



DECENTRALISED COOPERATION AND BIODIVERSITY

Scaling up French local government action abroad
for biodiversity conservation

POLICY REPORT



Directorate-General of Global Affairs, Development and Partnerships

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About IUCN France

Created in 1992, the IUCN French Committee is the network of International Union for Conservation of Nature organisations and experts in France. This unique partnership of two ministries (French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development, and French Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy), 13 public organisations, 41 non-governmental organisations, and more than 250 experts meets in specialised commissions and working groups.

It has two main missions: to meet biodiversity challenges and promote French expertise worldwide. The IUCN French Committee's mixed structure makes it a unique platform for biodiversity dialogue and expertise, associating local authorities and private companies.

IUCN France has developed seven programmes on biodiversity policies, protected areas, endangered species, ecosystem management, education and communication, overseas, and international cooperation. These programmes work with IUCN France member organisations and experts to produce assessments, make concrete recommendations and manage projects to take forward biodiversity conservation policies, knowledge, and action.



This study links up two
of IUCN France's main
areas of action

IUCN France and local government

IUCN France has been working for a number of years now to encourage and scale up local government (Regions, Departments, Cities and communes...) support for biodiversity. It sets up the Local Government and Biodiversity Working Group in 2007 following a recommendation adopted by the IUCN World Conservation Congress in Bangkok in 2004. This national platform for discussion and cooperation consists of voluntary French local authorities, their main networks and IUCN France network members (central government, government-funded institutions, non-governmental organisations [NGOs], etc.) totalling over 110 bodies.

IUCN France and international cooperation

IUCN France was tasked with managing the Small Grants Programme in 2007. This capacity-building programme for civil society in Southern countries is funded by the French Global Environment Facility (FGEF). IUCN France currently manages a portfolio of approximately 80 of the 175 funded projects in some 30 mainly French-speaking African countries. These projects support biodiversity protection and climate change mitigation action by African associations.

The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development and IUCN

France is a fully-fledged member of the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the world's oldest and largest global environmental organisation. IUCN was founded in October 1948 following an international conference in Fontainebleau, France.

The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development (MAEDI) Directorate-General of Global Affairs, Development, and Partnerships (DGM) is tasked with developing and monitoring French international cooperation strategies in health, food security, human development, environment, and climate change. It works with its diplomatic network, its operators, and its partners to promote environmental and climate change mitigation actions. It liaises with the relevant administrations to develop strategies and monitor international negotiations and processes on climate change, water and biodiversity, desertification, forests, chemical product and waste treatment, and disaster prevention. It helps to define development cooperation policies in these sectors, and monitors actions taken by international funds, conventions, and programmes for the global environment. It has forged a number of strategic partnerships with major environmental organisations, including IUCN with which it has been working on a partnership basis since 2005.



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Chapter 1

BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION: BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

1.1 Biodiversity conservation: a challenge for society recognised at all institutional levels of public action

1.1.1 Biodiversity conservation: a common concern of humankind¹

Biodiversity, or biological diversity, constitutes the planet's living fabric. This concept, which first appeared in the late 1980s², covers all forms of life on Earth and the interactions between them and with their environment.

Biodiversity is expressed on three levels: diversity of genes, species, and ecosystems. It drives the evolutionary potential that guarantees the capacity of species (including the human species) and ecosystems to adapt to global change.

The goods and services provided by biodiversity make it key to our lives, and its preservation is of vital importance to human societies. Healthy ecosystems support essential processes and provide many services called “ecological services”, which are crucial to the well-being of humankind and all its activities.³

Definition of biological diversity

Article 2 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), concluded in Rio de Janeiro on 5 June 1992, defines biological diversity as, “the variability among living organisms from all sources including, among others, 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.”

Despite its fundamental importance, biodiversity loss is now an incontrovertible fact. Although life evolves by means of speciation (evolutionary process by which new species appear) and extinction phenomena, the current rate of species disappearance is 100 to 1,000 times higher than the natural extinction rate. Scientists have announced that we are entering the sixth wave of mass species extinction in our planet's history, the first to be anthropogenic.⁴

In 2015, of the 1.8 million known species in the world, the IUCN Red List catalogued 77,340 threatened species with 22,784 of these threatened with extinction.⁵ This risk of extinction concerns 41% of amphibians, 13% of birds, 25% of

1 - United Nations, 1992. *Convention on Biological Diversity*. Rio de Janeiro, 28 p.

2 - The word “biodiversity” was used for the first time in 1986 at the National Forum on Biological Diversity held by the United States National Research Council. The publication of the Biodiversity report on the forum by naturalist Edward O. Wilson two years later spread and mainstreamed the term.

3 - IUCN France, 2012. *Panorama des services écologiques fournis par les milieux naturels en France – Volume 1 : Contexte et enjeux*. Paris, 47 p.

4 - *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MEA)*, 2005. *Ecosystems and Human Well-Being*. Island Press. – The assessment was launched by the United Nations (UN) in 2001 to scientifically assess the extent and impacts of ecosystem changes on human well-being. More than 1,300 experts worldwide worked on this four-year assessment.

5 - IUCN, 2015. *The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species*. Version 2015.2.

Definition of ecosystem services

The *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment*⁶ report defines ecosystem services as, “the benefits people obtain from ecosystems.” These services can be broken down into four categories:

- Provisioning services cover the production of material goods directly usable by humans: food, fibres, wood, natural medicines, etc.
- Regulating services are responsible for controlling natural processes: climate regulation, water and air quality regulation, natural hazard regulation, pest, disease and pollination regulation, etc.
- Cultural services are nonmaterial benefits obtained through spiritual enrichment, aesthetic experiences, and recreation: well-being, recreation, spirituality, etc.
- Supporting services form the basis for all other ecosystem services, as they are vital to the functioning of the ecosystem: water cycling, nutrient cycling, photosynthesis, etc.

mammals, 31% of sharks and rays, 33% of reef-forming corals, and 34% of conifers. Human activities are also deteriorating and destroying natural habitats: 60% of the world's natural habitats have been degraded over the last 50 years and nearly 70% are used unsustainably, as is the case with the forests. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment also finds that 60% of the world's ecosystem services are being degraded when 40% of our economy relies on them.⁷

This biodiversity crisis is associated with the development of human activities, especially unsustainable consumption and production practices. Five main causes have been identified worldwide:

- Degradation and destruction of natural habitats (growing urbanisation, construction of transport infrastructures, agricultural intensification, etc.)

- Overexploitation of natural resources (overfishing, deforestation, illegal trade, etc.)
- Widespread pollution of all sorts (domestic, agricultural, and industrial)
- Climate change
- Development of invasive alien species

Many experts believe that this pressure on the ecosystems will further increase in coming decades and do irreversible damage if we do not quickly make huge changes to our activities and our behaviour. Biodiversity loss will have growing impacts on our living conditions and will drive up poverty, especially in the Southern countries.

Biodiversity is a global public good⁸ and our collective life insurance for the future. Deterioration and loss of our natural capital combined with climate change is posing an acute environmental threat worldwide. Biodiversity can offer effective solutions to the main challenges facing humankind (climate change mitigation and adaptation, water supply, food security, disaster risk management, etc.). Yet there is still a long way to go to make the world really wake up to the biodiversity crisis and its repercussions for our societies.

1.1.2 Engagement at all institutional levels⁹

Given the importance of the issue, biodiversity loss was placed on the international political agenda in the early 1990s. In 1992, 150 heads of government signed the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) at the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit, the meeting that established the international community's commitment to sustainable development. The signatories to this flagship document for international action in favour of biodiversity set three main goals:¹⁰

- The conservation of biological diversity
- Its sustainable use
- The fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources

6 - *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment* (MEA), 2005, Ibid.

7 - *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment* (MEA), 2005, Ibid.

8 - Resource, good or service available to all and whose use and preservation justify international collective action.

9 - A summary of the history of this engagement is also available in *Indicateurs de biodiversité pour les collectivités territoriales : cadre de réflexion et d'analyse pour les territoires*, IUCN France, 2014, Paris, 159 p.

10 - United Nations, 1992. *Convention on Biological Diversity*. Rio de Janeiro, 28 p.

The decisions adopted by the Conferences of the Parties (COP) to the CBD are international in scope. In 2010, the 10th COP to the CBD in Nagoya, Japan, adopted a Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020¹¹ with five strategic goals broken down into 20 Aichi Targets and a strategy for financial resource mobilisation.

In 2012, the 11th COP to the CBD in Hyderabad, India, concluded with the adoption of a decision, confirmed at the 12th COP in Pyeongchang, Republic of Korea, to double biodiversity-related international financial flows from all sources to developing countries by 2015 and maintain this level until 2020. This was the first time that an international financial target was set for biodiversity. The Parties to the Convention also agreed to step up their domestic expenditure on biodiversity and to report on this expenditure, mainly in the form of national financial plans. Reporting by local government and businesses is a fundamental part of this, as it is important for their contribution to these financial flows to be known and counted. The Conferences of the Parties to the CBD will regularly review the goals and progress with these different points at each of their meetings through to 2020.¹²

These common strategic goals have been taken up and incorporated into the biodiversity strategies being conducted by:

- **the European Union (EU):** Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020.¹³ The European Community approved the CBD in 1993 and started working it into successive strategies in 1998;
- **France:** the National Biodiversity Strategy for 2011-2020.¹⁴ France ratified the CBD in 1994 and acted on its commitment with a first National Biodiversity Strategy (2004-2010) in 2004.¹⁵

The reduction of biodiversity loss was also an integral part of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

defined in 2000 and is now one of the main elements shaping the post-2015 development agenda's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Biodiversity conservation directly contributes to improving local populations' living conditions and poverty reduction.

Local authorities and their networks have also rallied to this international, European, and national movement, and are now recognised as key stakeholders in the conservation, restoration, and development of global biodiversity. Local authorities work at local level there, where the action is taken. They are pivotal local planning and development stakeholders who work closely with natural heritage management bodies and users.

Their importance is reflected:

- at international community level by the 10th COP to the CBD's adoption of a Plan of Action on Subnational Governments, Cities and Other Local Authorities for Biodiversity¹⁶ to promote and encourage the involvement of cities and local authorities in implementing the CBD. This commitment was collectively endorsed by the Declaration of the French Associations of Local and Regional Authorities for Biodiversity launched and supported by IUCN France and presented at the 11th COP;¹⁷
- in France, with the scaling up of French local government biodiversity conservation work (e.g., regional nature parks, regional nature reserves, sensitive wilderness areas, green and blue infrastructure, regional lead agency for biodiversity conservation, etc.) accompanied, in keeping with international

11 - UNEP, 2010b. *Decision X/2: Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets*. 13 p.

12 - French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development, 2010. *French Policy on Biodiversity*. Available online: <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy/sustainable-development-environment/french-policy-on-biodiversity-7423/>

13 - European Commission, 2011. *Our Life Insurance, our Natural Capital: an EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions*, COM/2011/0244. Brussels, 16 p.

14 - French Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development, Transport and Housing, 2011. *Stratégie nationale pour la biodiversité 2011-2020*. 42 p.

15 - French Ministry of Ecology and Sustainable Development, 2004, *Ibid*.

16 - UNEP, 2010a. *Decision X/22: Plan of Action on Subnational Governments, Cities and Other Local Authorities for Biodiversity*. 7 p.

17 - *Déclaration commune des associations françaises d'élus et de collectivités territoriales pour la biodiversité : les collectivités territoriales françaises et leurs associations mobilisées pour préserver, restaurer et valoriser la biodiversité*, 2012. 7 p.

recommendations, by voluntary, committed initiatives (e.g., biodiversity policies and strategies, local biodiversity observatories, local natural heritage inventories, participatory science initiatives, nature contracts, etc.).¹⁸ For example, in 2015, half of the regions of mainland France had regional biodiversity strategies (RBSs) drawn up in association with other local stakeholders (devolved government departments and government-funded institutions, other local government units, business, civil society, etc.).¹⁹

1.2 Decentralised cooperation: a recognised means for effective global biodiversity conservation

The main national and international framework documents on biodiversity conservation, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity²⁰ and the French National Biodiversity Strategy (NBS) for 2011-2020²¹, identify international cooperation as one of the key means for effective action in favour of global biodiversity conservation and the sustainable use of its components.

More specifically, the Plan of Action on Subnational Governments, Cities and Other Local Authorities for Biodiversity²² adopted in Nagoya in October 2010 identifies decentralised cooperation as one of the local authorities' contributions to achieve the Aichi Targets. The Parties are invited to "encourage, promote and support, as appropriate and through policy tools, guidelines and programmes, direct decentralized cooperation on biodiversity and development between local authorities at national, regional and global levels." The importance of these cooperation actions is also reiterated in a range of international declarations by local authorities.

Similarly, a number of French cooperation documents identify biodiversity conservation as a priority area for action. Among these are the Charter for Decentralised Cooperation for Sustainable Development²³ and the French Development Agency's Biodiversity Cross-Sectoral Intervention Framework 2013-2016.²⁴

1.2.1 Legislative framework and definition

Decentralised cooperation today covers all partnerships between French local authorities and their foreign counterparts.²⁵ This movement has really taken off over the last 20 years, gradually becoming structured by the progressive

Definition of decentralised cooperation

Decentralised cooperation, now referred to as "local government action abroad", is defined by Article L1115-1 of the French Local Authority Code (CGCT) as "In keeping with France's international commitments, the local government sector may take or support all annual and multiannual international cooperation, development assistance and humanitarian action. To this end, the local government sector may, where appropriate, sign agreements with foreign local authorities. These agreements shall specify the purpose of the planned actions and the estimated sum of financial commitments."

18 - IUCN France, 2010. *Biodiversité & Collectivités : panorama de l'implication des collectivités territoriales pour la préservation de la biodiversité en France métropolitaine*. Paris. 100 p.

19 - IUCN France, 2011. *Quelles stratégies régionales pour la biodiversité en France métropolitaine ?* Paris. 116 p.

20 - United Nations, 1992, Ibid. [preamble, Art. 5, 14 & 18].

