



Inadequate monitoring framework Jeopardises the Integrity of the GBF

By Nele Marien, FOEI

After the successful adoption of the GBF, the world is longing to see its swift and effective implementation. As parties will be eager to show compliance with the GBF, they will orient their actions to score well on the indicators. The monitoring framework, far from being merely a procedural "follow-up," will profoundly influence the conduct of Parties. Similarly, the absence of qualitative indicators, particularly in areas such as human rights, poses a disincentive for parties to prioritize these critical issues.

Therefore, the inconsistencies, inadequacies, and lack of coherence in the ongoing work on the monitoring framework are alarming.

Many headline indicators fail to align with the respective targets, with some inadvertently encouraging parties to adopt counterproductive measures.

Binary indicators fail to provide meaningful insights into the quality or trajectory of implementation processes. This raises the possibility of all 196 countries claiming positive compliance with an indicator while the actual outcome of the target undergoes severe deterioration. Furthermore, as illustrated in discussions, small changes to binary targets can entirely alter their meaning, highlighting the inconsistencies in the framing of these indicators.

Furthermore, a combination of binary and headline indicators, means that the outcomes of these indicators fail to provide the accurate metrics needed to assess progress towards targets.

Parties will need to repeat their homework and do so in a very swift manner. Otherwise, they would fail the assignment altogether. And that failure would have irreversible impacts on biodiversity, also affecting the people protecting it on the ground.

Will headline indicators also be indicators of success??

By Alice Hughes,
China Biodiversity Conservation Green Development Foundation

The monitoring framework of the GBF was meant to enable the tracking of progress towards targets and enable targets where progress is not being made, or where trends continue in the wrong direction to be revisited. Consequently, having a set of clear, well-matched indicators is crucial to enable us to track progress towards targets.

However, the current proposed monitoring framework fails to provide timely indicators for the majority of targets,. Even where agreed headline indicators exist, they are often either not temporally explicit or are not matched with the target, leaving major elements of targets untracked.

For example the only indicator for sustainable wildlife trade is based on Fishstocks, which provide no indication of the trade of the thousands of other species in trade for a wide variety of purposes, and falling outside the remit of any convention. Similarly, the only indicator for species is the Redlist of species, yet many species will not be reassessed before many targets come to a close in 2030. Likewise the main indicator for ecosystems is the red list of ecosystems, yet most ecosystems have not been assessed, and those that have will not be reassessed by 2030.

The headline indicator for target 3, on protected areas or OECM coverage, will likely enable areas that are of no value to biodiversity, such as areas in the multiple-use zone of the UNESCO protected areas, to be considered towards the target. This target, if measured purely on the basis of area coverage, may actively fuel the “protection” through methods that fail to account for biodiversity, such as monoculture tree plantations and agroforestry, purely in order to meet the percentage in this target. OECMs can serve a wide range of uses, which should not be equated with protected areas from a biodiversity perspective, and could artificially inflate perceived coverage to meet this target. The headline indicator should make a distinction between different types of areas counting towards the target.

These headline indicators are critical to assess progress, and the mismatches and gaps are currently outside of the remit of the AHTEG. Furthermore, as targets may have headline indicators, binary indicators, neither, or even both, it is likely that different targets will have different modes of monitoring, and many countries may either have one or the other. This would provide inconsistent information on progress toward targets, and prevent coherent and standardized monitoring.

Most headline indicators were proposed by entities specialized in the topic. These entities would be better suited than the AHTEG to explore appropriate methodologies to apply the indicator.

Allowing them to take on this part of the work, the AHTEG could concentrate its attention on a more targeted approach to ensuring effective monitoring of progress towards targets: and consider how well the current headline indicators fit the targets, if headline indicators proposed adequately enable monitoring of the target, and if not, or if there is no headline indicator, would any complementary or contingent indicators be fit for the purpose.

Furthermore, we must remember that with the finalization of indicators at the COP16 in 2024 we will have only 6 years until the end of the initial targets, and thus adequate and accurate monitoring is key. At present, we have an indicator framework that will not enable monitoring of many of the targets within the timeline of the framework, especially if only binary targets are used for many of the targets. With limited time available the AHTEG would be better placed in assessing how indicators could monitor targets, as moving forward without appropriate indicators will significantly hamper the effective implementation of targets.

The monitoring framework fails to include human rights protection

By Jacqueline Rukanda, Natural justice

The demand for more concrete and substantive indicators for measuring progress and implementing the human rights protections guaranteed under the Global Biodiversity Framework is a critical issue. This is essential to reinforce the rights-based approach of the GBF, which has the potential to bring real life-changing results for indigenous and local communities working at the frontlines to defend biodiversity. For instance, looking at the ambitions of the GBF under Target 3, 22, and 23, with respect to human rights defenders, it is well documented that indigenous and local communities protect 80% of the world’s biodiversity in forests, deserts, grasslands and marine environments in which they have lived for centuries.

It would be naïve and myopic not to anticipate serious conflicts and resultant human rights violations by governments and corporations, as the GBF is being implemented. The proposal to measure human rights implementation and progress by a binary indicator with only “yes/no” responses, means nothing for human rights defenders, who are already facing increased threats and attacks.

What is worse is that in addition to failure to implement protections, states (who are meant to protect, promote, and fulfill the realization of human rights) are often implicated in violations against defenders. In Kenya, South Africa, and Mozambique, for example, Natural Justice has reports of communities being threatened, killed, or having to leave their homes for fear of persecution. This is despite the fact that these governments have ratified and adopted national laws under the normative human rights framework under international human rights law. But violations continue and are even increasing. What is happening, is a lack of political will on the part of states and impunity by state and non-state actors.

The monitoring framework for the GBF is an opportunity to address these issues, as well as mutually reinforce and revitalize the already existing normative framework for human rights and place it in climate change and biodiversity protection. What is needed is effective, measurable indicators that speak to the realities of communities.