ASSESSMENT MISSION OF THE VOLUNTARY COMMITMENTS AND RESULTS OF THE BIODEV2030 PROJECT IN ITS 16 COUNTRIES OF INTERVENTION

EVALUATION REPORT MAR 2023
Context

Finalized in December 2022, the BIODEV2030 project has allowed to structure and support a dialogue process in 16 countries with stakeholders from identified sectors and industries, based on a diagnosis of i) the threats that these sectors pose to biodiversity; ii) their development prospects; and iii) their capacity to commit to biodiversity conservation. This innovative and pilot approach proposed by BIODEV2030 is part of the renewed context of global ambitions for biodiversity. BIODEV2030 was implemented in 16 countries (Tunisia, Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Senegal, Republic of Congo, Gabon, Cameroon, Madagascar, Vietnam, Fiji, Guyana) with varied economic, social and political contexts and where the characteristics of biodiversity and the threats it faces are not homogeneous.
BIODEV2030’s choice to focus its approach on "voluntary commitments" (VCs) made by the private sector, an essential pillar of development, is an innovation that should usefully feed into an "action agenda" of the Kunming-Montreal Biodiversity Framework, in which non-state actors have a central role to play.

Methodology

The evaluation mission conducted by Altai Consulting focused on three main areas. Altai i) carried out a synthetic and structured inventory of the process of defining VCs or draft VCs co-constructed by the actors mobilized in the 16 intervention countries; ii) evaluated the results obtained in light of criteria based in particular, but not exclusively, on the document "Recommendations for the formulation of quality voluntary commitments" produced by BIODEV2030; iii) Assess the alignment of the VCs, draft VCs or commitment scenarios identified in the sector diagnoses (DIAG 2) with the country’s structuring frameworks to combat biodiversity loss (existing National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans - NBSAPs - and the objectives and targets of the Kunming-Montreal framework).

This mission was also part of a capitalization process conducted by project operators to draw lessons from this innovative method with a view to replication and continuation.

In total, 51 individual in-depth interviews were conducted in February and March 2023 by Altai Consulting with BIODEV2030 stakeholders. To present the results of the dialogue process and the (draft) VCs obtained in each country in a synthetic and graphic way, Altai elaborated 16 Country Fact Sheets (available in French and English), which complement the present report.

Main results from the analysis

The VCs are the end result of a dialogue process that mobilized the key stakeholders identified in the DIAG 2 within different sectors and/or industries. The progress of the dialogue process can thus be characterized according to 3 categories:

- **Category 1: VCs discussed, negotiated and approved**: this category includes the sectors that have gone furthest in the dialogue process. VCs have been defined, negotiated, and finally approved by the stakeholders in this process.

- **Category 2: Draft VCs discussed**: This category includes sectors and/or value chains where a dialogue phase on VC outlines took place without finalizing the process and achieving formalization and stakeholder engagement.

- **Category 3: DIAG 2 commitment scenarios**: project stakeholders, from the project steering committee or other working / consultation groups associated with BIODEV2030, did not discuss commitment scenarios identified within the DIAG 2.

In total, most sectors of activity agreed on draft VCs (23 draft VCs discussed). 12 sectors discussed, negotiated, and approved VCs; and 9 remained at the stage of the commitment scenarios identified in the DIAG 2. The breakdown by country is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category 1: VCs discussed, negotiated and approved</th>
<th>Fiji, Madagascar, Uganda, Senegal, Tunisia, Vietnam</th>
<th>6 countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category 2: Draft VCs discussed</td>
<td>Burkina Faso, Benin, Ethiopia, Guinea, Guyana, Kenya, Mozambique</td>
<td>7 countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category 3: DIAG 2 commitment scenarios</td>
<td>Cameroon, Congo, Gabon</td>
<td>3 countries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Agriculture is the most represented among the sectors identified by the actors who participated in the selection process. It registered the most VCs. Within the agricultural sector, stakeholders chose to work on 14 different value chains. The agricultural sectors that went the furthest in the engagement process were, for the most part, already structured at the time BIODEV2030 was implemented.
Industrial mining actors were not very involved in the dialogue process. In this sector, it was mainly the umbrella organizations or federations that were involved.

