



Education and awareness for mainstreaming and public engagement in formulation of the new National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP)

Final Report



2022

Project Completion and Impact Report

Organization Legal Name	Bethlehem University. Section: Palestine Institute for Biodiversity and Sustainability (PIBS)
Project Title	<i>“Education and awareness for mainstreaming and public engagement in formulation of the new National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP)”</i>
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Royal Belgian Institute of Natural Sciences (RBINS)

Overall Objective: Academic Cooperation with the Environment Quality Authority to increase public awareness and participation in the new National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP)

Grant Amount: 7,142.86 €

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Context

The State of Palestine is a state in the making and is under Israeli occupation. Yet, the Palestinian government has been concerned about the environment from its inception after the Oslo agreements. These agreements, while interim and proposed for five years transitional period (1994-1999), were essentially left in place without a final agreement that was supposed to be reached to cover final status issues like settlements, borders, Jerusalem, natural resources, and refugees. Nevertheless, the interim Palestinian government did incorporate issues of the environment from its beginnings promulgating section 33 of its basic laws related to that, an environmental law and a national strategy for the environment (both in 1999). In the past two decades, the government also signed a number of key international agreements related to the environment. These range from the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), to the Cartagena protocols, to the UNESCO convention on heritage sites and many others. There are both privileges and responsibilities for ratifying these agreements. But the main focus of the government remains sustainability (per UN Sustainable Development Goals) and a big part of this sustainability is our compliance with CBD including achievement of Aichi Biodiversity Targets (ABTs). While we have limited resources, our philosophy is we can still do a lot along these lines ensuring sustainable human and natural communities.

Palestine, despite its relatively small size, has enormous biodiversity. The State of Palestine is now recognized as a non-member State at the UN (United Nations, 2019). The State of Palestine has signed numerous international conventions and treaties, including conventions that are significant to biodiversity conservation (United Nations Treaty Collection, 2019; Convention on

Biological Diversity, 2019). Palestine signed the International Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in 2015 and submitted an interim report (the first in Palestine the 5th for other signatories. see <https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/ps/ps-nr-05-en.pdf>). In January 2021, the state signed an agreement with us (PIBS at Bethlehem University) to develop the fuller version (called the 6th National Report but actually is the second for the state). This is now completed and will be uploaded online first week of October 2021). The second part of the agreement for which work commenced 1 September 2021 is to revise and update the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) of the State of Palestine. According to the consolidated guidance set by COP decisions and other CBD guideline (see <https://www.cbd.int/nbsap/guidance.shtml>) under mainly decision IX/8 and X/2 the NBSAP should consider the following issues to meet the objectives of the Convention:

- a) Ensure that NBSAP is action-driven, practical and prioritized, and provide an effective and up-to-date national framework for the implementation of the three objectives of the Convention, its relevant provisions and relevant guidance developed under the Convention;
- b) Ensure that NBSAP takes into account the principles in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development;
- c) Emphasize the integration of the objectives of the Convention into relevant sectoral or cross-sectoral plans, programmes and policies;
- d) Promote the mainstreaming of gender considerations;
- e) Promote synergies between activities to implement the Convention and poverty eradication;
- f) Identify priority actions at the national level, including strategic actions to achieve the objectives of the Convention;
- g) Develop a plan to mobilize national, regional and international financial resources in support of priority activities.

Public participation will be critical for this process to achieve these objectives. Mainstreaming is critical, especially taking in human well-being and bridging knowledge/science with policy and implementation.

Implementation Partners for this Project

Environmental Quality Authority (EQA)

Summary for overall results/impact of the project

Project Components and Deliverables

Component		Deliverable		
#	Description	Sub#	Description	Results for Deliverable
1	Expand an existing database of stakeholders to include wider public “influencers” which include youth and women and religious leaders, farmers, cooperatives and others who can become a backbone of implementation of relevant sections of the NBSAP. Also hold one launching workshop to seek input.	1.1	Collect contact information to add to the preliminary existing list and thus build a database of key stakeholders and influencers working in the field of biodiversity, environment, and conservation in Palestine.	4 focus group meetings were held with EQA to collect the data about the stakeholders and to reviewing their information
				Key stakeholders list reviewed and disseminated to have key stakeholders and influencers working in the field of biodiversity, environment, and conservation in Palestine. The list delivered to EQA (can be found in this link - note it has several tabs) to upload later on CHM website and to be available for everyone.
				404 stakeholders gathered had their emails subscribed to a list called NBSAP@palestinature.org and are regularly invited to attend all events including weekly workshops as well as receive reading and other material related to the NBSAP project. This tool became a very productive tool of capacity building and consultation to build a more participatory NBSAP.
2	Develop a text that includes key points of the NBSAP being worked on and make it available in Arabic to be used in public education, awareness, and consultation.	2.1	Make a synopsis (about 30 pages) in Arabic that includes the findings of CBD 6th National Report and the proposed National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan	2 focus group meetings were done in order to brainstorm on the most important topics related to the strategy, which must be raised about and familiarized with the local community
				Review for Key points from 6th National Report and NBSAP was done to gathering information about topics chosen in the focus group meetings and text translated to be used in public education and awareness (see Link for the final document containing these summaries in Arabic and English)
3	Bridging science-policy-public participation: Run additional four workshops and	3.1	Make the synopsis available on many platforms (websites of key environmental groups, PIBS, EQA,	Two Focus group meetings held to plan for dissemination and distribution of information in a sustainable manner. Based on these meetings, it was agreed on topics and text to be used, and instead of printing them, a

