



**Local governments
and biodiversity...
...the missing link
in IUCN activities?**

In partnership with



Context and stakes

Climate change, the loss of biodiversity and the growth, mainly urban, of the world's population – the major challenges of this century – are closely intertwined (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005). In this context, the local level is a key field of action to face these challenges. However, the commitment of local and regional government authorities (local governments thereafter) remains unknown and is not enough encouraged...

Yet, in the context provided by Chapter 28 of Agenda 21 adopted in Rio in 1992, local governments have committed to playing a significant role in terms of sustainable development and the support of greater solidarity between the North and South and the East and West² in the context of decentralised cooperation.

The management of natural resources and the conservation of our natural heritage are today part of the fields of action in which they are increasingly involved, along with climate change and energy...

→ **Decentralisation results in greater responsibilities being attributed to local governments¹, turning them today into major players in local actions.**

Greater mobilisation for a renewed governance of natural resources

Environmental management has evolved significantly over the past decades in favour of local governments. The great region-specific ecological diversity and use of resources, and the multitude of stakeholders involved explain why local-level decisions are the most appropriate. This is all the more applicable to natural resources. Decentralised management, combined with collective actions, tends to be a strong complement to centralised management, which defines major orientations. Effective governance at the various decision-making levels (international, national and sub-national) has a positive impact on biodiversity. The missions and means of local governments therefore appear to be different from those of States, for which they do not intend to be a substitute or an alternative, but a complementary actor when undertaking actions.

Decentralisation at work...

Local governments operate in a national legal and institutional framework, yet preserve autonomy, which allows them to adapt their policies to the local context and priorities. In some countries, this autonomy can be very broad. Over the past 30 years, democratic decentralisation has risen in many countries³. A greater number of local governments, in particular in rural areas (in Africa, for example) have more responsibilities, making the emergence of new forms of democracy possible. Local governments have therefore become more active in the economic, social and environmental management of their territories and have an increasing influence over related investments. These changes have a substantial impact on the management of natural resources and environmental governance. They may also impact active organisations, whether formal or not (traditional, associations ...), which usually manage natural resources.



Growing urbanisation... and therefore growing responsibilities

For the first time in 2007, the world's urban population exceeded its rural population. Cities occupy 2% of the planet's surface, but consume three quarters of its natural resources and are responsible for 80% of CO2 emissions in the world. This trend is all the greater in emerging countries and the South, home to the planet's greatest biodiversity. Local urban government authorities have become unquestionable centres for decision-making. Their role and ability to act are increasingly greater at the national, regional and global levels.

It is therefore crucial to take cities into account and support them in order to implement sustainable urban development and manage their control over space and natural resources. In rural areas, it is also key to support local governments, as biodiversity is at the heart and soul of many activities (agriculture, tourism ...).

A study conducted on natural sites close to the urban outskirts of Melbourne in Australia demonstrates that 40% of the ecosystems and 50% of endangered species at the national level are present in this area... *Garrard, Georgia, 3rd Conference of the Competence Network Urban Ecology*

More action at a local scale is a challenge to be met to achieve true progress in the fight against the erosion of biodiversity!

Local politicians must attempt on a daily basis to reconcile the social and economic development of their area and the protection of nature. To this end, there are two potential and complementary approaches:

- *Direct action*: the implementation of the protection of sensitive natural sites under their jurisdiction (protected inhabited areas - IUCN Categories V and VI) in partnership with the State, and the integrated management of natural resources (aquatic, forest, coastal, agricultural...).
- *Indirect action*: consideration and integration of issues related to the environment and biodiversity in sector-based and land use planning policies (creation of ecological corridors, environmentally friendly agricultural development, control over land use planning...).

The complexity of these issues has often resulted in the implementation of innovative governance mechanisms adapted to the local context, in particular all stakeholders working together in the preparation and execution of environmental policies.

The actions led by and with local governments on a local level and those to be led in the future to protect ecosystems and biodiversity will play a key role in the conservation of the diversity of life on Earth.