21 - French Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development, Transport and Housing, 2011, Ibid. [targets 10, 12, 16 & 17].

22 - UNEP, 2010a, Ibid.

23 - AFCCRE, Cités Unies France, Comité 21, 2004. *Charte de la coopération décentralisée pour le développement durable*. 8 p.

24 - French Development Agency (AFD), 2013. *Biodiversity Cross-Sectoral Intervention Framework 2013-2016*. 86 p.

25 - French Development Agency (AFD), 2011. *Travailler avec les collectivités territoriales françaises et les acteurs de la coopération décentralisée*. 54 p.

N.B.

This study's purpose and content were defined in early 2013 when the definition of decentralised cooperation, as specified by the Thiollière Act and transcribed in Article L1115-1 of the CGCT, covered solely international cooperation actions conducted under agreements between the French local government sector and foreign local authorities.

The term “decentralised cooperation” used in this publication and the study therefore refers exclusively to decentralised cooperation projects on biodiversity conducted under an agreement drawn up between a French local authority and a foreign local authority.

legal climate that has accompanied the initiatives conducted by local government.²⁶

Decentralised cooperation was established by the 6 February 1992 policy act on the local administration of the French Republic. Its legislative base was stabilised and secured by the Thiollière Act in 2007.²⁷ This legislative fabric has just been strengthened by Act No. 2014-773 of 7 July 2014 on development policy and international solidarity, which amends the French Local Authority Code (CGCT), replacing the term “decentralised cooperation” with the broader notion of “local government action abroad”.

With decentralised cooperation, local government became a fully-fledged player in French official development assistance

(ODA). As the number of decentralisation processes has proliferated in many countries, especially in developing countries, the French authorities have come to play an ever more useful role in terms of the support they provide their counterparts to conduct and scale up their work. In addition to political legitimacy comes the legitimacy of practical experience. Decentralised cooperation also delivers on common interests for the benefit of both partner authorities. It drives exchanges between local government employees, elected officials, and civil society.²⁸

1.2.2 The main characteristics of French decentralised cooperation

1.2.2.1 Key figures

In 2014, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development (MAEDI) counted over 13,000 cooperation projects conducted by nearly 5,000 French local government bodies with partnerships underway with 10,000 foreign local authorities in 145 countries.²⁹

In France, all the regions, the vast majority of départements and nearly all the cities and urban communities work on decentralised cooperation along with a large number of small and medium-sized municipalities and a growing number of inter-municipal bodies.³⁰ The large number of municipalities means that they represent over 74% of the projects counted.

Municipalities fund their decentralised cooperation from their own budgets and cofinancing. The sums allocated depend on the local authority's resources and the importance it attaches to the project. Earmarked amounts come to 0.01% to 0.3% of their total annual budget on average.³¹

26 - Laignel A., 2013. *Rapport sur l'action extérieure des collectivités territoriales françaises : nouvelles approches... nouvelles ambitions*. Paris, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 87 p - Peyronnet J.-C., 2012. *Rapport d'information fait au nom de la Délégation aux collectivités territoriales et à la décentralisation sur la coopération décentralisée : la solidarité internationale à l'échelle des territoires : état des lieux et perspectives*. Paris, Senate, 79 p. Les Rapports du Sénat, No. 123.

27 - French Republic, 2007. Act No. 2007-147 of 2 February 2007 on action abroad by the local government sector.

28 - French Development Agency (AFD), 2011, Ibid.

29 - French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development, 2014b. *Infographie interactive : L'engagement à l'international des collectivités territoriales* (31.03.14). Available in English online from the dropdown language menu at: <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/politique-etrangere-de-la-france/action-exterieure-des-collectivites-territoriales/article/infographie-interactive-l>.

30 - French Development Agency (AFD), 2011, Ibid.

31 - Association des professionnels de l'action européenne et internationale des collectivités territoriales (ARRICOD), 2012. *L'Action internationale des collectivités territoriales*. Paris, Le Cavalier Bleu, 127 p. (Idées Reçues).

These funds are valued at €70 million in 2009 based on ODA declared by local authorities. Yet since sums incurred are still often poorly reported or underestimated, the local authorities are estimated to have committed at least €110 million to working with development partners.³² The regions, the largest entities in both geographic and financial terms, account for over half of the French decentralised cooperation funds.³³

Geographically speaking, most projects concern European countries (63%). Sub-Saharan Africa is in second place with 18% of actions, mainly concentrated in the four countries of Burkina Faso, Mali, Senegal, and Madagascar. Although French-speaking Africa is a target area for French decentralised cooperation stakeholders, a growing number of projects are being conducted in Latin America, Asia, North Africa, and the Middle East, mainly by large local government bodies.³⁴

Decentralised cooperation contributes, among other things, to achieving the goals set by other local public policies while pursuing specific objectives consistent with the local project.³⁵ It hence covers all the fields tasked to local government in which local area stakeholders can take action as operators. MAEDI breaks down the projects it counts into seven major sectors: “culture”, which concerns more than half of the projects (55%); “town and country planning” (13%); and “education, training and research” (11%); followed by “institutional support and local governance”, and “emergency aid, health and society”, each representing 6% to 7% of the projects. The “environment, energy and climate” sector concerns just 2% of all projects.

1.2.2.2 The main decentralised cooperation stakeholders³⁶

French decentralised cooperation works with many other partners in addition to the main local government stakeholders, as detailed in the following table:

<p>Central government and French institutions</p>	<p>National Commission for Decentralised Cooperation (CNCD):</p> <p>The CNCD reports to the Prime Minister and covers all the decentralised cooperation stakeholders. It provides a forum for consultation and cooperation between central and local government. It makes proposals to improve and scale up decentralised cooperation.</p> <p>Ministries:</p> <p>The ministries assist and support decentralised cooperation each according to their expertise. MAEDI's Delegation for Local Government Action Abroad (DAECT) is tasked with working with the CNCD to define and implement the decentralised cooperation support and development strategy (local government resource and support centre).</p> <p>French Development Agency (AFD):</p> <p>AFD develops partnerships with French local government for a wide range of projects in foreign local authorities. It complements DAECT by providing support to French local authorities in defined priority sectors and geographic areas.</p>
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32 - French Development Agency (AFD), 2011, Ibid.

33 - Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, 2012. *La Coopération décentralisée française et la protection de la biodiversité : synthèse*. 35 p.

34 - French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development, 2014b, Ibid. – French Development Agency (AFD), 2011, Ibid.

35 - AFCCRE, 2015. *Les Politiques publiques de coopération au développement : quelles réponses aux enjeux de nos territoires ? Projet d'argumentaire*. 14 p.

36 - French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development, 2014b, Ibid. – French Development Agency (AFD), 2011, Ibid.

Associations of French local and regional authorities

National associations of elected officials:

The main associations here are the Association of French Mayors (AMF), the Assembly of French *Départements* (ADF), the Association of French Regions (ARF), the Association of French City Mayors (AMGVF) and Villes de France. Their action is underpinned by specialised associations, such as the French Association of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (AFCCRE), which gives the French local authorities a voice in European issues, and United Cities of France (CUF), which federates local authorities working on decentralised cooperation and coordinates and promotes their actions, mainly by means of their country and focus groups (one of which concerns the climate and environment).

Regional multiplayer networks (RMPN):

Since the mid-1990s, a number of French regions have set up “regional multiplayer dialogue, support and cooperation networks for international cooperation” at the joint initiative of central government, local government and/or associations. These regional networks supported by MAEDI act as an interface between the ministry, AFD and the regional stakeholders and provide methodological assistance to project initiators. They develop associative action between these networks in an informal “network of networks”.

Specialised networks:

These networks cluster local authorities working on the same issues. Of mention here are the Association of Local Authority Professionals involved in European and International Action (ARRICOD) and the French Federation of Regional Nature Parks (FPNRF) for the biodiversity sector.

International forums and NGOs

European and international forums:

These forums support decentralised cooperation at all levels from information exchange to operational assistance and the promotion of cooperation (e.g., European Commission, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions [CEMR], United Cities and Local Governments [UCLG], the International Association of French-Speaking Mayors [AIMF], and the International Association of French-Speaking Regions [AIRF]).

NGOs:

NGOs may be tasked with conducting development assistance projects at the decision of French and foreign local government authorities.

1.2.2.3 Decentralised cooperation tools

A range of tools has been developed to support French decentralised cooperation. These tools include:

- **The French Atlas of Decentralised Cooperation,³⁷ a tool for networking and associative action**

In 2009, the National Commission for Decentralised Cooperation (CNCD) online a French atlas of decentralised cooperation and other foreign actions for all decentralised cooperation stakeholders. The atlas is a map of all the international actions reported to the system by the French local authorities conducting them. Clicking the map opens detailed factsheets on the projects (sector, objectives, background, environment, funding, partners, etc.). It covers decentralised cooperation (including twinning operations) and all *ad hoc* actions and actions conducted without a signed agreement.

The local authorities that inform the atlas of a project online are asked to class it in an action sector. One of the dozen or so possible sectors is the “environment, climate change and energy” sector subdivided into three subsectors, one of which is the “environment”, itself subdivided into five subsectors where “biodiversity” is found. As of 1 July 2015, a mere 27 of the 13,000 projects featured in the atlas were “biodiversity” projects. Not all the local authorities report on their actions, fill in the descriptive factsheets consistently³⁸ or use their own judgement to choose the project sector from among over 50 options, none of which are explained or defined in the atlas.

- **Calls for decentralised cooperation projects co-financed by MAEDI³⁹**

MAEDI, in association with the regional prefectures and the CNCD, has been supporting decentralised cooperation since 2008 in the form of a partnership policy with French local government based mainly on annual and three-yearly calls for projects.

The projects have to meet thematic and geographic eligibility criteria based on government cooperation policy guidelines and be in line with the local authorities’ areas of excellence. The

purpose as always is to draw on local authorities’ local development expertise and mobilise local stakeholders. “Sustainable tourism and the development of natural and cultural heritage” is one of the eight priority areas of action for these calls for projects. The local authorities have welcomed this measure, which respects their autonomy. For example, some one hundred local authorities every year answer the annual calls for projects with proposals for some 30 countries and approximately €3 million in cofinancing. In the case of the 2010-2012 three-yearly call, close on 200 proposals were submitted online by 170 authorities (17 regional councils, 22 *département* councils, 95 municipalities, and 36 intermunicipal bodies) for a total of €22.5 million in requested cofinancing for the three-year period.

DAECT also uses other tools, such as targeted calls for projects (the first was launched on “climate” in 2015 ahead of COP21), special decentralised cooperation funds and joint intergovernmental calls for projects.

Note that the CNCD has also set up a decentralised cooperation project exchange.

This exchange presents concrete projects conducted by foreign local authorities that might interest French local authorities. However, this tool is not yet well known and little use is made of it.

1.3 A fact-finding study to scale up French decentralised cooperation in favour of biodiversity conservation

National and international recognition of the importance of decentralised cooperation for global biodiversity conservation argues in favour of scaling up French local government action in this area.

This study was conducted by IUCN France in partnership with the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development and in close association with the members of its

37 - French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development, 2014a. *Atlas français de la coopération décentralisée*. Available in French online: www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/politique-etrangere-de-la-france/action-exterieure-des-collectivites-territoriales/atlas-francais-de-la-cooperation

38 - Peyronnet J.-C., 2012, *Ibid.*

39 - French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development, 2013. *Appels à projets et fonds en soutien à la coopération décentralisée* (22 May 13). Available in French online: www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/politique-etrangere-de-la-france/action-exterieure-des-collectivites-territoriales/appels-a-projets-et-fonds-en-soutien-a-la-cooperation-decentralisee/



Local Government & Biodiversity Working Group and all the partners concerned to:

- **find out and present the facts about current French local government decentralised cooperation on global biodiversity;**
- promote the scaling up of French decentralised cooperation on biodiversity, especially with Southern countries for a more sustainable management of their natural resources to help improve the local populations' living conditions.

The study needed a broad-based survey of French local authorities to gain an overview of their decentralised cooperation projects on biodiversity. Taking this as a basis, further analyses were then conducted on a sample of projects to identify their main brakes and drivers and make recommendations to scale up French decentralised cooperation on biodiversity, in Southern countries in particular. This work received the support of a monitoring committee comprising the main French decentralised cooperation stakeholders (AFD, CUF, FGEF, FPNRF, MAEDI, and French Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy [MEDDE]), the Local Government & Biodiversity Working Group and the expertise of the IUCN France network of experts. It also drew on the main local government networks and many other stakeholders concerned (ARRICOD, regional multiplayer networks, ARF, ADF, AMGVE, Villes de France, etc.).

Chapter 2

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF FRENCH LOCAL GOVERNMENT DECENTRALISED COOPERATION PROJECTS FOR BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

This brief overview has been produced as a fact-finding presentation of current French local government decentralised cooperation on global biodiversity.

2.1 Method: a broad-based survey of French local government

The data collection method consisted mainly in a broad-based survey of French local government bodies by the IUCN France network and its partners. This was rounded out by a summary and bibliographical analysis of existing data drawn mainly from the French Atlas of Decentralised Cooperation.⁴⁰

2.1.1 Purpose: identify and describe the decentralised cooperation projects on biodiversity

IUCN France worked closely with the study's monitoring committee to develop an online questionnaire for all levels of French local government to report and describe their decentralised cooperation projects on biodiversity (main characteristics, description, implementation, outcomes and outlook, etc.). **The survey focused on projects in all geographic areas since 2006 meeting the two following criteria:**

- **Conducted under a decentralised cooperation agreement** drawn up between the French local authority and a foreign local authority
- **Targeting directly and explicitly biodiversity conservation or restoration among its main objectives**⁴¹

The findings presented in this publication are therefore based on the information reported. They aim to be as

representative as possible of French decentralised cooperation on biodiversity. Given the weight of the regions in French decentralised cooperation funds (see Section 1.2.2, p. 10), particular attention was paid to collecting information from these regions.