<p>focus groups that reach a minimum 100 Palestinian influencers from diverse backgrounds</p>		<p>online social media etc.) with clear instructions to give feedback and suggest ideas for implementation.</p> <p>decision was made that the awareness and education process would be carried out through posts on social media and creating two educational videos to be used in the long-term awareness and education process.</p>
<p>(gender, age, geographic location, educational background etc.) to increase knowledge and participation in policy making and in conservation.</p>	<p>3.2 Disseminate the synopsis to all (>100 influencers and stakeholders) in the database (generated via Activity 1.1) and request their comments in ways that result in additional knowledge and interactive feedback that continuously improves the outcome being better strategy and action plans for Palestine and a mainstreaming and buy-in of these.</p>	<p>Both Arabic and English texts were used in weekly posts through the museum’s social media aimed at raising awareness and educating the local community about the National Biodiversity Strategy for and the entities responsible for it. You can see the links below:</p> <p>Post 1: https://www.facebook.com/PIBS.PMNH/posts/3135713810040470</p> <p>Post 2: https://www.facebook.com/PIBS.PMNH/posts/3139638179648033</p> <p>Post 3: https://www.facebook.com/PIBS.PMNH/posts/3145108079101043</p> <p>Post 4: https://www.facebook.com/PIBS.PMNH/posts/3150111015267416</p> <p>Post 5: https://www.facebook.com/PIBS.PMNH/posts/3159492494329268</p> <p>Post 6: https://www.facebook.com/PIBS.PMNH/posts/3165988450346339</p> <p>Post 7: https://www.facebook.com/PIBS.PMNH/posts/3174608009484383</p> <p>Post 8: https://www.facebook.com/PIBS.PMNH/posts/3189797237965460</p>

				<p>Post 9: https://www.facebook.com/PIBS.PMNH/posts/3195523864059464</p>
		3.3	<p>Conduct additional four meetings/workshops in the West Bank and Gaza to discuss the synopsis. The workshops will be held both in person and online (proportional attendance on each depends on location and pandemic situation- all health guidelines will be followed). The attendance includes a minimum 30 individuals (influencers) at each location. The conferences also take into account the results of COP15 for CBD and the new global biodiversity targets. The conference subjects will be decided based on the first meeting with stakeholders (highlighted in Sub objective 1) but includes subjects like ecosystem services, protected area management, special planning, and green economy as well as activities people can do themselves to promote biodiversity.</p>	<p>25 workshops were held virtually and one workshop held in person for the key stakeholders aimed at mainstreaming, raising awareness and education about the NBSAP, and to educate participants in the areas presented in the workshops, in addition to involving all stakeholders in developing action plans through the topics presented in building the national biodiversity strategy and action plan. Another 10 workshops were also attended to take action points for building the national biodiversity strategy and action plan and used to publicize the work. See the list of the workshops (Dates, titles, facilitators, recordings) and the list of attendees Action Points from the workshops can be found in this link</p> <p>Through the focus group meetings and the workshops we agreed to have the educational module for the public as videos about the Biodiversity (link) and about the International Convention on Biological Diversity (link) . The first video was boosted and reached some 66,000 people with over 12500 engaging. The second reached 44,240 and 11,880 engaged.</p>

Tools, products, or methodologies that resulted from this project or contributed to the results.