In Kumaon, India, decentralised management by a local government has allowed for a forest area to be protected for more than 70 years. *Agrawal, Arun. 2002. Mountain research and development 21 (3).*

1. At an international level, referred to as local and regional government authorities.

2. Lisbon 1996 action plan, objectives of the 2000 Millennium Summit, Millennium Ecosystem Evaluation 2005...

3. «Decentralisation and local democracy in the world- 2007 First Global Report», coordinated by the Research Network on Local Government in Europe (GRALE), available at: www.cities-localgovernments.org/gold/gold_report.asp.

Who are local and regional government authorities?

→ **Entities (governmental bodies or institutions) that are active at an infra-national level, distinct from State administrative authorities, with their own responsibilities and a degree of local autonomy for their own areas of responsibility within a context defined by law.**

Three key defining concepts :

Decentralisation
Relations between the various levels of power, as defined by law

There are four levels of decentralisation: administrative, political, budgetary and economic (market). It involves the transfer of decision-making powers, responsibilities (competencies) and the resources required. It gives a juridical personality to the entity (or its executives) that exercises the powers and responsibilities for which it has a degree of local autonomy and management, while under State control. It is generally characterised by the existence of an authority elected locally, which is distinct from the State's administrative authorities.

Local autonomy
Status of the authority

It expresses the ability of a local government to manage their own affairs with a certain degree of independence in a context defined by law (self-government, *autonomia*).

Democracy
Mode in which power is exercised

This implies that elected officials report to their constituents and it determines free administration.

Different types of entities throughout the world...

The absence of a standard model results from the diversity in the political and administrative histories that have led to the creation of modern States (from the Nation State to Federations, or regionalised States...). This diversity is not a weakness; on the contrary, it highlights the strength of the systems' ability to adapt to vast panoply of institutional models.

...but a common framework

Decentralisation is the reference standard in local administration. In 2007, the *International Guidelines on Decentralisation and the Strengthening of Local Authorities*, adopted after more than 10 years of debate by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), provide a common framework applicable on a worldwide scale for the first time.

Two possible tiers...

- *The local level* - the lowest tier, closest to citizen in the State structure (most often, the municipality);
- *Intermediary levels*, the number and style of which differs depending on the countries.

...and different scopes of action

They act within their territory, but also beyond, through cooperation with other territories or the implementation of networks on a national scale, through their associations, some of which are specifically focused on environmental and/or "nature" issues, and on the international scale, via their international networks.

A key player in territories

→ **acquiring greater and greater...**

...responsibilities in terms of territorial planning and the conservation of natural assets, complementary to the States'

The allocation of responsibilities between local governments varies depending on the country. Despite obvious differences, local-level responsibilities present great similarities throughout the world (OECD/World Bank; Lima 2007). The lowest sub-national level is generally responsible for immediate environmental services – management of transportation, waste, sanitation and basic education. Major cities and intermediary entities (provinces, regions...) usually have responsibilities that extend to the environment and planning, habitat, and social and economic development ... (Lima 2007⁴, 12 world entities analysed).

In Senegal, the management of natural resources is one of the responsibilities that have been transferred to the regions, towns and local communities⁵. To this end, they may implement structures for formal discussion through local management agreements covering natural resources and the environment

Local governments are often the main contractors at the level of their territory for international undertakings in terms of sustainable development and biodiversity, even if this is a State responsibility. They increasingly pursue their actions within a context (strategies, plans ...) that illustrates a medium or long-term view of their territory and its evolution. These documents, prepared on the basis of a shared initial diagnostic, define the major orientations and objectives sought. Biodiversity may be one of the components of a general document (for example, a regional land use planning scheme) or its core objective (strategy or action plan for biodiversity).

...planning and implementation tools that allow for the impact on biodiversity to be better taken into account

The tools are structured based on the degree of free administration available to the local government. Local governments may undertake the tasks themselves directly or delegate execution to an external operator.