2.1.2 A widely circulated online survey

The survey was sent to the 50 IUCN France Local Government & Biodiversity Working Group member authorities (which include the 22 regions of mainland France), to the nine overseas regions and *départements* (via the IUCN France Overseas Working Group), and to approximately 30 authorities that had reported conducting a decentralised cooperation project on biodiversity in the French Atlas of Decentralised Cooperation.

It was widely circulated by 15 of the main local government networks: Association of French Overseas Municipalities and Local Authorities (ACCDOM), Association of Urban Communities of France (ACUF), Assembly of Communities of France (ADCF), ADF, AFCCRE, AMF, AMGVF, National Association of Coastal Local Authorities (ANEL), National Association of Mountain Local Authorities (ANEM), Association of the Small Towns of France (APVF), ARF, ARRICOD, CUF, Éco Maires and Villes de France. The survey was also disseminated by the French Federation of Regional Nature Parks and by the main national decentralised cooperation focal points (DAECT, RMPN, and ARRICOD). The questionnaire was sent to the department in charge of biodiversity and the department in charge of decentralised cooperation in each of the local authorities and local government associations contacted in order to cater for the sector-based organisation of most local government bodies and make for maximum feedback.

40 - French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development, 2014a, Ibid.

41 - i.e. one of the main purposes of which is one or more of the five goals of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020. See: UNEP, 2010b, Ibid.

2.1.3 A prerequisite: classification of the reported projects

The survey response rate was highly satisfactory at over 70% of the Local Government & Biodiversity Working Group member authorities and local government bodies reporting a biodiversity project in the French Atlas of Decentralised Cooperation. Respondents included 20 of the 22 regions of mainland France. All in all, a total of 87 local government bodies⁴² answered the survey:

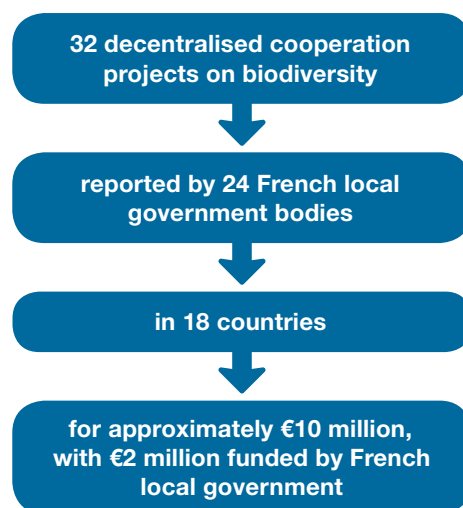
- 54 authorities reported having no decentralised cooperation project on biodiversity underway.
- 33 authorities reported 54 decentralised cooperation projects on biodiversity in progress.

These findings are based solely on the reported information and the assessment of the people answering the survey. IUCN France hence analysed the 54 projects reported based on the information sent and the two defined criteria to identify two project categories.

- **32 projects meet the required criteria:** they are conducted under a decentralised cooperation agreement between a French local authority and a foreign local authority, and biodiversity conservation clearly and explicitly figures in their objectives and content. **These 32 decentralised cooperation projects on biodiversity form the substance of the overview presented below.**
- 22 do not meet the required criteria. These are essentially environmental projects, but they have other purposes than biodiversity conservation (local or rural development, action to curb desertification, waste management, water management, the blue economy, etc.) or are being conducted without a decentralised cooperation agreement.

2.2 Thirty-two projects representative of French decentralised cooperation on biodiversity

The survey work and the classification and processing of the responses received identified the following for the 2006-2014 period:



The many conversations with the respondent authorities established that, although these findings are not exhaustive, they are representative of French decentralised cooperation on biodiversity. Some local authorities chose, for want of time or resources, to fill in the survey with the project(s) they considered the most representative or emblematic of their action.⁴³

Half of the 27 projects listed in the French Atlas of Decentralised Cooperation's "biodiversity" sector were reported to the survey. The relevant local authorities explained that the other projects were no longer running or covered more than just the theme of "biodiversity". Conversely, virtually all the projects identified below are listed in the atlas, but sometimes in other sectors, such as "forests", "rural and agricultural development", and "local governance and institutional support".

42 - In this publication as in the French Atlas of Decentralised Cooperation, regional nature parks are included in these "local government bodies" and "local authorities".

43 - For example, some projects are not included in the projects analysed in this study, such as the "programme to structure an ecotourism supply around the Mare aux Hippopotames Biosphere Reserve" conducted in cooperation between the Rhône-Alpes region and the Hauts-Bassins region of Burkina Faso, and the "Porto-Novo, Green City: Strategic, Sustainable Planning" project run by the Beninese city of Porto-Novo, Cergy-Pointoise Urban District Community and Greater Lyons.

2.2.1 List of the 32 identified decentralised cooperation projects on biodiversity

Table 2: List of the 32 decentralised cooperation projects on biodiversity reported to the survey by French local authorities⁴⁴

French local authority name ⁴⁵	Partner local authority name and country	Project title
● Aquitaine Regional Council	Lào Cai Province, Vietnam	Ecotourism, capacity building and biodiversity protection in the Hoang Lien National Park in Lào Cai Province
● Lower Normandy Regional Council	Atsinanana Region, Madagascar	Support to set up a natural heritage sustainable development and conservation area
● Burgundy Regional Council	Cape Province, South Africa	Integrated management of wine-growing areas and biodiversity conservation
● Centre Regional Council (Loire-Anjou-Touraine RNP)	Luang Prabang Province, Laos	Nam Khan Ecovalley
● Centre Regional Council⁴⁶	Luang Prabang Province, Laos	Regional management and preservation of the heritage of the inland waterways
● Champagne-Ardenne Regional Council	Salta Province, Argentina	Regional Nature Parks (RNPs) and wine growing as drivers for balanced local development
● Champagne-Ardenne Regional Council	Départements of Borgou and Alibori, Benin	Support for the creation of Benin's first Regional Nature Park (RNP) in the Wari-Marou, Monts Kouffè, and Agoua forest reserves

44 - Note that some local authorities reported using international biodiversity action methods other than signing agreements with a foreign local authority. The Midi-Pyrénées Region, for example, subsidises this type of action in the form of calls for projects from civil society stakeholders in the region.

45 - When the body reporting the project is not the local authority that signed the agreement, the name of this body is given in brackets.

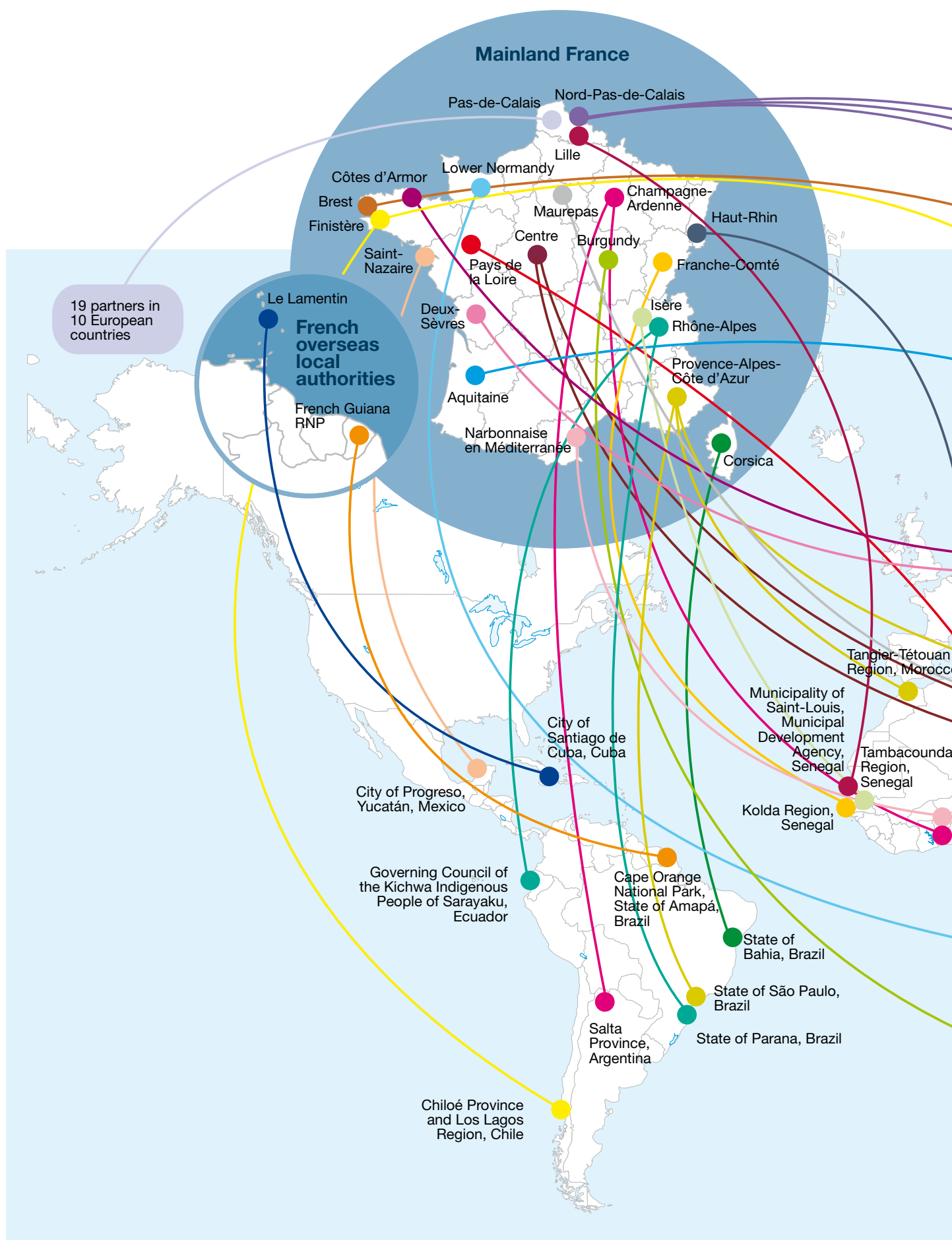
46 - The decentralised cooperation projects between the Centre Region and Luang Prabang Province are part of the Nam Khan Ecovalley Programme in which the Loire-Anjou-Touraine Regional Nature Park is involved.

● Corsica Local Authority	State of Bahia, Brazil	Sustainable development and participatory management of protected wildlands
● Franche-Comté Regional Council	Kolda Region, Senegal	Programme to create and sustainably develop a permanent forest estate
● Nord-Pas-de-Calais Regional Council	Analanjirifo Region, Madagascar	Development of protected areas and promotion of ecotourism in the three forested areas of Nosy Boraha
● Nord-Pas-de-Calais Regional Council	Analanjirifo Region, Madagascar	Support to the communities on managing protected areas
● Nord-Pas-de-Calais Regional Council	Analanjirifo Region, Madagascar	Sustainable management and development of the flora in Farankaraina Forest
● Pays de la Loire Regional Council	Republic of Burundi ⁴⁷	Development of natural heritage, biodiversity conservation, improvement of water management in the watersheds and environmental outreach
● Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Regional Council	State of São Paulo, Brazil	Mosaics of protected natural areas
● Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Regional Council (Luberon RNP)	Tangier-Tétouan Region, Morocco	Support for the creation of Bouhachem Nature Park
● Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Regional Council	Union of the Municipalities of Jezzine, Lebanon	Assistance to introduce new governance for the Union of the Municipalities of Jezzine: for a participatory sustainable rural development charter in Lebanon
● Rhône-Alpes Regional Council	State of Parana, Brazil	Costeering of the NRG4SD network's Biodiversity Working Group
● Rhône-Alpes Regional Council	Governing Council of the Kichwa Indigenous People of Sarayaku, Ecuador	Land development and biodiversity protection in the Amazon Forest in Ecuador
● French Guiana Regional Nature Park (French Guiana Regional Council)	Cape Orange National Park, State of Amapá, Brazil	Oyapock Nature Programme

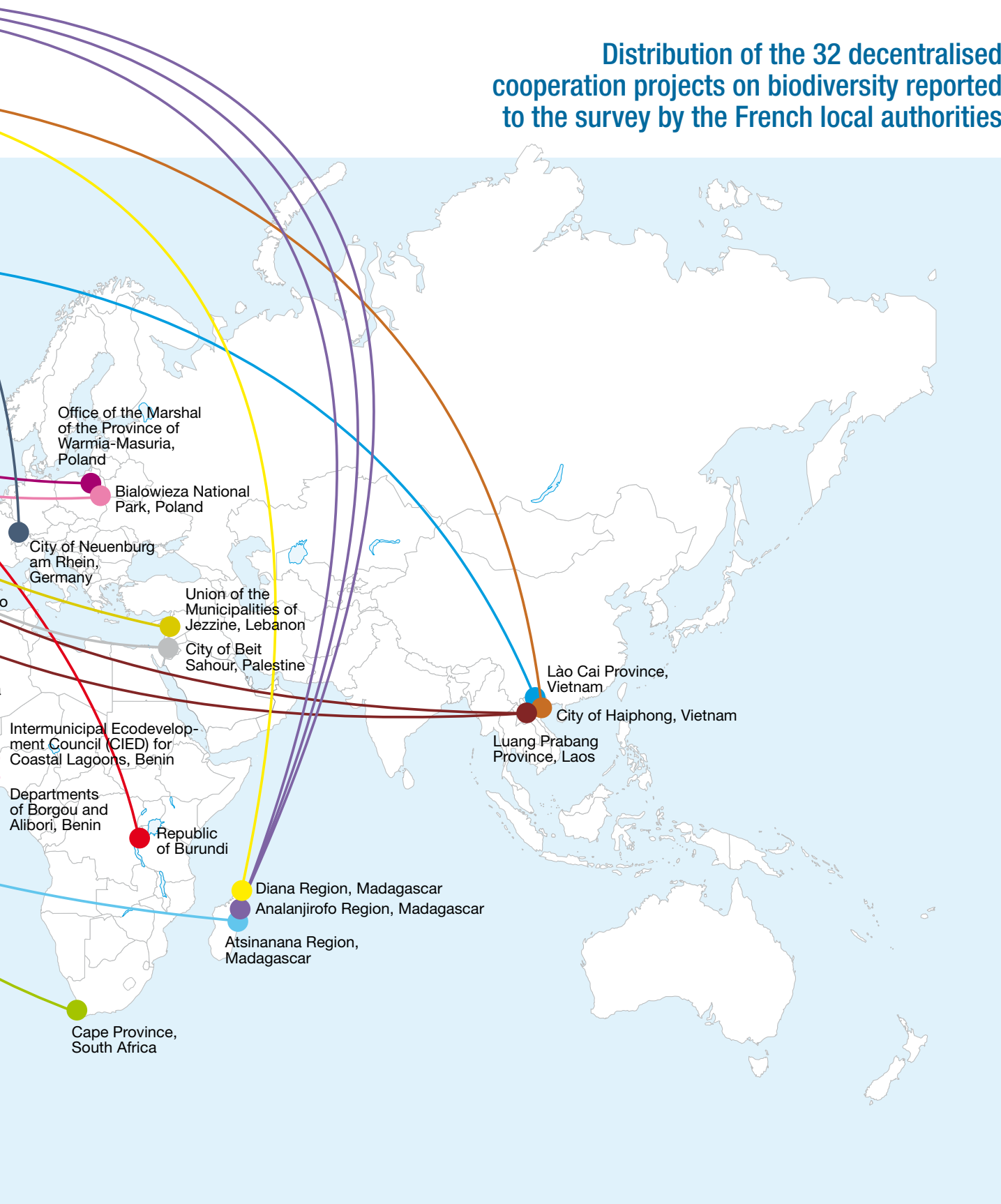
47 - Decentralised cooperation agreements may be signed between local authorities and states where no local authorities are to be found with the same responsibilities (e.g., Monaco, Andorra, Luxembourg, Burundi, etc.): Embassy of France in Togo, France Coopération & Union of Municipalities of Togo, 2010. *La Coopération décentralisée France – Togo : présentation et analyse*. 59 p.