Overall, all sectors (agriculture, mining, fishing, forestry, livestock, energy, infrastructure) have agreed on relatively classic EV measures or avenues (harvesting and processing practices, traceability and certification of practices, protection or restoration of degraded areas, etc.), and some provisions may even simply fall under the application of existing regulations. However, the dialogue processes have made it possible to mobilize new actors who would not necessarily be involved through another approach and who have been made aware of the issues related to biodiversity protection. They have also allowed public and private actors, but also within the same value chain for example, to interact and become aware of the need to establish a certain level of coordination and collaboration.

In terms of the dialogue process, the national or regional scale of the intervention was considered in different ways by project stakeholders. The choice of the scale of the dialogue was chosen according to its relevance to the local intervention context (administrative organization and level of decentralization of the country, type of actors, sector, biodiversity issues, etc.). The analysis revealed that stakeholders had different visions of working at the regional level, with the latter being considered as the first stage of a project that could be replicated elsewhere, or on the contrary as a priority intervention area for biodiversity preservation.

The relevant private and public stakeholders were generally integrated into the dialogue processes and the combination of the two types of actors always made it possible to go further in the VC process. The modalities of engagement were adapted and evolved during the course of the project (via platforms or not), depending on which stakeholders took part in the dialogue.

The VCs or draft VCs are, for the most part, aligned with the DIAG 1 (threats) and DIAG 2 (harmful practices) conducted in the 16 intervention countries. However, VCs tend to be more specific and focus on a few practices and actors identified in DIAG 2.

Most sectors that engaged in the process included enabling conditions for the implementation of VCs and draft VCs. Most of these conditions are oriented towards the means that the State / central administration should take to ensure their implementation. Beyond these conditions, sector representatives had more difficulty placing VCs and draft VCs within an implementation dynamic (action plan, budget), mainly because of the lack of time allocated to the last phase of dialogue.

Few avenues for VCs funding were identified, but about 15 meetings with potential donors / funders were organized in several countries. It is interesting to note that private companies participating in the process were considered by the other actors as potential VC funders. Finally, as was done in Tunisia, the banking sector was considered in many countries as an important sector to engage to create a leverage effect through financing conditionalities.

Main opportunities for action / recommendations
From the perspective of replicating the BIODEV2030 method, the analysis identified a few opportunities for action and main recommendations:

- Allocate more time to the dialogue and negotiation phase in order to ensure that stakeholders can reflect on possible voluntary commitments they might take; but also, to engage the entire hierarchical or functional chain concerned by these commitments.

- Diversify the methods of facilitating dialogue and equip field teams - or consider bringing in external expertise - to carry out these facilitations: the realities of intervention in 16 countries are necessarily very different and these specific contexts (cultural, political, economic, etc.) must be taken into account in the facilitation of dialogues.

- Collaboration between sectors: the countries have selected fairly similar sectors and value chains (rice, sugarcane, etc.) or the same type of sector (food crops, vegetables, cash crops, etc.) and the BIODEV2030 project community could have created collaborative "groups" between sectors that could have shared good practices to be disseminated and exchanged on their methods of engagement.
- **Reflection on the ambitions in terms of VCs**: at the scale of the project, it seems relevant to revise the (high) ambitions initially planned in the framework of the "Recommendations for the formulation of good quality voluntary commitments" to better take into account the limited time and means allocated to such an intervention.

In the perspective of a potential phase 2 of BIODEV2030, the analysis suggests that the project could provide support to:

- Set up transformative projects in the value chains based on VCs or draft VCs;
- Ensure a role of "business provider": BIODEV2030 could play a role of "referral" program between project leaders and external funding opportunities existing in the countries of intervention;
- Support the relevant and active dialogue platforms set up during phase 1 of BIODEV2030.