DIRECT TOOLS	INDIRECT TOOLS
Regulatory (prohibitions, regulations over use, access ... in the form of legislation, orders or customary regulations)	Financial incentives (from local economic players, NGOs...)
Property : control over property in the form of zoning, determination of potential uses (land use planning methods, methods to manage natural resources...)	Innovative governance methods
Contracting and partnerships with relevant players: farmers, private sector, local associations, State administrative bodies...	Support to project leaders – individuals, NGO

4. Ferreira Lima, Sueli. 2007. Local public finances in the new global economic context: city budgets, globalization and local demands. Masters of Urban Planning degree, McGill University, School of Urban Planning...

5. Art. 40 of Decree 96-1134, 27 December 1996.

...and local level experiences in project management to be shared

To speak of actions led by local governments means referring to political and technical choices in answer to a question that is simple only in appearance: "Protect what, how and for who?", political choices established by elected officials on the basis of technical choices made by technical teams and external experts. However, and moreover, this is a societal choice that depends on the degree of closeness between elected officials and the population, as well as the educational actions conducted at a territorial level.

At their level, local governments (provinces, regions, cities, municipalities...) manage a composite territory that is a "mosaic" composed of a number of settings (urban, rural, forest, coastal...), traditions (economic, social), users, interests and challenges in terms of biodiversity. They must decide, arbitrate and/or reconcile the elements that constitute these mosaics every day. Elected officials or their representative bodies juggle interests that are at times distinct. Therefore, local governments develop dynamic approaches for the conservation of natural sites that break with the frozen tradition of territories. These approaches often fit within the Ecosystem Approach, the application framework for the Convention on Biological Diversity, which local governments often have little or insufficient knowledge of.

Many local governments, despite a lack of support, commit in concrete terms to facing challenges that are global in scope but have a local impact. Since the Summit in Rio in 1992, and even at times before then, they have not wavered in complying with their commitments: the Aalborg Charter in 1994, the Millennium Towns and Cities Campaign (UCLG⁶, Beijing, 2005), the Declaration on Cities and Biodiversity in Curitiba (2007)... The Millennium Development Goals and the objective to halt biodiversity loss in 2010 are included in their agenda and they have committed to concrete actions in this regard.

Since 1998, the Northern Forum⁷ (Subarctic) has led a joint programme with various regions on brown bears. The Kodiak and Kamchatka bears are at the heart of this process !



In 1997, a water pollution alert led New York City to reflect on the most economic method to solve this problem. The implementation of a cleanup strategy for its drainage basins cost seven times less than the building and operations of a water treatment plant. It specifically acquired land around the reservoirs to protect the forests and humid areas that acts as a buffer and filter against pollution, allocated credits to local property owners to maintain the forests along the waterways, and provided technical support and infrastructures to farmers and forest operators.

New York City Department of Environmental Protection.

6. United Cities and Local Governments

7. www.northernforum.org/servlet/content/161.html

International networks to share and mutualise experience...

→ **The experience of these networks proves that the great diversity of local and regional government authorities in the world is a treasure and source of innovative solutions adapted to their specific context.**

Local governments have vast experience in creating networks, sharing, international cooperation and partnerships. Sustainable development and climate change have been rapidly included into fundamental topics. Biodiversity as such has emerged more recently and progressively due to issues related to the integrated management of natural resources and the conservation of nature.

First, these networks defend the challenges facing local democracy and a balanced territorial development. They may be:

1. Bodies of a general nature (mayors, intermediary local and regional governments...)
2. Demographically-based entities (major cities, medium size cities, rural towns...), forums for exchange between elected officials facing similar challenges.
3. Sector-based groups (tourism, economy, natural resources...)

Whether they are generalists or specialists, they conduct effective actions both by their ability to advise and their representative role vis-à-vis institutional powers (general public, international governmental bodies, funders...). They are forums for dialogue between elected officials and their partners at different levels (representatives of other local governments, national or international administrative authorities, experts and professionals in territorial policy, agencies...).

As forums for exchanges and the sharing of experience, they play a role that is often essential in terms of advice and training. These associations are an important source of proposals on policies that relate to them (urban policy, rural development policy, decentralisation, territorial and land use planning, urban management, local finances ...) and a permanent source of information.