 Narbonnaise Regional Nature Park	Intermunicipal Ecodevelopment Council (CIED) for Coastal Lagoons, Benin	Support for a coastal lagoon conservation project
 Isère Département Council	Tambacounda Region, Senegal	Support for the development of the Boundou community nature reserve
 Côtes d'Armor Département Council	Office of the Marshal of the Province of Warmia-Masuria, Poland	Exchanges between networks of naturalists in Côtes d'Armor and Warmia-Masuria
 Deux-Sèvres Département Council	Bialowieza National Park, Poland	Deux-Sèvres International Biodiversity Cluster
 Finistère Département Council	Chiloé Province and Los Lagos Region, Chile	Support from the Armorica Regional Nature Park with the application of a management model for the sustainable use of the north-west territory of Chiloé: a conservation landscape in Los Lagos Region
 Finistère Département Council	Diana Region, Madagascar	Programme to develop sustainable community tourism in protected areas
 Haut-Rhin Département Council	City of Neuenburg am Rhein, Germany	A garden for the Rhine – Cross-Border GERPLAN (management plan for rural and peri-urban areas)
 Pas-de-Calais Département Council	19 partners in ten European countries	NOSTRA (Network Of STRAits) Project for the straits of Europe
 Brest Métropole Océane Urban Community	City of Haiphong, Vietnam	Work on setting up a marine park on Cát Bà Island
 City of Lille	Municipality of Saint-Louis, Municipal Development Agency, Senegal	<i>Tell Me About Your Nature</i> leaflet
 City of Maurepas	City of Beit Sahour, Palestine	Conservation and development of natural heritage in Beit Sahour
 City of Saint-Nazaire	City of Progreso, Yucatán, Mexico	Biodiversity, Water and Education in Sustainable Development
 City of Le Lamentin	City of Santiago de Cuba, Cuba	Santiago-Le Lamentin: same diversity of life, but different practices

(Source: IUCN France Survey)



Distribution of the 32 decentralised cooperation projects on biodiversity reported to the survey by the French local authorities

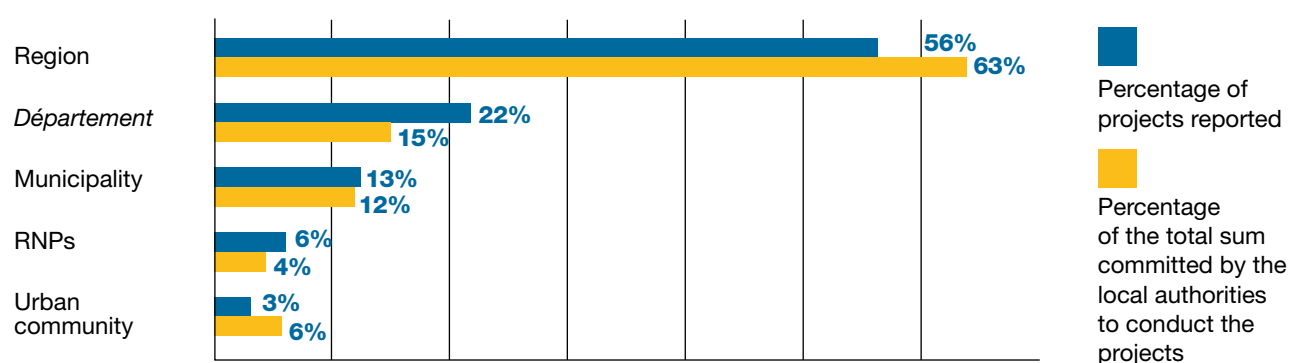


2.2.2 Project profile: the key figures

2.2.2.1 Regions: the main local authorities working on biodiversity projects

56% of the 32 decentralised cooperation projects on biodiversity were reported by regions. The regions' financial contribution represents 63% of the total sum committed and reported by the local authorities.

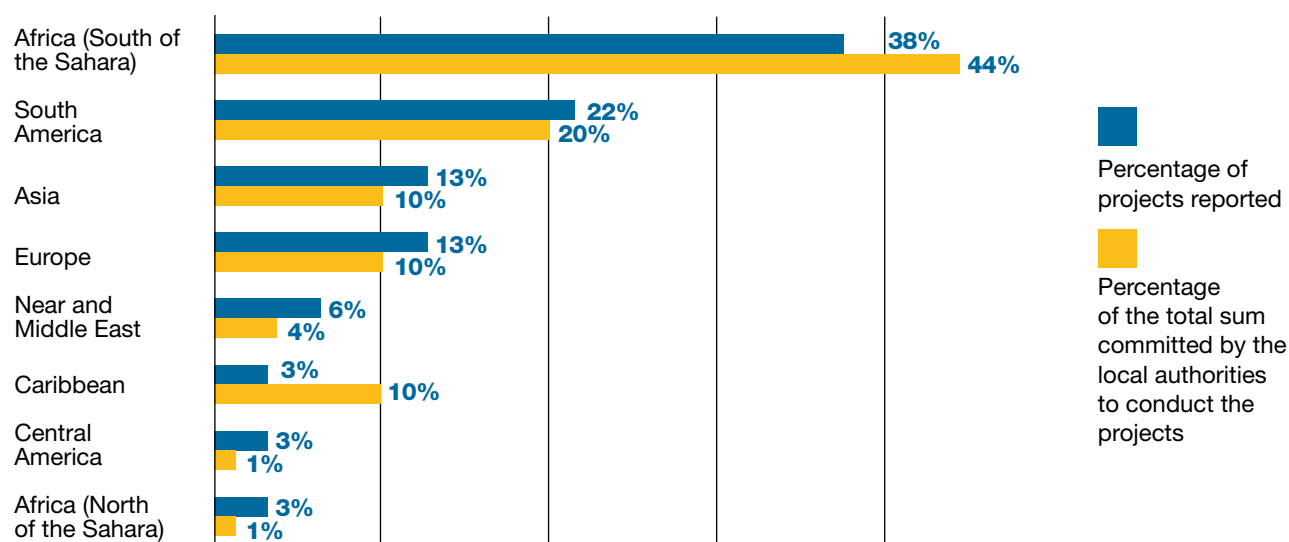
Figure 1 : Proportions of projects reported and funds committed by local authorities



2.2.2.2 Sub-Saharan Africa: the main area for action

Unlike the geographic distribution of French decentralised cooperation as a whole (see Section 1.2.2, p. 10), more than a third of the biodiversity projects reported and sums committed are in Sub-Saharan Africa, especially in Madagascar (five projects) and Senegal (three projects). These are two of the four countries that account for a large part of French local government action abroad in this region of the world. Projects in South America (especially Brazil), Asia, and Europe are also well represented.

Figure 2 : Geographic distribution of projects reported and funds committed by local authorities



2.2.2.3 Multiannual projects underway

Nearly 80% of the projects are long-term multiannual projects. Most of them are scheduled over three years or more.

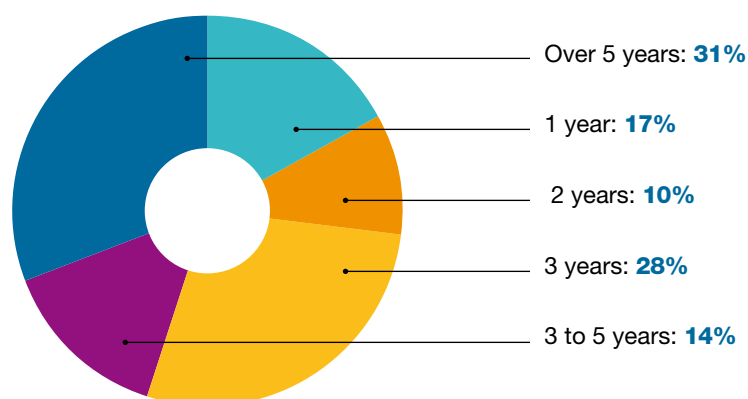


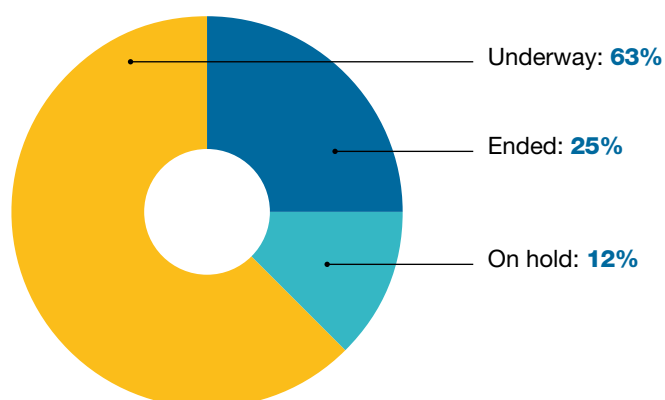
Figure 3 : Project period

(Source: IUCN France Survey)

63% of the projects reported are currently being conducted. Four projects are on hold due to problems with the local situation in the country in question. The few annual projects have ended.

Figure 4 : State of progress with the projects

(Source: IUCN France Survey)



Chapter 3

ANALYSIS OF THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DECENTRALISED COOPERATION PROJECTS ON BIODIVERSITY

3.1 Overview of project emergence

A full 25 of the 32 projects are reportedly part of a local biodiversity conservation strategy for one or both of the local authorities concerned. For the French local authority, this may take the form of regional or *département* biodiversity policies or

strategies, *département* plans for sensitive natural areas, Agenda 21 programmes or RNPs charters. For the foreign local authority, it may take the form of a forest policy or the creation of protected areas.

3.1.1 Projects in a long-term, multisector partnership

EXAMPLE 1

Development of natural heritage, biodiversity conservation, improvement of water management in the watersheds and environmental outreach

Partners: Pays de la Loire Regional Council/Republic of Burundi

In 2004, the Pays de la Loire Region announced a drive to establish close links with the Southern countries. In 2006, following high-level contacts with the Burundian authorities, the first discussions were held on sport, the environment, and the economy. On 19 February 2008, a cooperation agreement supported by the French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (mainly in connection with its calls for projects) was signed for four main target sectors: sport, health, the food industry, and the environment.⁴⁸

The environment track focuses on biodiversity conservation. It was chosen in close liaison with the Burundian authorities who identified the preservation of their natural heritage as one of the growth-rich sectors to be developed as a priority in their Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper back in 2006.⁴⁹ Burundi presents a great deal of potential in this area due mainly to its 14 protected areas with their wide range of ecosystems. The Burundian government was interested in developing an integrated environmental public policy. The

two partners therefore chose to set up conservation programmes for Burundian biodiversity and natural resources under their successive cooperation agreements (the third agreement runs through to 2016), concentrating on: the rehabilitation of parks and nature reserves (Ruvubu Nature Park, Rusizi nature reserve, etc.), fauna and flora conservation, the creation of a protected landscape to the north-east of Lake Tanganyika, action to prevent erosion and pollution focusing on Lake Tanganyika in particular, reforestation, training and capacity building (park wardens, tourist guides, etc.), environmental awareness campaigns for the local populations, improvements to water management, etc.

A permanent Pays de la Loire representative office was set up in Burundi in 2008. Then, in 2010, the partnership was extended to two new sectors: “decentralisation” and “youth”.⁵⁰ Unfortunately, the country’s political situation meant that this decentralised cooperation had to be put on hold in May 2015.

48 - Republic of Burundi & Pays de la Loire Region, 2008. *Coopération Pays de la Loire/Burundi : une région ouverte sur le monde*. 6 p.

49 - Republic of Burundi, 2006. *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper* - PRSP. 140 p.

50 - Pays de la Loire Region, 2013. *Pays de la Loire/Burundi : rapport d’activités 2011-2012*. 93 p.

The vast majority of the decentralised cooperation projects on biodiversity identified form part of a long-term partnership framework. Two-thirds of the cooperation projects have been in place for over five years under a series of signed agreements, most of which are three-yearly. Note that a twinning operation with the foreign local authority does not appear to be decisive to project emergence.

These projects are generally part of broader cooperation programmes with a number of workstreams, such as “sustainable

local development”, “governance assistance”, and “education” in keeping with the territories’ integrated development approach.