In working on the NBSAP, we used five principles:

- 1) The most important aspect of this is grass root involvement: involving local people in all levels of planning, managing natural resources, and ensuring all have fair/equal access to benefit sharing from the rich biodiversity in Palestine and will continue to build as work in progress and will continue even after the end of the construction of the revised NBSAP.
- 2) We do not reinvent the wheel. We use the post 2020 CBD frameworks and other countries experiences and our own local experiences and background (including the 1999 NBSAP) to tailor a program that works practically and on the ground (both the strategy and all action plans)
- 3) Empowerment and capacity building: We need human capacity building especially in developing countries including restructuring of educational systems at all levels. For example, schools and universities should not kill creativity & innovation and create conformist consumers; They should help young people become better innovative citizen activists who protect the environment! RESPECT (for ourselves, for others, for nature) leads to sustainability and coexistence (with each other and with nature). In line with national development goals, the envisioned NBSAP must be based on preserving both cultural and natural heritage. It is based on caring, empathy, and collaboration both across borders (which eventually should be dismantled) and within borders. Moving beyond measures of GDP to measures of human and nature well-being as real indicators of sustainability and having a balanced ecosystem.
- 4) We must use our indigenous knowledge, practices, and value systems: Indigenous knowledge includes traditional ways of production and consumption and includes things like Aoneh (collaboration, support), and sumud (self-sustenance, resilience). Using new technology can work together (e.g for food sovereignty) while protecting the environment.
- 5) We have to have environmental justice. People should be entitled to clean air, clean water, and a healthy environment all around.

How we worked locally

We adhered to the policy and recommendations of CBD, IPBES, TEEB and other relevant global frameworks but take into account local situations and available local guidelines and resources and in particular

- 1) Results of consultations conducted especially for this purpose, including those in the first and second NBSAP conferences and then in weekly ongoing workshops and focus groups. We will be holding many more like governorate-level workshops, institutional workshops, or other consultations and meetings carried out over consultation phase.
- 2) Outcomes of activities carried out and reports delivered by the technical teams
- 3) Results of the analysis of all feedback and data gathered including on the NBSAP@palestinature.org

4) MoPAD-issued Technical Annex of the Guidance on Developing Sector and Cross-Cutting Strategies

5) Guidelines on general political issues, inferred from PLO Permanent Status Guidelines for the PRDP (September 2009) of the PLO Negotiations Affairs Department.

6) The Manual for the Development of Sectoral Strategies (2017-2022) which was prepared by the Ministry of Finance and Planning has identified a set of expectations that are deemed as the objectives of the sectoral planning process. These were as follows (including what we did to achieve):

a) Determine the role of responsibility centers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector in the delivery of services and the sector's development. This is an ongoing process but some roles are listed in the first tab of this [link](#)

b) Determine the government's efforts to achieve the strategic objectives over the next six years through goals, objectives and standards of program policies. (This is still to be done through our work on the NBSAP).

c) Determine the required arrangements to ensure coordination between governmental and NGO plans. This is still to be done through our work on the NBSAP.

d) Describe actions needed to influence the decisions and actions of civil society organizations and the private sector (including legislation and laws). This is 80% done via the action plans but is ongoing process.

e) Describe the expected role of the private sector over the next six years including adherence to laws and legislations, fund transfer and governmental support. This is still to be done through our work on the NBSAP.

f) Describe interventions agreed upon by all development partners, including funding plans for development projects (internal and external).

g) We joined international for including COP26 International Group cop26-international-group@googlegroups.com, <https://nbsapforum.net/forum> , Arab Country groups

Using these guidelines and based on the directives of the Environment Quality Authority, work on the NBSAP commenced in October 2021 right after the completion of the Sixth National Report to CBD (this essentially acted as the baseline data). The overall process was undertaken through the following activities:

- Weekly expert thematic workshops held every Thursday starting 25 November 2021 that is covering all areas needed to build the NBSAP to come up with action points while also doing capacity building
- The action points are gathered in a table/worksheet available
- The Mid-term National Workshop (MNW) of the NBSAP was held 21 February 2022 with objectives: a) To review the progress of preparation of strategy and action plans at various levels under NBSAP project. This included briefing on outputs of the weekly workshops and desktop and focus group/individual meetings; b) To facilitate the exchange of ideas and experiences amongst the coordinators of agencies involved in the process; c) To outline the future course of action to meet the objectives of NBSAP; d) To seek the participation of agencies and sectors not so far involved in the process, including generating interest for subsequent implementation of the action plans. Four breakout sessions were held (Conservation, ecosystem service/benefit sharing,

databases/research, and resource mobilization). Breakout rooms generated action points which were incorporated in the system.