A vast number of associations of local governments exist in the world at various levels – national, sub-regional, regional... At a worldwide level, six major networks exist, composed of individual members and smaller associations. They are related to each other through their members and via complementary mandates and objectives. The biodiversity and management of natural resources theme is developed in the context of their activities - decentralised cooperation, projects led by or between network members.



→ Examples of local governmental networks recognised on global level

• **United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)**

www.cities-localgovernments.org/uclg

Founded in 2004 in Paris further to a merger between two international networks in order to unite the voice of local governments vis-à-vis international organisations, this is the largest worldwide network of local governments composed of individual members and national associations. UCLG members represent more than half of the world's population in more than 130 countries and seven of the world's regions. The recognition of local governments and democracy, the Millennium Development Goals, sustainable development and climate change are this network's main areas of focus. Biodiversity is set out as a priority in its founding document.

• **METROPOLIS (World Association of the Major Metropolises)**

www.metropolis.org/index.html

Founded in 1984, this is the urban section of UCLG. This network brings together more than 90 of the world's largest metropolises. An Eco-Region Commission was created in 2006 and works on urban biodiversity and peri-urban agricultural issues on a regional scale.

• **ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability)**

www.iclei.org

Founded in 1990, this network was recognised in Rio in 1992 as the leader of Local Agenda 21 initiated by Chapter 28 of Agenda 21. It constitutes the environment, sustainable development and biodiversity section of UCLG. This network has initiated a pilot project, "Local Actions for Biodiversity", which aims at improving the consideration of nature in urban development. This pilot project spread over three years to end in 2009, it covers 21 cities throughout the world. It will then be extended to all local governments that wish to use this methodology.

• **The World Mayors Council on Climate Change (WMCCC)**

www.iclei.org/index.php?id=7199

Founded in 2005 after the effective date of the Kyoto Protocol, the promotion and implementation of policies related to climate change at a local level are the major actions points for this network. A vice-president responsible for biodiversity issues confirms that the link between climate change and biodiversity must be considered at a local level.

• **Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development (nrg4SD)**

www.nrg4sd.net/

This network was created at the Johannesburg World Summit in 2002 to respond to the "think globally, act locally" motto. Its objectives are to represent the Regions at global level, promote sustainable development at a regional level and facilitate cooperation and exchanges of good practices between its members. The network's programme follows the multilateral international agenda on sustainable development issues, human settlements, climate change, the sustainable management of natural resources and milieus ... this network is FOGAR's Sustainable Development section.

• **Forum of Global Associations of Regions (FOGAR)**

www.crpm.org/fr/index.php?act=4,7,2

The first Forum of Regional Networks established at a global level on the initiative of the CPMR (Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions) during the International Convention for a Territorial Approach to Development held on March 5-7, 2007 in Marseille. On this occasion, the 11 founding networks of Regions of FOGAR signed a "Declaration of the Regions on their participation in the governance of globalisation".

...key players in international and European biodiversity programmes :

→ in the context of **Local Agenda 21**

The United Nations 1992 Conference on Environment and Development was the starting point for the true recognition of all players in the decision-making process at a global level. Chapter 28 of Agenda 21 is exclusively dedicated to the implementation of Agenda 21 at a local level. Since the Rio Conference, local governments have increasingly invested at their level in undertakings made at a global level. In 2005, more than 6,000 LOCAL AGENDA 21 PROCESSES had been initiated in 113 countries throughout the world.

→ for the **Millennium Development Goals**

The Member States of the United Nations undertook to achieve the Millennium Development Goals on the occasion of the 2000 Millennium Summit. The seventh objective aims at ensuring environmental sustainability (halt the loss of natural resources; by 2010, halt biodiversity loss; ensure access to drinking water and sanitation for all; improve living conditions in slums).

Local governments have committed heavily to achieving these Millennium Development Goals (MDG). For this reason, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the largest network of local and regional government authorities in the world, launched the Millennium Towns and Cities Campaign in 2005.

In the same year, at the Millennium +5 Summit held in New York in September 2005, more than 150 States explicitly acknowledged the key role played by local authorities in achieving the MDG.

→ for **United Nations' programmes** : UN-Habitat, PNUE, MAB/UNESCO...