The biodiversity track may develop during the partnership, as the situation and needs of the authorities concerned evolve, or may be identified as a sector for cooperation from the outset.

In a small number of cases, however, biodiversity action is the founding element for multisector decentralised cooperation.

EXAMPLE 2

Oyapock Nature Programme (OYANA)

Partners: French Guiana Regional Nature Park/Cape Orange National Park (Brazil)

Following meetings between the French and Brazilians to develop a cooperation programme between the protected areas of the State of Amapá and French Guiana (meeting in Brasilia in April 2005 followed by Cayenne in December 2005), the Oyapock estuary, with the French Guiana Regional Nature Park on its north bank and the Cape Orange National Park on its south bank, was chosen as the site for the launch of an innovative international cooperation model based on sustainable development. The two areas had the same socioeconomic and environmental problems: species smuggling, intensive fishing, illegal gold washing, deforestation, high levels of pollution by domestic waste, etc.

With the Amazonian ecosystem’s conservation reliant on joint cross-border management, the French Guiana Regional Nature Park and the Cape Orange National Park signed a decentralised cooperation agreement in the middle of the Oyapock River on 21 June 2008 to launch the Oyapock Nature Programme (OYANA). This programme targets harmonious, sustainable development in the Oyapock estuary area with the conservation, sustainable use and development of biodiversity in this border region (exchanges of knowledge on the natural and human environment, education on the environment, use and protection of the fauna and flora, ecotourism, inclusion of local communities, studies on and promotion of a biosphere reserve, etc.).⁵¹

3.1.2 Projects driven by shared interests to conserve biodiversity for sustainable local development

All the decentralised cooperation projects on biodiversity have emerged in particular circumstances specific to each

cooperation relationship. They are generally the expression of the partners’ shared interests to conserve and develop often remarkable biodiversity seen in all cases as a way to promote and develop the local areas concerned. As with all cooperation projects, these initiatives have often come about as a result of human encounters and especially the volition of the local

51 - French Guiana Regional Nature Park. *Présentation du programme OYANA*. Available in French online: <http://pnrguyane.free.fr/spip.php?article197>

politicians in both local authorities to commit to this focus. The survey findings also point up a number of factors that come into play in the emergence of these projects, including:

- the presence of remarkable, fragile biodiversity in the geographic area of action, which generally benefits from national and international conservation tools (e.g., Moroccan site of bioecological interest, biosphere reserve, site on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) List of World Heritage in Danger, site on the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance, national biodiversity conservation area, etc.);
- areas that present similar natural and socioeconomic characteristics and that may have similar issues;
- the presence in French areas, in particular, of bodies with biodiversity conservation skills and expertise (e.g., regional nature parks, national parks, botanical conservatories, marine protected areas, etc.);
- a change in the national legislative and institutional structure that generally ties in with a decentralisation process and grants the foreign local authority new natural heritage management powers in which the French local authorities have real expertise (e.g., regional nature parks model, sensitive natural areas policy, and regional nature reserves);
- search for particular skills or expertise to address a specific issue (e.g., integrated management of wine-growing areas for the economic development of biodiversity conservation).

EXAMPLE 3

Support for the creation of Benin's first Regional Nature Park (RNP) in the Wari-Marô, Monts Kouffè, and Agoua forest reserves

Partners: Champagne-Ardenne Regional Council/Departments of Borgou and Alibori (Benin)

The Champagne-Ardenne Region started providing support for the economic development of local stakeholders to the Departments of Borgou and Alibori in 1993 under its decentralised cooperation policy with Benin. This cooperation was then extended to other sectors, including tourism, to assist the authorities with the sustainable local development of their area (creation of income generating activities). This area of Benin features the complex of the Wari-Marô, Monts Kouffè, and Agoua forest reserves. In Benin, forest reserves are considered part of the national heritage and a central government responsibility. This rich natural heritage is under great anthropogenic pressure (charcoal making, logging, poaching, and extensive slash-and-burn agriculture). Its conservation calls for discussion and acceptance of its management policies by all the area's stakeholders. A management plan for this forest complex has also pointed up tourist sites worth developing. Despite the decentralisation process launched in the

1990s, the Beninese municipalities have few resources to conduct local development actions. For this reason, the municipality of Tchaourou took the initiative to co-opt the municipalities of Banté and Bassila to turn the Wari-Marô, Monts Kouffè, and Agoua forest reserves into a regional nature park. The Head of State issued a positive advisability opinion, but without method, experience, and resources, the initiative could not go ahead.

So the Beninese Department contacted the Champagne-Ardenne Region, as a choice partner with three RNPs in its own region, to lay down the foundations for the creation of the first regional nature park in Benin. The aim is to preserve this natural forest heritage and develop its eco-tourism potential to create income generating activities and improve the local populations' living conditions (inventory of the site's potential, establishment of the legislative and legal conditions for the creation of an RNP, local governance and involvement of all the parties concerned, etc.).

EXAMPLE 4

Support for a coastal lagoon conservation project

Partners: Narbonnaise Regional Nature Park/
Benin Intermunicipal Ecodevelopment Council
for Coastal Lagoons

These two structures embarked upon cooperation because they have a lot of commonalities: vast coastal lagoons giving them similar issues (conservation of fisheries resources and flora and fauna, water quality, etc.). The Narbonnaise Regional Nature Park and the Benin Intermunicipal Ecodevelopment Council for Coastal Lagoons (CIED) are also both on the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance, which was decisive in setting up this cooperation.

3.2 Key features of project content

3.2.1 Multisector projects for the local populations in the area of action

Over 85% of the projects surveyed cover other workstreams in addition to biodiversity. Those most often mentioned are local and sustainable economic development (rural development, urban, and suburban development, etc.) with, in particular, tourism and ecotourism and also water, its uses, and sanitation. Also found in these projects are health, education, waste management, and transport.

In most of these projects, the French local authorities cite the population (84%) and the socioeconomic stakeholders in the area of action (56%) as the main beneficiaries of the actions taken, followed closely by NGOs and local associations (47%).

3.2.2 Exchanges of experience are a pillar of many major types of intervention

The projects analysed draw mainly on exchanges of knowledge and experience between partners to improve the conservation and development of biodiversity with the overarching goal of the integrated, sustainable development of the areas concerned and improving the local populations' living conditions. These projects feature multiple objectives and a wide range of content revolving around a number of types of action often dovetailed within the same project.

3.2.2.1 Exchanges of knowledge and expertise on biodiversity conservation

In approximately one-third of the projects, cooperation is based mainly on exchanges of knowledge and best practices conducive to biodiversity conservation. This bilateral capacity building concerns, for example, naturalist knowledge capitalisation and dissemination, exchanges of skills (e.g., territorial diagnosis, development of local biodiversity strategies, creation and management of protected areas, economic development of biodiversity, etc.), the development of joint academic research and the improvement of local governance methods.

In this type of action, cooperation generally takes the form of technical and sector-based visits, hosting delegations, expert missions, exhibitions, symposia, training and conferences.

EXAMPLE 5

Mosaics of protected natural areas

Partners: Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (PACA) Regional Council/State of São Paulo (Brazil)

This project is part of the vast French-Brazilian cooperation programme on “scaling up integrated, participatory management in the mosaics of protected areas in Brazil for sustainable local development”. The programme combines bilateral cooperation (French and Brazilian ministries, French Federation of Regional Nature Parks, etc.) and decentralised cooperation (PACA Region/State of São Paulo, Rhône-Alpes Region /State of Paraná, Nord-Pas-de-Calais Region/State of Minas Gerais) working with numerous partners, such as the regional nature parks. The purpose is mainly to compare biodiversity conservation tools and the dynamics of the natural areas in the different territories concerned (e.g., RNP in

France/Mosaic in Brazil) and to set up forums for discussion and exchanges of experience between French and Brazilian stakeholders (think tanks, cobuild new practices and systems of governance for the protected areas, broaden the range of conservation tools, inform, communicate, etc.). At interregional and Brazilian interstate levels, this goal has driven seminars, training, publications and exhibitions. For example, the PACA Region and the State of São Paulo have organised technical expertise missions and workshops to exchange best practices (e.g., on activities in the wild compatible with biodiversity conservation) and have published a guide on these best practices.

EXAMPLE 6

Same diversity of life, but different practices

Partners: City of Le Lamentin (Martinique)/City of Santiago de Cuba (Cuba)

In 2010, the cities of Le Lamentin and Santiago de Cuba, both with similar ecosystems (mangroves), signed cooperation agreements to share biodiversity conservation practices as part of their 15-year twinning operation.

In 2011, the City of Le Lamentin hosted two Cuban engineers from the BIOECO Research Centre (Cuban research centre on the protection of Caribbean biodiversity) to work on a diagnosis of the area and help train Martinique's stakeholders for the design of Le Lamentin's environmental strategy (workshops and meetings to exchange information with a number of city departments and partners: Martinique Directorate for the Environment, Planning and Housing [DEAL], Martinique Regional Nature Park, University of the French West Indies and Guiana, Central Martinique Urban District Community, neighbouring municipalities, etc.). The city drew on this work to develop its environmental policy, called the Lamentin Environmental Strategy (SELA), flanked by outreach actions for children and adults in the area. In March 2012, the City of Le Lamentin organised for a mission to go to Santiago for Martinique's stakeholders to also understand this groundbreaking ecosystem conservation area.

In 2013, these exchanges of skills and expertise continued with several workstreams all working towards the implementation of the Lamentin Environmental Strategy: develop the training of stakeholders in both areas in biodiversity conservation (especially mangroves) and partnership dynamics to support their respective environmental strategies; develop integrated practices for the Lamentin stakeholders to conserve biodiversity and play a greater part in the Genipa Bay reserve and Fort-de-France Bay contract projects; and transfer environmental practices between the two areas. One of the outputs is a rapid biological inventory (RBI) in Le Lamentin with the assistance of the Cuban partners. Such inventories are concentrated over a short space of time to study the species' biological, social and cultural challenges, identify their threats, define their conservation objectives and develop management and communication strategies. This approach was backed by a broad-based voluntary rallying of local Martinique stakeholders (scientists, local authorities, fishers, hunters, associations, inhabitants, etc.). This initiative is continuing with a mangrove conservation education programme for local inhabitants and the preparation of an integrated management plan for the coastal areas of Le Lamentin.

3.2.2.2 Technical assistance to scale up the creation, management, and development of protected areas for the benefit of local populations

In around one-quarter of the projects, the French local authority is there to help the partner local authority set up or improve the management of biodiversity conservation tools (e.g., nature reserve, national park, permanent forest estate, etc.) in order to improve the development of the natural heritage with and for the local populations. This development mainly takes the form of the development

of ecotourism and sustainable agricultural and forest production. The income and jobs generated by these new activities are intended to improve the local populations' living conditions.

These projects entail many political and technical exchanges between the two local authorities, which can take the form of the French local authority or its operators providing staff on *ad hoc* or permanent assignments. This support generally builds local stakeholders' capacities in the long run and ensures sound local ownership of the project.

EXAMPLE 7

Programme to develop sustainable community tourism in protected areas

Partners: Finistère Département Council/Diana Region (Madagascar)

The first contacts between the Finistère Département Council and the northern province of Antsiranana were made in 1999 on the basis of physical and economic similarities (coastline, fishing, farming, tourism, etc.). This cooperation was made official in September 2002 with the signing of a framework cooperation agreement between the two administrative areas. Changes to the Malagasy institutional landscape with the advent of regions in 2004 then led to the signing of a partnership agreement between the Malagasy Diana Region and Finistère Département Council in November 2007. This agreement covered five priority sectors for action: support for the decentralisation process, health, culture-youth, agricultural development, and ecotourism-rural tourism. An international solidarity volunteer represents the *département* in the region.

Under Madagascar's protected areas system, protected areas were set up in the Diana Region (mainly "protected landscapes" – IUCN Category V). Their management was temporarily assigned to local NGOs (e.g., Fanamby and SAGE). The Diana Region also identified tourism as one of

its main development drivers in its Regional Development Plan. The Diana Region and its local stakeholders consequently asked Finistère and its partners (Armorica Regional Nature Park, Brest National Botanical Conservatory, etc.) to assist them with their experience of managing sensitive natural areas and made the programme to develop sustainable community tourism in a number of protected areas a pillar of their cooperation. A series of projects in different protected areas have been conducted since 2007 (Andrafiarena-Andavakoera, French Mountain, etc.).

Actions cover diagnoses of ecotourism potential in protected areas, exchanges of experience on the development of ecotourism with the Armorica RNP, technical assistance for the creation and management of native species nurseries, reforestation and forest restoration, setting up tourism infrastructures compliant with international standards, informing the local populations and communities, the development of organic fair trade sectors, assistance with the definition and implementation of protected area management plans, creation of a platform for exchanges, etc.

3.2.2.3 Transfer of the French Regional Nature Parks (RNPs) concept: high value-added expertise

The main aim of a quarter of the projects is to export and tailor the "French RNPs" model to the partner's area, generally at the request of the foreign local authority.

The regional nature parks of France have a 40-year experience in innovative governance, environmental protection, biodiversity conservation, local planning, local and social development, and decentralisation scale-up methods. The regional nature parks and their federation have been largely engaged in

international cooperation for over ten years. They have a wide range of experience in this in terms of types of action (from *ad hoc* expertise to major institutional assistance projects), cooperation sectors and partner countries. They work with over 25 countries in virtually all the regions of the world. With the regional nature parks' experience, local authorities have an original, effective tool to enrich their cooperation programmes.⁵² Since 2003, this international work by the RNPs and their federation has developed a flagship international cooperation strategy, updated and rolled out for the 2014-2020 period,⁵³ to develop and structure their action.