- We got involvement of EQA (various divisions), Ministry of Agriculture (various sections), Ministry of Tourism and soon will expand to others: Ministry of Finance and Planning, Ministry of National Economy, Ministry of Labor, Water Authority, Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, Risk Prevention and Agricultural Insurance Fund, Palestinian Agricultural Credit Institution, the Ministry of Local Government, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education etc
- We started mainstreaming our NBSAP via posts on social media with the hashtag #NBSAPP (NBSAP Palestine) and there has been good interactions with these posts.

In all this work, three questions were sought to be answered:

- Is a comprehensive understanding of biodiversity, and a full coverage of the issues involved, taking place?
- Is the process of the NBSAP participatory enough? If not, what more needs to be done?
- How effective will an exercise of this nature be, in actually achieving conservation and sustainable use, and in protecting indigenous knowledge and local community rights?

The large number of strategies and actions in the NBSAP necessitated prioritizing them (will be happening in the National Workshops in June and July). The facilitating committee (EQA/PIBS) discuss the prioritization table in detail attempting to be as 'objective' as possible, keeping in mind various factors. However, the introductory note acknowledged that some biases are inevitable.

Taking some ideas from the literature (e.g. Mistry et al 2021 and the desktop study shared earlier with over 1100 documents reviewed) and via the participatory thematic workshops and focus groups, we develop ideas for working with Palestinians of all backgrounds to build an inclusive national strategy and action plan. Specific points considered in both gathering data (for example via the focus groups and workshops) and in mainstreaming the NBSAP include:

- 1) Develop training modules for local people to disseminate widely via social media that are culturally sensitive and that draws on the rich traditional knowledge and practices of our people (in the Fertile Crescent). These can include powerpoint (here is an example https://cobracollective.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Traditional-knowledge-eLearning-course_FINAL-.pdf), written briefing in lay-person language, video (a short video see this link and filter by video tutorial), applications on mobile phones etc.
- 2) Traditional knowledge action plans that are developed collectively in participatory way are practical and include. Knowledge from the past can be very valuable to conserve biodiversity and have tested solutions from the past (Boivin and Crowther 2021).
- 3) Stakeholder and community analysis is critical
- 4) Think of rights, responsibilities, and returns (benefit)
- 5) Think of both spatial and temporal issues in building action plans (where, when)

Facilitators for all workshops follow classical guidelines of effective facilitation leading to achieving results including:

- a) Learn all aspects of session and its relation to NBSAP (desktop info digestion),
- b) Prepare by researching signed participants to know more about them,

- c) clearly explain in the beginning to participants the NBSAP, its process and what is expected of the session and especially highlight benefit to them, to society, and to nature (utilitarian, aesthetic, ecosystem, intrinsic),
- d) Round of introductions (get to know the participants: learn their names and backgrounds)
- e) Develop action oriented main agenda: list of subjects, breakout (if needed), report back etc.
- f) Encourage participation and avoid lecturing, merely facilitate: Be neutral, an active listener, observant, positive and be aware of group dynamics
- g) Encourage feedback and questions

Key issues for Workshops

1. Regional, national, and thematic workshops provide opportunities for networking at various levels and thereby learning from each other's experiences. The outputs so far (after the 6th meeting) exemplary in coming up with action points etc.
2. Regular meetings and workshops allow for the orientation of new people and refreshing of the objectives for those who have already been involved.
3. More time and effort needs to be invested in planning so that it can allow for innovation of formats/schedules of a meeting.
4. More effort should be expended by participants to read ahead of workshop (good material here is critical)
5. There needs to be regular discussion and orientation regarding cross-cutting issues (gender, equity etc), intersectoral issues, inter-state linkages and the need to build them into the NBSAP. This needs to happen especially at the initial stages of the process and reinforced later on.
6. The future regional workshops needs to focus on regional specific issues, which could be later, reflected in the national plan. Responsibility for organizing regional workshops by executing agencies, allows for their greater involvement in the process.
7. More than one round of regional or thematic workshops might enable refinement of action plans and larger interaction and new ideas.
8. Budgetary and programmatic plans need to be incorporated

Draft of objectives, goals, milestones based on post-2020 GBF

The post-2020 GBF recognized that : a) Ecosystems and their biodiversity underpin the global economy and human well-being and need to be valued and protected, b) Damage to global ecosystem services and biodiversity is acute and accelerating (five major threats globally Climate Change, overexploitation, pollution, habitat destruction, and invasive species and we add occupation/colonization locally), c) Ecosystem damage carries costs for business and society, D) Growing demand from an expanding wealthier population is a key cause of biodiversity loss, E) Investing in ecological infrastructure can offer greater returns than man-made alternatives and thus makes economic sense. Based on our engagement collectively (EQA, PIBS, other stakeholders through over 35 workshops - see above), we developed and publicized new NBSAP objectives, goals and milestones (these were presented at a [workshop 9 June 2022](#) at the conclusion of this CeBios project of mainstreaming NBSAP process):

