodiversity Boards of Kerala and Goa have been actively participating in the project activities. After extensive stakeholder consultations, the pilot projects that have been planned for the city of Kochi include Development of Pollinator Garden, Herbal Garden and Nature Interpretation Centre at Subhash Bose Park and Thevera Canal Restoration. It was suggested that the interpretation centres developed with financial support from GIZ in Goa, Mumbai and Gujarat by Archemedis, a German organisation, may be visited, prior to developing the interpretation centre under this project, once the approval for the project is received from IKI. To further highlight the importance of mangrove ecosystem in Kochi, a detailed study on the site specific ecosystem services provided by mangroves has been initiated.

A handbook of trees of Subhash Bose Park in Kochi for the purpose of information dissemination and education has been developed which also comprises of GIS based maps of the trees in the Park. In addition, the trees in the Park have been labelled. The handbook was released by Mrs. Soumini Jain, Hon'ble Mayor of Kochi Municipal Corporation in presence of Retired Justice of High Court, Justice Sukumaran. Kochi Municipal Corporation has also allocated dedicated funds to activities focussing on biodiversity conservation and ecosystem services in the municipal budget. The project steering committee recorded this as an ideal method for mainstreaming biodiversity conservation in cities.

The ecosystem service assessment workshop in Panaji identified mangroves and back waters as critical ecosystems for the city.

### 2.2. Strategies for Engagement and Dissemination

Various global and regional platforms were being employed to engage and disseminate the key messages of the project. The project was showcased at the CBD COP at Sharm-El-Sheikh and representatives from Kochi, Kerala State Biodiversity Board and Goa State Biodiversity Board attended the same. The project will also be showcased at an upcoming Resilient Cities Asia Pacific Congress in New Delhi from 15-17 April. A session, focussing on the

project is being planned at the Congress, with participation from project staff from all the three project countries. At a local level, in addition to various Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials outlined earlier, illustrated natural asset maps for the project cities are in the process of being developed. These maps are uniquely powerful visual tools that simplify, represent and communicate information about complex ecosystem structures, functions and services in a geographical area. The maps support local governments to integrate biodiversity conservation and ecosystem management into urban planning and community involvement for sustainable development and improved quality of life.

Ward wise meetings are also being planned for Kochi which would engage a wide array of stakeholders within the city. These meetings will then form the basis of discussions with experts and practitioners to develop the LBSAP for the city.

Since capacity building is a major focus of the project, ICLEI South Asia has been disseminating results from the ongoing project activities and trainings to other cities as well. This has resulted in Gangtok city displaying interest to be included in the project as an observing city to benefit from the capacity building activities. A letter in this regard had been sent to ICLEI South Asia by the Hon'ble Mayor of Gangtok. The same had been submitted by ICLEI South Asia to the project steering committee. The project steering committee recommended that two additional cities be included as observing cities in this project (within the existing funds). Since the city of Gangtok has already sent a request in this regard, it was decided by the committee to recommend the inclusion of the city of Gangtok as an observing city. It was suggested at looking into the possibility of inclusion of the city of Delhi as an observing city (after carrying out discussions with the city and gauging the interest of the city).

### 2.3. How can ICLEI facilitate the various entire action points described above?

It was pointed out that one of the main issues faced by urban local bodies was finance and therefore the project should help the cities to prepare bigger projects for accessing funds from others sources such as GIM and ICZM etc. to improve basic infrastructure and incorporate nature based solutions into traditionally grey projects. The key messages which need to emanate from this project should be why biodiversity is important and integral to the urban environment, and how interventions through biodiversity can improve the quality of environment by providing clean air and clean water.

### 3. Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework implications

Going forward, the dialogue and the points raised can be viewed through the Post-2020 lens, specifically in point 5 of ICLEI's 10 Point Framework, which promotes the creation of an enabling environment that supports the mainstreaming of the multiple social and health benefits of nature at the local and subnational levels to improve the quality of life and resilience of communities, enhance social cohesion and lead to financial benefits and savings for both individuals and governments. In addition, Point 3 promotes the creation of an enabling environment for significantly increased private sector investment and development aid in nature-based solutions at local and subnational levels, as they are closer to the mainstreaming sectors and best positioned to build and sustain functional and resilient ecosystems and urban-rural linkages.

### INTERACT-Bio project at a glance

**Full title:** Integrated subnational action for biodiversity: Supporting implementation of National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans through the mainstreaming of biodiversity objectives across city-regions

**Funded by:** the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) through the International Climate Initiative (IKI)

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