RNPs are often asked by their regional and département councils to work on decentralised cooperation actions and can be also found driving partnerships, generally via their federation. They form real integrated local development tools, balancing socioeconomic development with environmental conservation, and are of growing interest to many countries seeking to replicate this concept. Project content generally comprises exchanges of experience regarding the main features of the RNPs model: definition of a sustainable local project, participatory governance, contractual management of natural habitats, promotion of local products and local identity, ecotourism, etc.⁵⁴

The projects cover, for example, all or part of the following actions: policy support to national and local policymakers; development of a preparatory study and diagnosis of the territory; identification of the project territory or at least a pilot area for demonstration purposes; organisation of consultations and local governance; the technical, legal and financial set-up for a Park Centre structure to promote the approach; definition of a plan of action in the form of a charter; implementation of concrete, operational actions, generally for demonstration purposes (e.g., management of natural habitats, ecotourism and agroecology); outreach and communication campaigns for local stakeholders

to encourage ownership of the RNP concept and the collaborative implementation of the local project, etc.

The French RNPs concerned are always involved in these projects as experts or operators, if not signatories of the cooperation agreement itself. Note also that these are generally long-term stepwise projects that advance at the rate of local ownership of the concept.

EXAMPLE 8

Transfer of the French Regional Nature Parks concept

Partners: Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Regional Council/Tangier-Tétouan Region (Morocco) - Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Regional Council/ Union of the Municipalities of Jezzine (Lebanon)

The Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Region is at the forefront of this type of action with its six regional nature parks, all fully fledged laboratories for the transfer of experience and exchanges of expertise. Just two examples are:

- The Luberon RNP, which has been assisting the Tangier-Tétouan Region in Morocco with the creation of a regional nature park in Bouhachem since 2001.⁵⁵
- The Verdon RNP, which is assisting the Union of the Municipalities of Jezzine in Lebanon with the development of a participatory sustainable rural development charter. See also Example 3 above (see p. 26).

52-Madon G., 2008. *Coopération internationale des parcs naturels régionaux : vade-mecum*. Paris, Direction générale de la coopération internationale et du développement, 77 p.

53-French Federation of Regional Nature Parks, 2014. *Stratégie : coopération européenne et internationale 2014-2020*. 7 p.

54-French Development Agency (AFD) and French Federation of Regional Nature Parks, 2010. *Savoirs Communs No. 8 : Parcs naturels régionaux de France et coopération décentralisée*. 80 p.

55-For more information, see the "Projet Parc naturel régional de Bouhachem au Maroc" case study published in French by the French Development Agency (AFD) and French Federation of Regional Nature Parks, 2010, in *Savoirs Communs No. 8 : Parcs naturels régionaux de France et coopération décentralisée*. 80 p.

3.2.2.4 Raising awareness and promoting education on biodiversity and its importance

Most of the projects surveyed include biodiversity outreach and/or education actions for different targets (local population, elected officials and local stakeholders, schools, etc.).

Two of the five projects conducted by municipalities and inter-municipal bodies specifically feature biodiversity outreach and

education for the schools of the two local partner authorities. The local authorities interviewed say that this type of project is motivating for decision-makers and technical partners both in house and out of house. These grassroots projects and their outcomes are in effect directly “visible” to the local populations in the local authorities concerned.

EXAMPLE 9

“Tell Me About Your Nature” leaflet

Partners: City of Lille/Municipality of Saint-Louis, Municipal Development Agency (Senegal)

Lille was twinned with Saint-Louis in 1978. These long-standing partners signed a first decentralised cooperation agreement in 2007. This agreement was renewed in 2010 with five cooperation sectors: participatory democracy, the local economy, health and public hygiene, the quality of life and culture. Cooperation saw a technical correspondent sent by the City of Lille to Saint-Louis.

In 2011, in the “participatory democracy” sector, Saint-Louis set up a Municipal Children’s Council (CME) based on Lille’s model. A special twinning committee was established for the two councils to work together. They regularly discuss the focuses they want to work on and conduct joint projects together. In 2013, the children decided they wanted to work on nature and produce a leaflet on the animal and plant species typical of each of their home areas and the

biodiversity initiatives taken by their city and its inhabitants. The overarching aim of this project was to raise the child council members’ awareness of the biodiversity in their area and their twinned city’s area and learn to get to know each other through “nature”. This involved visits to natural habitats and educational farms, discussions to choose the species (five per area) and initiatives to be presented, factsheets produced by the children, and presentations of the leaflet⁵⁶ to Lille City Hall and the Municipality of Saint-Louis. In preparing this leaflet, the children (re)discovered their fauna and flora through their field trips and bibliographical research. They also found out about their twin city’s nature and were able to compare it with what they had at home. In Lille, the leaflet will be reused for school and extracurricular workshops, in particular during Sustainable Development Week.

Decentralised cooperation in favour of biodiversity therefore concerns mainly technical cooperation in operations set up to exchange knowledge and expertise and provide technical assistance to the local partner authority. It also helps raise the populations’ awareness of biodiversity. It concerns few material investment actions.

56- City of Lille and Municipality of Saint-Louis, 2013. *Raconte-moi ta nature : un projet des conseils municipaux d’enfants de Lille et de Saint-Louis*. 37 p.

3.3 Project implementation: partnership organisation and mutual benefits

3.3.1 Key features of the partnership organisation

3.3.1.1 In the French local authorities: use of technical departments and involvement of elected officials

Two-thirds of the projects surveyed use various French local authority technical departments for their implementation. These departments are:

- **the department for decentralised cooperation**, which generally coordinates, steers, and oversees the project (e.g., finding funding, setting up the project, player and partner coordination, and logistics);
- **the department for biodiversity**, which works on the project's operational track, providing its technical expertise and linkage with the local area's focus partners;
- **and the other specialised departments concerned by the project** (e.g., water, agriculture, and forestry, environmental education, tourism, communication, and participatory democracy).

In the interviews with the departments, the department in charge of biodiversity was often said to be “called in *ad hoc*”, with too little notice and too late on in the design of the project. Most of the people interviewed complained of a lack of co-construction and cross-cutting thinking upstream of the project. The lack of “specialised” department availability to work on international actions was also raised. The international track is generally not defined as part of their brief, often resulting in a lack of in-house technical expertise at work in decentralised cooperation projects.

In answer to the involvement of elected officials, however, the survey respondents said that the relevant technical department correspondents were always involved in the projects and kept informed of project progress.

3.3.1.2 A wide range of technical partners

The projects analysed involve a large number of technical and institutional partners classed in five main categories:

- Central government departments and government-funded institutions (e.g., French Development Agency (AFD), French Agency for Marine Protected Areas, water agencies, French Coastal Protection Agency, French Forestry Agency, national parks, and relevant devolved government departments)
- Local authorities and their intermunicipal cooperation structures (e.g., regional nature parks, different French local government bodies involved in cooperation with the same foreign local authority, and the different levels of local government in a given area)
- Local socioeconomic stakeholders (e.g., local fishing association, federation of tourism stakeholders, and beekeeping union)
- Local environmental associations and NGOs
- Academic and research bodies

The implementation of decentralised cooperation projects on biodiversity draws mainly on the relevant biodiversity conservation bodies in the areas concerned. These “resource” partners are often the project operators. Of note here is the **particular case of the parks** (regional nature parks, marine nature parks and national parks), especially the RNPs and their federation, which play a key role in the emergence and implementation of many decentralised cooperation projects on biodiversity (see also Section 3.2.2 p. 27). The parks are involved in nearly half of the 32 projects analysed, generally as operators of all or part of the project, technical partners and cofinanciers, if not signatories of the cooperation agreement itself. However, these structures and their federation are faced with a considerable imbalance between a high level of international demand for their exchanges of experience and their capacity to meet this demand (lack of means for sustainable outreach on the subject).⁵⁷

3.3.1.3 Varying levels of financial resources

The financial sums reported vary considerably from one project to the next and do not appear to depend on the local government level concerned. For example, the authorities reported earmarking sums ranging from €5,000 to €330,000 for the implementation

57 - French Development Agency (AFD) and French Federation of Regional Nature Parks, 2010, Ibid.

of these projects. Reported project totals range from €5,000 to nearly €3 million without any distinction made between local government levels. Total funding for the 32 identified projects can therefore be estimated at approximately €10 million, with €2 million of this sum coming from local government.

However, these figures are to be treated with caution. They are taken from information voluntarily provided by the survey respondents, which presents a wide range of content and levels of accuracy from one questionnaire to the next (e.g., nearly a third of the questions on the project total and its funding were not answered).

Other observations are:

- the projects' main technical partners, starting with the authorities involved, provide a large share of the project funding;
- two-thirds of the projects receive cofinancing from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development, mainly in respect of its calls for projects;
- the use of European funds is only mentioned in four of the 32 projects (mainly the European Regional Development Fund [ERDF] in connection with the Innovation & Environment Regions of Europe sharing solutions [INTERREG] Programme)
- the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the French Global Environment Facility (FGEF) are mentioned in 20% of the answers received.

Local government financial reporting would need to be improved and brought to scale to be able to conduct a more accurate, consolidated analysis of the funds allocated to decentralised cooperation on biodiversity.

3.3.2 Project outcomes and gains for the areas concerned and their stakeholders

3.3.2.1 "Sustainable" projects with outcomes deemed "satisfactory" even though few are assessed

The French local authorities said they could identify outcomes in keeping with the goals initially set for 25 of the 32 projects.

Although 75% of these projects have not been assessed, the authorities consider their outcomes to be satisfactory on the whole (satisfactory: 59%; highly satisfactory: 15%).

Annual project reports or progress reports are produced for in-house use or the financial partners in the majority of cases.

Yet very few of these projects have a real monitoring and evaluation mechanism able to assess the project as a whole and report on biodiversity conservation outcomes and gains for the geographic areas concerned.

In terms of outlook, over 80% of the projects consider that the partnership put in place and the work undertaken are "sustainable" and should normally continue and evolve.

3.3.2.2 Project gains for the partners' areas

The main benefits of the implementation of the decentralised cooperation projects on biodiversity for the partners' areas reported by the French authorities concern:

- **Conservation of the area's biodiversity** (e.g., protected area creation and upgraded management, improved knowledge, awareness of the issue among local stakeholders and populations, creation of local projects based on the French RNPs model, etc.)
- **Creation of income generating activities that improve the local populations' living conditions** (e.g., sustainable use and development of natural resources, creation of native species nurseries for reforestation activities, improvement and development of ecotourism, etc.). All the activities developed by these projects generally constitute a real economic, social, and environmental alternative for the populations living and working in and around these areas
- **Capacity development and building for the partner authority and local stakeholders** for biodiversity conservation and, more generally, the implementation of sustainable local projects based on the conservation and development of their natural heritage
- **Improvement of local governance, and the networking and local steering of administrative areas in favour of biodiversity conservation** involving civil society and especially local NGOs
- **Awareness raising among the local populations** of the benefits of protecting their environment

3.3.2.3 Project gains for the French areas

As with most of the decentralised cooperation projects, the positive effects of the biodiversity projects on the French authority's own administrative area are generally not, or not sufficiently, identified and promoted to local stakeholders and the population. Yet the mutual benefits of these projects, often seen as an expense for the sole benefit of the partner's administrative area, are impor-

tant for the French area. Project implementation mainly:

- **creates a local understanding of international biodiversity conservation issues and helps develop the notion of responsibility for the preservation of this common good.** The biodiversity communication, outreach, and education actions conducted by the projects are particularly important in this;
- **illustrates and spotlights the strong linkages between biodiversity conservation and local development** and improves the understanding of how they are replicated in our territories;
- **promotes and develops French biodiversity expertise as an additional driver for the attractiveness and reach of our territories with the potential to position France as a country of excellence in this field** (scientific research, academics, engineers, etc.). This entails pointing up economic, academic and technical potential in France;
- **prompts the French local authority and its partners, by comparing their practices with others, to question, enhance and develop their implementation practices and methods to improve biodiversity conservation in France** (in terms of governance, cooperation, local organisation, tools, etc.). These exchanges build the skills of the French stakeholders involved and often help them take new angles on their local situation and issues.
- **advances the networking and local steering of administrative areas in both the North and the South** by creating a teamwork dynamic for all the French stakeholders concerned to work together on shared biodiversity conservation goals;
- **encourages the cross-cutting use of the local authority's departments.** This departmental decompartmentalisation can be a source of internal efficiency, consistency and enrichment of practices for the teams.

It is important to develop and promote these aspects to drive up the legitimacy of the projects and their ability to respond to local issues in France and abroad.

3.4 Main drivers and brakes associated with the emergence and implementation of decentralised cooperation projects on biodiversity

3.4.1 Main drivers and keys for success

3.4.1.1 General

- **The identification of biodiversity conservation as a mutual concern and a factor for the development** of the areas involved in both the North and the South is key to project emergence. The similarity of habitats concerned in the areas, and hence the management of their challenges, is an important element in establishing cooperation.
- **An operating procedure drawing on the local stakeholders in the two areas and the Northern and Southern institutions fosters responses tailored to local needs and the sustainability of actions and their outcomes.** This local matrix makes it easier for the institutions to hand over the reins to the local areas and their stakeholders when the time is right.
- **The presence of local stakeholders with biodiversity expertise** (e.g., regional nature park, national botanical conservatory, and local nature conservation association) and their involvement in project implementation fosters local support for and investment in the actions taken and the promotion of local engineering skills and expertise. The French local authority consequently plays a role of project facilitator, coordinator and support body.
- **The involvement of the French Federation of Regional Nature Parks**, identified as one of the leading specialised biodiversity networks, is considered to be particularly important especially for projects involving the national institutional levels.
- **The networking and coordination of actions by different French local authorities working in the same geographic area** pools and optimises the means used (project preparation package, funding application and approval, and project monitoring and evaluation).
- **The decentralised cooperation projects designed to raise young people's awareness of nature are generally motivational and conducive to sound ownership by the local authorities and partners concerned.** The notion of a mutually

beneficial project is probably more visible, as the young people in both the South and the North benefit from this outreach and improve their knowledge of nature at home and abroad.

- **The financial involvement of a French local authority** in the implementation of a project can act as a driver in terms of the donors seeing it as more secure and hence being more inclined to approve additional funding.