More historical collaborations (from the '80s) cover human settlement issues (UN-Habitat) and health issues (WHO). After Rio, partnerships were created between the local governments and various environment-related UN programmes.

*UNEP's*⁸ Urban Environment Unit promotes the role of cities in meeting global challenges such as climate change, the protection of ecosystems and biodiversity. Many projects have been conducted with the support of UN-Habitat⁹ :

- *GEO Cities* – Integrated Environmental Evaluation Method developed to analyse the state of the local environment and to be used as a decision-making tool. It has been implemented in more than 10 Latin American cities and a similar initiative has been developed for Africa.
- *Sustainable Cities Programme*, which promotes sustainable environmental planning and development. It has been deployed in more than 40 cities worldwide.

The World Urban Forum, organised every two years on the initiative of UN-Habitat, targets sustainable urban development throughout the world. City politicians and their technical teams are at the heart of these meetings. Biodiversity and natural resources are an integral part of the topics related to the environment and are approached from a number of perspectives: interrelations between rural and urban settings, urban agriculture, the loss of natural habitats... The question of harmonising construction and the natural environment is one of the six "dialogues" that constitute the November 2008 congress.

Cities Alliance is a worldwide partnership of cities and their development partners (funders, States) committed to the fight against poverty. It supports cities in their reduction of slums, financial management, transversal urban planning (waste, energy, water, sanitation, ecosystemic services...).

8. www.unep.org/urban_environment/key_programmes/index.asp

9. Human Settlements Programme; www.unhabitat.org

*The Urban Network of Biosphere Reserves*¹⁰ brings together UNESCO's MAB programme, the Stockholm Resilience research centre¹¹ and world cities (Canberra, Bangalore, Cape Town, New York...).

*The Equator Initiative*¹² is a partnership created on the initiative of UNEP with various local partners that supports their efforts to reduce poverty via the protection and sustainable use of biodiversity.

→ for the application of the **Convention on Biological Diversity**

The Ecosystem Approach, a logical framework for the implementation of the Convention, allows for biodiversity conservation measures to also be deployed in sites located outside of protected areas.

This approach can be applied to every territorial level and can also be used as an appropriate tool to better identify threats and the most suitable solutions for a given area.

In 2006, in Curitiba, the participating states initiated a new phase in the implementation of the Convention and recognised the need for all players to participate, in particular local governments. The first conference on *"Cities and Biodiversity: 2010 Biodiversity Target"* was held in Curitiba in March 2007 on the initiative of the city mayor in partnership with the Convention's secretariat. A second conference was organised in parallel to the Conference of Parties to the Convention in May 2008 in Bonn. The Bonn Call for Action and the Declaration on Cities of Curitiba were presented to the Parties in Bonn.

The Convention on Biological Diversity also supports the cities and local governments commitment in favour of biodiversity (Decision IX.28 of CoP9) : experiences in the conservation of nature and the sustainable use of resources at a local level may complete and support national orientations and global commitments.

→ in the context of the IUCN **« Countdown 2010 »** initiative

In mid-2008, 250 local governments participated in this alliance¹³. They have committed to specific actions related to biodiversity - education, the protection of sensitive sites, key species and network activities. In order to develop the urban biodiversity topic, the Countdown is associated with ICLEI and the European Centre for Nature Conservation (ECNC). Its collaboration with ICLEI has recently (October 2007) led to a partnership with IUCN at an international level.

→ at a **multilateral** level

A *Global Partnership on Cities and Biodiversity*¹⁴ was initiated by UNEP, the Secretariat of the Convention for Biological Diversity, UN-Habitat, ICLEI, Countdown 2010, UNITAR, UNESCO and a Steering Committee of the Mayors of Curitiba, Montreal, Bonn, Nagoya and Johannesburg.

Dongtan – a sustainable city at the mouth of the Blue River (Yangtze Jiang Delta)

The municipal government of the City of Shanghai has undertaken the construction of an "eco-city": energy-independent, CO2-neutral buildings, recuperated rainwater, composted organic wastes for organic agriculture in the area... while maintaining a natural reserve of international scope for migrating bird species.