Objective A. Increase protection and conservation measures to halt the decline and minimize loss of habitats and species. This includes dealing with the five major threats identified globally (climate change, habitat destruction, pollution, overexploitation, invasive species)

and colonization threat (locally) in ways to reduce what can be reduced and mitigate impact on biodiversity for others

Goal A: The integrity of all ecosystems is enhanced, with an increase of at least 15 per cent in the area, connectivity and integrity of natural ecosystems, supporting healthy and resilient populations of all species, the rate of extinctions has been reduced at least tenfold, and the risk of species extinctions across all taxonomic and functional groups, is halved, and genetic diversity of wild and domesticated species is safeguarded, with at least 90% of genetic diversity within all species maintained.

Milestone A.1: Net gain in the area, connectivity and integrity of natural systems of at least 5 per cent.

Milestone A.2: The increase in the extinction rate is halted or reversed, and the extinction risk is reduced by at least 10 per cent, with a decrease in the proportion of species that are threatened, and the abundance and distribution of populations of species is enhanced or at least maintained.

Milestone A.3: Genetic diversity of wild and domesticated species is safeguarded, with an increase in the proportion of species that have at least 90 per cent of their genetic diversity maintained

Milestone A.4 By 2030 protect two large mammals (e.g. Gazelles and Vormella and stem their decline). By 2050 have effective protection of 9% of the area of Palestine

Milestone A.5 By 2030 have strong and enforced incentives and disincentives to result in 50% decrease in harmful practices

Objective B. Enhance ecosystem services and benefit sharing

Goal B Nature's contributions to people are valued, maintained or enhanced through conservation and sustainable use supporting the global development agenda for the benefit of all; The benefits from the utilization of genetic resources are shared fairly and equitably, with a substantial increase in both monetary and non-monetary benefits shared, including for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

Milestone B.1: Nature and its contributions to people are fully accounted for and inform all relevant public and private decisions.

Milestone B.2 The long-term sustainability of all categories of nature's contributions to people is ensured, with those currently in decline restored, contributing to each of the relevant Sustainable Development Goals

Milestone B.3 The share of monetary benefits received by providers, including holders of traditional knowledge, has increased.

Milestone B.4 Non-monetary benefits, such as the participation of providers, including holders of traditional knowledge, in research and development, has increased.

Objective C. Increase knowledge generation, accessibility, and modernization that aids in conservation measures and ecosystem services. [Knowledge is critical for biodiversity conservation at all levels from knowledge of species, habitats, threats, ecosystems, protected areas, methods of conservation, and methods of mainstreaming. We must also use GIS/RS, databases, and have a CHM].

Goal C: Develop new programs for capacity building, knowledge generation, mainstreaming, and sharing in ways that enhance conservation

Milestone C.1: New university level programs relating to biodiversity.

Milestone C.2: Increased children education and awareness via both curricular and extracurricular programs

Milestone C.3: Increase research productivity in areas of biodiversity by 300% by 2030

Milestone C.4: Increase community involvement by creating facilities and programs that engage, inspire and activate

Milestone C.5: Increase women participation in leadership positions by 2030 to 20% of all institutions working on biodiversity issues. Increase children awareness activities to reach 30% of all students (elementary, middle, and highschool) by 2030

Objective D. Improved governance, cooperation, resource mobilization and capacity building

Goal D Better governmental and non-governmental structures related to biodiversity are implemented. The gap between available financial and other means of implementation, and those necessary to achieve the 2050 Vision, is closed.

Milestone D.1 New systems are developed and implemented (e.g. via documentary evidence) that improve performance of governmental, academics, and NGOs

Milestone D.2 Create a biodiversity board composed of key stakeholders that oversees the implementation of the NBSAP

Milestone D.3 Adequate financial resources to implement the framework are available and deployed, progressively closing the financing gap up to at least US \$700 billion per year by 2030.

Milestone D.4 Adequate other means, including capacity-building and development, technical and scientific cooperation and technology transfer to implement the framework to 2030 are available and deployed.

The indicators and action plants for the post-2020 targets are being developed. Representatives of EQA (Dr. Issa Musa Albardeiya and Mohammad Mahassnah) are attending the CBD meeting in Kenya and will make sure taht the NBSAP document draft that was created will be updated as needed and adopted before the end of this year 2022. Its mainstreaming done via this project ensures “buy-in” for the implementation phase in 2023 and beyond.

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