3.4.1.2 Within French local authorities

- **Strong political backing from elected officials** is conducive to the emergence and implementation of the cooperation project and makes it easier to onboard all the departments concerned and sustain the project in the long term.
- **Biodiversity department staff involvement in the project is key to its sound implementation and monitoring.** However, participation in international actions is not generally defined as part of their brief.
- **The decentralised cooperation department and the biodiversity department need to work together right from the project design stage,** as these specialised departments provide technical expertise and know which local stakeholders can potentially be associated with the project.
- **Standing budgets for international action by the authority's different specialised departments** enable the use of the government body's in-house expertise and the involvement of the people concerned.
- **Staff in the intervention area** (e.g., French authority's representative office or international solidarity volunteers) **who work closely with the foreign authority's staff and local stakeholders** help identify relevant projects that meet the area's needs and concerns, help bring both parties firmly on board and make for efficient monitoring of project implementation.

3.4.2 Main brakes and problems

3.4.2.1 General


- **Lack of knowledge of biodiversity and its importance, the international institutional framework for biodiversity conservation, and the commitments made by France to address biodiversity concerns.** This means that the contribution of local government action abroad to addressing these concerns is not, or not sufficiently, tapped into and promoted.
- **Underestimation of the importance of decentralised biodiversity cooperation to the development and**

attractiveness of the areas and to improving the populations' living conditions at home and abroad, which could be due to a lack of understanding as to what biodiversity conservation does for local development and a lack of communication on the projects conducted and their outcomes.

- **Biodiversity is generally seen as a "secondary" non-priority issue.** Local authorities tend to opt for sectors of cooperation that they identify as having a more direct economic impact on their own area.
- **The current climate of local government budget cutbacks is pushing international and biodiversity issues into the background.** Much closer attention is currently paid to which projects and fields are funded, and these two areas are still far too often seen as "non-essential" compared with other local social, transport and health policies, for example.
- **The lack of communication on French local authorities' international work and achievements** (for the areas, their stakeholders, and their inhabitants) means that the projects conducted suffer from a lack of visibility and local profile. This lack of information does nothing for the local populations' uptake of and support for these public policies, a factor that is often decisive in justifying and guaranteeing political backing for these sectors.
- **The lack of local player mobilisation,** in France and abroad, makes it hard to elicit the local investment the project needs for its implementation.

3.4.2.2 Within French local authorities

- **The lack of political backing** is identified as the main brake on the emergence, implementation and development of decentralised cooperation projects on biodiversity. It explains most of the other problems identified.
- **The international relations department or directorate's position in the authority's organisation chart** does not always give it the legitimacy it needs to actually be able to secure the services of the specialised departments and especially the department in charge of biodiversity.
- **Given that working on these international projects is not generally defined as part of the specialised departments' brief, projects put forward by international relations staff are often seen as "extra work".** The involvement of the specialised departments in the project therefore depends mainly on the "political" will of the decision-makers (elected



officials, directors, etc.) to make the project one of their priorities for action and/or the personal interest and goodwill of the people concerned.

- **The lack of human resources in the departments in charge of biodiversity** is often pointed up as a brake on response to the different international projects put forward.
- **Interdepartmental compartmentalisation generally results in a lack of co-construction and cross-cutting thinking in project definition and implementation** (*ad hoc* use of specialised departments too late on in the project set-up process, lack of cross-cutting thinking upstream of the project, etc.), and there is a mutual lack of knowledge between departments of the local authority's sector strategies/policies (few links between the local authorities' biodiversity strategies, where such exist, and their international policies).
- **Lack of use of the biodiversity expertise found in local authorities.**

Most of the problems raised are not specific to the biodiversity focus. They apply to most of the decentralised cooperation projects, irrespective of their focus. As Senator Peyronnet's information report puts it, "The main challenges for decentralised cooperation today are financing and justifying international actions and optimising these actions by means of evaluation and coordination."⁵⁸

58 - Peyronnet J.-C., 2012, *Ibid.*

Chapter 4

PROPOSED RECOMMENDATIONS TO SCALE UP FRENCH DECENTRALISED COOPERATION IN FAVOUR OF BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

The purpose of these proposed recommendations is to scale up and improve French decentralised cooperation in favour of biodiversity conservation.

- These recommendations were developed by IUCN France based on the survey findings, interviews with a sample of French local authorities conducting decentralised cooperation projects on biodiversity, and written contributions from the main institutional stakeholders concerned.
- IUCN France rounded out this work with the support of its network of experts and its Local Government & Biodiversity Working Group and drawing on the conservation and development project experience it has acquired in its management of the Small Grants Programme.
- These recommendations are for all stakeholders concerned by decentralised cooperation on biodiversity:
 - Biodiversity conservation stakeholders: NGOs, associations, etc.
 - The local government sector
 - French decentralised cooperation and international solidarity networks: United Cities of France, regional multiplayer networks, etc.
 - Central government and its government-funded institutions: MAEDI, MEDDE, AFD, etc.

Recommendation No. 1

Raise awareness of what the term “biodiversity” covers, the importance of biodiversity conservation, and its contribution to inclusive local development.

This explanation work should involve educational and communication actions focusing on the following notions.

- **The importance of biodiversity conservation and its international framework:** define biodiversity, differentiate it from the terms “environment” and “sustainable development” with which it is all too often equated, and clearly explain what

a decentralised cooperation project on biodiversity is. Also raise the profile of the international institutional framework on biodiversity and the commitment by France and other nations to preserve it.

- **The contribution of biodiversity to local development, based on the notion of ecosystem services, i.e. the goods and services people obtain from protected nature:** this understanding is key to scaling up local government’s international biodiversity action and enabling the cross-cutting, integrated mainstreaming of biodiversity and its concerns in international cooperation projects, mainly those focusing on development.
- **The solutions offered by protected ecosystems:** nature-based solutions are particularly important, especially to address the issues that will be raised by climate change and for which we need to prepare (e.g., food security and natural hazards).
- **Local government’s responsibility in international work to prevent biodiversity loss:** the decentralisation processes are stepping up local government’s direct responsibilities for biodiversity and establishing their role and position among the key international conservation stakeholders. This can be seen from the recognition and inclusion of local government in the CBD. This is actually a spin-off of the Rio Earth Summit slogan, “Think Global, Act Local”. The French local authorities’ commitment to biodiversity cannot solely take the form of actions in their own areas, since biodiversity loss has local and global repercussions.
- **The necessary solidarity between administrative areas for biodiversity conservation:** solidarity shares in the implementation of the principle of responsibility to future generations and nature. This notion, based on a moral code of responsibility, balances economic development with biodiversity conservation. The projects conducted address local concerns while helping to take up challenges that transcend the two local areas concerned: preservation of a global public good.

Recommendation No. 2

Raise the profile of the decentralised biodiversity cooperation projects conducted by French local government and explain their gains and cobenefits for the areas involved.

This concerns the following main actions:

- **Promote the listing of all decentralised cooperation projects conducted by French local authorities in a specialised database that clearly defines and explains “biodiversity conservation”** (e.g., the French Atlas of Decentralised Cooperation and the project exchange). This information should be easily accessible and updated annually.
- **Explain and communicate on the gains and cobenefits of decentralised cooperation projects on biodiversity for all the geographic areas involved**, showing in particular:
 - the advantages for the reach and development of the local authorities at home and abroad;
 - the mutual benefits for partner areas;
 - the promotion of local skills and expertise;
 - their contribution to achieving the goals defined in the local authorities’ policies/strategies in favour of biodiversity conservation and sustainable development (especially in terms of the Agenda 21 programmes).

It is key to spotlight and promote the positive impact of these projects for French territories in the current environment of budget cutbacks and local government shift of focus to their core assignments.

- **Identify, capitalise on and promote joint success stories at home and abroad** of projects conducted mainly in developing countries:
 - that have achieved positive natural heritage conservation outcomes;
 - that are development vehicles for the areas involved (e.g., creation of income generating activities, improvement of the populations’ living conditions, and local player training and upskilling).

This work could also be accompanied by the identification of best practices at all project stages (e.g., project definition in keeping with partners’ needs, governance, tools used, promotion of outcomes, involvement of local populations, etc.).

This could take the form, for example, of **a widely disseminated portfolio of model projects** to encourage investment in centralised cooperation projects on biodiversity.

- **Include a track in all decentralised biodiversity cooperation projects on nature information and education actions for young people and schoolchildren in the geographic areas concerned.** These actions raise the project’s local profile and add to its positive impacts by informing populations and stakeholders at home and abroad of the bio-diversity issues addressed and the actions taken.

Recommendation No. 3

Create more links and bridges between biodiversity conservation stakeholders and decentralised cooperation stakeholders at all institutional action levels.

These networks exist side by side but are unfamiliar with and have little to do with each other. They know little of their respective issues, stakeholders involved, actions taken and expertise available or the opportunities for networking and associative action.

The development of relations between these networks would:

- **disseminate and improve knowledge of France’s international biodiversity conservation work** under the Convention on Biological Diversity, of which the decentralised cooperation stakeholders are currently largely ignorant;
- **raise the profile of local government’s role in and contribution to achieving these goals** and consequently step up their position in global biodiversity governance.

This will call for bridges to be developed at all levels:

- **International and European:** the international and European local government networks play an important role in promoting and providing political backing for these subjects (United Cities and Local Governments [UCLG], United Regions Organization – Forum of Global Associations of Regions [ORU-FOGAR], Council of European Municipalities and Regions [CEMR], Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development [NRG4SD], International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives [ICLEI], etc.). It can in effect be useful to use “global advocacy” to foster more local political backing.
- **National:** develop interministerial work in line with the recent climate initiatives (e.g., interministerial call for Climate 2015 projects). The role of the National Commission for Decentralised Cooperation (CNCD), the French Development Agency (AFD) and national local government bodies is also vital to ensure this link (e.g., AFCCRE, CUF, ARF, ADF, AMGVE, ACUF, Éco

Maires, etc.), as is the involvement of the French Federation of Regional Nature Parks and the future French Agency for Biodiversity.

- **Local:** strengthen links between local biodiversity stakeholders (e.g., local representative offices of the future French Agency for Biodiversity, environmental and sustainable development education associations, regional nature parks and universities) and international cooperation stakeholders (e.g., regional multiplayer networks, ARRICOD, and civic and international solidarity education associations).

A number of actions could be taken to drive forward this networking, such as setting up dedicated forums; improving existing Internet platforms to include, develop, and promote biodiversity or at least create an international biodiversity player portal; hold annual international and national focus meetings and conferences; scale up the role played by the multisector regional multiplayer networks in the local administrative areas, etc.

Recommendation No. 4

Equip the local authorities with tools they can use in house to scale up and develop their decentralised cooperation on biodiversity conservation.

The following actions could be developed as priorities:

- **Develop a political argument for decision-makers explaining the benefits and gains of decentralised cooperation projects on biodiversity for the local areas and stakeholders concerned at home and abroad to encourage political backing for this subject** (e.g., international reach, local governance tool, impact on youth, promotion of the contribution of French local authorities to achieving national and international biodiversity conservation objectives, the notions of collective solidarity and global public goods, mutual benefits, including economic gains, promotion and development of grassroots expertise and skills, tie-ins with the Climate and COP21 commitments, etc. See also Section 3.3.2, p. 33). This specific biodiversity work could draw on the thinking already conducted on local government action

abroad in general⁵⁹ and on the profile-raising work for the French decentralised cooperation projects on biodiversity (see Recommendation No. 2, p. 38).

- **Propose an organisation and resources that foster the use of the French authority's in-house biodiversity conservation expertise to involve the technical department concerned as far upstream as possible in decentralised cooperation project implementation:** identify international action as a cross-cutting priority and include it in the different technical departments' briefs (e.g., position the department in charge of international action at a high enough level of responsibility in the authority's organisation chart to enable this cross-cutting action; give the technical departments a dedicated international action budget; and appoint a correspondent for each department responsible for international biodiversity action), decompartmentalise action and develop interdepartmental teamwork, create a culture of teamwork, introduce international solidarity leave, arrange communication on mutual local-international enrichment, etc.
- **Take action for the French local authority to be represented in partner administrative areas and cooperate closely with the foreign local government staff and local stakeholders** (e.g., French authority's representative office, joint representative office covering a number of local authorities, international solidarity volunteers, and temporary secondment of local authority staff to train local stakeholders).
- **Produce a handbook, a guide on procedures and best practices covering:**
 - **decentralised cooperation:** legislative framework, the procedures to know, the pitfalls to avoid, the keys for success, the best promotion internally and externally, the international actions taken, etc.;
 - **and the biodiversity track:** definition, France's international commitments, legislative framework, possible areas of action for each level of local government jurisdiction, possible sources of financing, joint success stories and their gains for both the administrative areas and the Northern and Southern stakeholders, illustrations of best practices, examples of the successful inclusion of biodiversity in other projects (e.g., agriculture, fishing, water, transport, rural development, etc.), examples of monitoring mechanisms and performance indicators, etc.

59- For example, the collective rationale "Development cooperation public policies: Can they provide solutions to the issues we face in our territories?", drafted following the European conference of the same name held by AFCCRE in Orléans on 19 May 2015 in association with the European Year for Development; and ARRICOD's "L'Action Internationale des Collectivités Territoriales".

• **Introduce improved, systematic evaluation of the projects conducted, their outcomes and their gains for all the areas concerned.** An evaluation template for decentralised cooperation projects on biodiversity could, for example, be proposed to the local authorities.

Recommendation No. 5

Scale up action by bodies working on biodiversity conservation in French decentralised cooperation projects.

A range of action could be taken:

- **Facilitate the involvement of local stakeholders, especially local “specialised” biodiversity conservation operators,** in decentralised cooperation project implementation (e.g., national parks, regional nature parks, national botanical conservatories, water agencies, universities and research institutes, environmental associations, botanical gardens and safari parks). In this case, the local authority acts as project facilitator and coordinator, a role generally more suited to its resources. This also improves the local investment in the project, conducive to its success and the sustainability of its outcomes, and the development of local skills and expertise.
- **Step up and promote the role of the main national specialised biodiversity conservation networks** (e.g., the French Federation of Regional Nature Parks) in the emergence and implementation of decentralised cooperation projects.
- **Involve the future French Agency for Biodiversity and its local representative offices,** as part of its international brief, in support for decentralised cooperation actions in close cooperation with the specialised national and regional decentralised cooperation networks.