Shanghai Industrial Investment Corporation : www.siiic.com/en

Agence Arup : www.arup.com

10. www.unesco.org/mab/index.htm

11. www.stockholmresilience.su.se

12. www.undp.org/equatorinitiative/index.htm

13. www.countdown2010.net/lara

14. www.unep.org/urban_environment/issues/biodiversity.asp

Many experiments in progress, but a common culture remains to be created...

Initiatives by local governments that focus on biodiversity exist. Some have been moving in this direction for more than 20 years (Porto Alegre, Singapore, Curitiba...). Local governments face many issues related to appropriate territorial objectives, tools, methods and indicators... The actions they undertake are rarely integrated into a strategy that includes supra-local levels (national and supra-national). In order to achieve the structuring of coherent orientations and actions among all decision-making levels, local governments need a forum to exchange and reflect with other players at all levels (national, regional, global) on biodiversity issues. This type of exchange of experiences and perspectives has often proven its effectiveness in the efficient realisation and implementation of innovative methods.

Today, exemplary initiatives exist, but how can they be better communicated ? How can these successful practices be broadcast and extended ? How can relations be created between the various levels (local, national, global)? How can the advantages and needs at a territorial level be fully taken into account when establishing international orientations on biodiversity ? Sharing experience and reciprocal communication between the players seems more crucial now than ever before. IUCN is a unique platform of its kind and has lengthy experience in this field. The organisation is thus a privileged forum for exchanges.

In this context, it is appropriate to underline the need for advice and expertise expressed by local governments and their interest in working with members of the IUCN to benefit from the network's activities : specialised publications, exchanges with experts...

Communication of the knowledge of the methods and tools developed in the context of international conventions and programmes covering biodiversity issues that targets local and regional government authorities is essential.

The common sharing of these experiences where man and nature are one, with cumulated experience in protected areas and their perimeter, may be an interesting step to take in order to define common methodologies for mutual enrichment.

→ **Local and regional government authorities ask for the creation of a common culture with other stakeholders in the field of biodiversity. They are crucial partners, alongside States, NGOs and corporations, to meet global challenges, such as the Millennium Development Goals and the objective of reducing biodiversity loss by 2010.**



For a greater
integration of local
and regional government
authorities within
IUCN

A necessary change

- The question of local and regional government authorities joining IUCN has been included twice on the agenda, once in 1990 for the General Assembly in Perth and again in 1996 for the 1st World Conservation Congress in Montreal,
- Opening membership to environmental departments of local governments was approved in March 2004,
- A resolution requesting closer relations between IUCN and local governments was approved by IUCN members at the 3rd World Conservation Congress (Bangkok, 2004),
- A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between IUCN and ICLEI in October 2007,
- A favourable advice of the Governance Task Force of the IUCN Council in March 2008 was given on a proposal to amend the statutes, including the creation of a new membership category for local governments,
- A resolution is submitted at the 4th World Conservation Congress in Barcelona to reinforce the involvement of local governments in the IUCN worldwide programme.

At the French level... an original experience initiated by the IUCN French National Committee in partnership with the French Regional Nature Parks Federation...

The creation of a working group on local governments and biodiversity

An original platform for exchanges on biodiversity issues between local governments, their representative networks and members of IUCN in France (50 members).

Two parts to the working group's programme :

A "national" part :

Conduct of a study on **the strategies of French local governments in favour of biodiversity. It :**

Identifies the roles and responsibilities of local governments in the management of biodiversity, the main tools developed and their use with those of other stakeholders;

Identifies their needs to meet the challenges of biodiversity conservation in particular in terms of assistance and recommendations on the drafting of effective action plans and relevant indicators.

An "international" part :

Conduct of a study under the framework agreement signed by the French government and IUCN, with two objectives :

Demonstrate the growing role of local governments in the conservation of biodiversity and encourage them to develop actions that favour biodiversity,

Encourage their involvement within IUCN network by better defining their role in the governance of the Union.

Support the membership of the environmental departments of the various local governments in France

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