Recommendation No. 6

Promote the sharing of international biodiversity conservation experience by French local government bodies.

Recommended action here is to:

- **foster joint projects by French local authorities working in the same geographic area.** The pooling of resources is

particularly appropriate in the current climate of budget cutbacks (pooling funds, human resources, management capacities, etc.);

- **encourage exchanges of biodiversity and natural resource conservation experiences by French authorities in association with the main networks of stakeholders concerned.** This knowledge sharing could take a range of forms, such as publishing a compendium of experiences, setting up a specialised project exchange and holding meetings on the subject (e.g., training-action by geographic areas with similar natural characteristics, setting up focus exchange groups within existing bodies or *ad hoc* depending on needs, etc.).

Recommendation No. 7

Raise financing to scale up and develop decentralised cooperation projects on biodiversity.

In the current climate, take action to:

- **develop resources allocated by local authorities to their decentralised biodiversity cooperation, especially given:**
 - the importance of local area involvement to biodiversity conservation and meeting the targets of the Convention on Biological Diversity's Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, known as the Aichi Targets,
 - the benefits of conducting these projects for the areas concerned and their stakeholders,
 - sums currently earmarked given the local authorities' total budgets.
- **harness the national decentralised cooperation financing tools in favour of biodiversity conservation, for example:**
 - **ensure that biodiversity appears as a priority focus for action in MAEDI's coming annual and three-yearly calls for decentralised cooperation projects** and clearly explain what the term covers,
 - **launch a call for interministerial projects on biodiversity and natural resource conservation** modelled on the Climate 2015 call for projects by the French Foreign Affairs and International Development, and Agriculture and Ecology ministries,
 - **roll out and ramp up the AFD's French Local Government Financing Facility (FICOL)⁶⁰ for biodiversity and natural resource conservation** and make sure that this mechanism is suited to the French local authorities' project management and financing capacities.

60 - The French Development Agency (AFD) has been testing a French Local Government Financing Facility (FICOL) since 2014 to finance international development projects proposed and implemented by French local government bodies.

- **propose and promote international biodiversity cooperation financing mechanisms tailored to the management and financing capacities of the authorities and especially the “small” authorities, which are important decentralised cooperation stakeholders.** This could, for example, concern the French Global Environment Facility (FGEF) and particularly its Small Grants Programme managed by the IUCN French Committee. The programme’s mandate is to scale up the contribution made by civil society in West Africa, Central Africa, and Madagascar to global environmental protection while improving the local populations’ living conditions. Thanks to ten years of operations, the Small Grants Programme has collected illustrative examples of projects combining biodiversity conservation with local development and has identified many proficient, experienced associations in this field. More than a mere cofunder, the Small Grants Programme is a potential source of inspiration for French local authorities and can provide support for the implementation and monitoring of financed projects;
- **inform local authorities of the different European Union financial instruments that can be used for decentralised biodiversity cooperation** (e.g., the geographic and thematic programmes of the Development Cooperation Instrument [DCI], European INTERREG programme and European structural funds) and help them make more use of these tools;
- **seek innovative and/or alternative financing to fund decentralised biodiversity cooperation** (e.g., sponsorship, private foundations and crowdfunding). Following the 2014 international development and solidarity policy act’s extension of the Oudin-Santini provision (water and sanitation) to waste,⁶¹ the act’s scope could now be extended to biodiversity conservation.

Recommendation No. 8

Develop the international promotion of French local government biodiversity conservation expertise.

In addition to their natural habitat management skills, growing French local government experience in setting up local planning programmes dedicated to or including biodiversity issues is a real boon for the recognition and international promotion of French biodiversity conserva-

tion expertise. This international promotion could cover:

- the development and implementation of local biodiversity strategies (e.g., regional biodiversity strategies [RBS] and plans for the biodiversity of départements and towns) associating all the administrative area’s stakeholders;
- the conservation and restoration of ecological continuity by means of the development and implementation of regional ecological cohesion plans (RECPs);
- biodiversity conservation as a solution for adaptation to climate change: communication of French experience to COP21, especially climate and biodiversity policies implemented by local government (Regional Climate, Air and Energy Plan [RCAEP] and Local Climate-Energy Plan [LCEP]).

Recommendation No. 9

Promote biodiversity conservation mainstreaming in all French decentralised cooperation projects.

Public policy consistency calls for action to ensure that decentralised cooperation project objectives do not run counter to biodiversity conservation and that these projects do not support actions resulting in biodiversity loss. This entails, for example:

- the definition of bioconditionality criteria for the different international cooperation finance tools;
- i-house communication on the local government body’s biodiversity policy and its mainstreaming in the international actions taken.

A European and international benchmarking exercise could serve for the implementation of all these recommendations. This comparative analysis would put into perspective and enhance French decentralised biodiversity cooperation practice by identifying factors for success found in other countries. In particular, the exercise could research and analyse:

- innovative governance methods promoting biodiversity mainstreaming in international cooperation policies;
- innovative financing;
- “best” international biodiversity cooperation projects by foreign local authorities in order to identify best practices (positive outcomes for biodiversity conservation, cobenefits, etc.).

61 - French Republic, 2014. International Development and Solidarity Policy Act No 2014-773 of 7 July 2014.

Conclusion

In the face of today's major planetary challenges and the importance of global biodiversity conservation, decentralised cooperation is one of the best ways for local and global levels to meet and answer the call for solidarity between territories.

The different decentralisation processes have driven growing awareness among local government bodies of their responsibilities and the importance of their involvement to achieve national and international biodiversity conservation goals. Many French authorities, regions in particular, have been working for years now with their foreign partner authorities on decentralised cooperation projects for biodiversity conservation, building up more biodiversity expertise as they go. These projects concern essentially Southern countries (Sub-Saharan Africa in the main) and are driven by shared interests to conserve biodiversity for the sustainable, inclusive development of areas in the North and the South. Among the key stakeholders in this cooperation are the regional nature parks with their original local conservation and sustainable development model.

International biodiversity conservation action by local authorities fosters the emergence of new international networks of administrative areas, pools knowledge of experience for the shared improvement of expertise, capacities and practices, builds awareness of and education on biodiversity and its challenges for different target audiences, directly contributes to local development and improves the local populations' living conditions. As such, it is a real driver for action to be developed and scaled up.

IUCN France proposes the nine following recommendations to develop and scale up this action:

1. Raise awareness of what the term "biodiversity" covers, the importance of biodiversity conservation and its contribution to inclusive local development.
2. Raise the profile of the decentralised biodiversity cooperation projects conducted by French local government and explain their gains and cobenefits for the areas involved.
3. Create more links and bridges between biodiversity conservation stakeholders and decentralised cooperation stakeholders at all institutional action levels.

4. Equip the local authorities with tools they can use in house to scale up and develop their decentralised cooperation on biodiversity conservation.

5. Scale up action by bodies working on biodiversity protection in French decentralised cooperation projects.

6. Promote the sharing of international biodiversity conservation experience by French local government bodies.

7. Raise financing to scale up and develop decentralised cooperation projects on biodiversity.

8. Develop the international promotion of French local government biodiversity conservation expertise.

9. Promote biodiversity conservation mainstreaming in all French decentralised cooperation projects.

With a large number of cooperation projects, there is great potential to improve and develop French decentralised cooperation in favour of biodiversity conservation. IUCN France therefore keenly encourages all the stakeholders concerned (NGOs, environmental associations, local government bodies, French decentralised cooperation and international solidarity networks, central government and government-funded institutions) to actively commit to the implementation of these recommendations to scale up and improve French decentralised biodiversity cooperation. This consolidation could concern the Southern countries in particular for the more sustainable management of their natural resources to help improve the local populations' living conditions.

IUCN France will contribute to this by making available the expertise it has acquired in over ten years of Small Grants Programme implementation. The IUCN French Committee has a real pool of experience in identifying and monitoring projects combining biodiversity conservation with local development initiated by civil society organisations in Southern countries. IUCN France helps these organisations to set up, manage, and monitor projects and gives them a voice in the environmental choices made in the countries in which their projects are conducted.



Acronyms and abbreviations

ACCDOM	Association of French Overseas Municipalities and Local Authorities (<i>Association des communes et collectivités d'Outre-mer</i>)	CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
ACUF	Association of Urban Communities of France (<i>Association des communautés urbaines de France</i>)	CEMR	Council of European Municipalities and Regions
ADCF	Assembly of Communities of France (<i>Assemblée des communautés de France</i>)	CGCT	French Local Authority Code (<i>Code général des collectivités territoriales</i>)
ADF	Assembly of French Départements (<i>Assemblée des départements de France</i>)	CIED	Intermunicipal Ecodevelopment Council (<i>Conseil intercommunal d'écodéveloppement</i>)
AFCCRE	French Association of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (<i>Association française du conseil des communes et régions d'Europe</i>)	CME	Municipal Children's Council (<i>Conseil municipal d'enfants</i>)
AFD	French Development Agency (<i>Agence française de développement</i>)	CNCD	National Commission for Decentralised Cooperation (<i>Commission nationale de la coopération décentralisée</i>)
AIMF	International Association of French-Speaking Mayors (<i>Association internationale des maires francophones</i>)	COP	Conference of the Parties
AIRF	International Association of French-Speaking Regions (<i>Association internationale des régions francophones</i>)	CUF	United Cities of France (<i>Cités unies France</i>)
AMF	Association of French Mayors (<i>Association des maires de France</i>)	DAECT	Delegation for Local Government Action Abroad, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development (<i>Délégation pour l'action extérieure des collectivités territoriales du ministère des Affaires étrangères et du Développement international</i>)
AMGVF	Association of French City Mayors (<i>Association des maires de grandes villes de France</i>)	DCI	Development Cooperation Instrument
ANEL	National Association of Coastal Local Authorities (<i>Association nationale des élus du littoral</i>)	DEAL	Directorate for the Environment, Planning and Housing (<i>Direction de l'environnement, de l'aménagement et du logement</i>)
ANEM	National Association of Mountain Local Authorities (<i>Association nationale des élus de montagne</i>)	DGM	Directorate General of Global Affairs, Development and Partnerships, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development
APVF	Association of the Small Towns of France (<i>Associations des petites villes de France</i>)	ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ARF	Association of French Regions (<i>Association des régions de France</i>)	EU	European Union
ARRICOD	Association of Local Authority Professionals involved in European and International Action (<i>Association des professionnels de l'action européenne et internationale des collectivités territoriales</i>)	FFEM	French Global Environment Facility (<i>Fonds français pour l'environnement mondial</i>)
		FICOL	French Local Government Financing Facility (<i>Facilité de financement des collectivités territoriales françaises</i>)
		FPNRF	French Federation of Regional Nature Parks (<i>Fédération des parcs naturels régionaux de France</i>)
		GEF	Global Environment Facility

ICLEI	International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives
INTERREG	Innovation & Environment Regions of Europe sharing solutions
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
LCEP	Local Climate-Energy Plan
MAEDI	French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development (<i>Ministère des Affaires étrangères et du Développement international</i>)
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MEDDE	French Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy (<i>Ministère de l'Écologie, du Développement durable et de l'Énergie</i>)
NBS	National Biodiversity Strategy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NRG4SD	Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development
ODA	Official Development Assistance
ORU-FOGAR	United Regions Organization – Forum of Global Associations of Regions
PACA	Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur
RBI	Rapid Biological Inventory
RBS	Regional Biodiversity Strategy
RCAEP	Regional Climate, Air and Energy Plan
RECP	Regional Ecological Cohesion Plan
RMPN	Regional Multiplayer Network
RNPs	Regional Nature Parks
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SELA	Lamentin Environmental Strategy (<i>Stratégie environnementale du Lamentin</i>)
UCLG	United Cities and Local Governments
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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DECENTRALISED COOPERATION AND BIODIVERSITY

Biodiversity is a global public good and our collective life insurance. Deterioration and loss of our natural capital combined with climate change is posing an acute environmental threat worldwide. Biodiversity can also offer effective solutions to the main challenges encountered by humankind (climate change mitigation and adaptation, water supply, food security, disaster risk management, etc.).

The huge stakes involved saw biodiversity loss placed on the international political agenda in the early 1990s and all institutional levels have rallied to the call. Decentralised cooperation has been recognised nationally and internationally as an effective biodiversity conservation tool.

IUCN France, in partnership with the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development and in close association with all the partners concerned, has conducted this study to improve our knowledge of current French local government decentralised cooperation in favour of global biodiversity. Our purpose is also to promote the scaling up of this cooperation, especially with the Southern countries, for a more sustainable management of their natural resources to help improve the local populations' living conditions.

The study called for a broad-based survey of French local authorities to gain an overview of their decentralised cooperation projects on biodiversity. Taking this as a basis, further analyses were then conducted on a sample of projects to identify their main brakes and drivers and propose recommendations to scale up and improve French decentralised cooperation on biodiversity. The main recommendations are for all the stakeholders concerned to work together to explain and communicate the importance and benefits of these projects for the areas involved on both sides of the globe, to present and promote the involvement of French local authorities and local stakeholders in this field, to give local authorities the resources and tools they need to scale up their decentralised biodiversity cooperation, and to strengthen the links between biodiversity conservation stakeholders and decentralised cooperation stakeholders at all levels of action.



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Printing: MAEDI Photocopying Department. **Cover photo:** A solitary bee (*Centris* sp.) drinks the salt-rich tears of a yellow-spotted river turtle (*Podocnemis unifilis*). Sodium is an essential nutrient for survival and reproduction: it helps maintain blood volume, regulate the balance of water in the cells, and keep nerves functioning. Although salt is found in abundance in the oceans, it is seldom found on land and especially rarely in plants. So many land animals that feed on plants need sodium. © www.naturexpose.com/Olivier Dangles and François Nowicki/IRD