

# sphere

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This special Earth Day edition of Sphere is dedicated to the environment and examines different opportunities to incorporate environmental themes into development efforts.

- **Addressing Biodiversity Conservation:** *DevTech's Experience in Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus*
- **Database Innovation:** *Equipping the U.S. Government to Report on Trade Capacity Building Activities*

Celebrated since 1970, Earth Day highlights environmental programs worldwide and builds public commitment to protecting the environment. Environmental efforts in international development programs can be marginalized, as donors often eschew conservation projects in favor of activities that have more easily quantifiable results that are often preferred in monetary terms. It is difficult to quantify the immediate return on investment in a long-term environmental effort such as protecting ecosystems or biodiversity. As an example, economists have struggled for years to agree on the value of an acre of rain forest. Consequently, it is rare that donors, such as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), design and implement a discrete environmental program. Increasingly, efforts to protect the environment and conserve biodiversity have been integrated into larger economic growth and governance programs.

This reality underscores the importance of several U.S. Government regulations and provisions associated with implementing development programs. In this issue of Sphere we discuss DevTech's recent Biodiversity Analysis for the USAID Regional Mission for Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus, which highlights the actions necessary to conserve biodiversity in the region and makes recommendations for how the Regional Mission could incorporate these actions into its programs. The company's database innovation work, also for USAID, tracks trade capacity building assistance and is an integral part of U.S. Government efforts to forge trade agreements that meet environmental standards, among others. Both articles remind us that there are environmental implications to all development work.

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DevTech Systems, Inc.  
1700 N. Moore Street, Suite 1720  
Arlington, VA 22209 USA



Nature Reserve on Khorytsya Island in the Dnipro River  
(near Zaporizhya, Ukraine, 2006)

## DATABASE INNOVATION:

### *Equipping the U.S. Government to Report on Trade Capacity Building Activities*

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DevTech's Summer 2006 Sphere discussed the increasing unrest and disenchantment with international trade policies, especially in Latin America, which seem to do little but cement poverty for many and produce riches for only a few. Presidential and congressional elections in Latin America and the United States have continued to highlight anxieties with trade liberalization.

This issue of Sphere discusses efforts to mitigate the effects of market adjustments when trade barriers are lifted, and their role in U.S. Government trade negotiations. In early 2007, the U.S. Government faces deadlines regarding free trade agreements and renewal of Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) legislation. Specifically, trade agreements with Peru, Colombia, and Panama await U.S. congressional approval. Also, the Andean Trade Preferences and Drug Eradication Act (ATPDEA), which extends preferences to the aforementioned Andean countries and Ecuador and Bolivia expires June 30, 2007, unless renewed. TPA legislation that provides for U.S. congressional approval by vote up or down without amendments on trade agreements negotiated by the U.S. Office of the Trade Representative (USTR) will expire the same day. Renewing TPA is argued to be essential for moving forward the Doha Development Agenda talks at the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Since 2001, DevTech has provided statistical and data analysis services to U.S. Government officials working on these negotiations. Specifically, the firm has been involved with collecting and helping disseminate information on U.S. Government trade capacity building (TCB) activities with trading partners.

For example, while the USTR was preparing for negotiations over the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) several years ago, it needed specific examples of U.S. Government activities that help countries in the region build their own ability to engage the global market. This type of foreign assistance, TCB, plays a critical role in enabling developing countries to realize the benefits of their participation in trade deals.

USTR did not have to look long for the data and activity descriptions they needed, however, thanks to an innovative, online, searchable database pioneered by a technical team from DevTech for USAID's Bureau for Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade (EGAT). This key information resource pulled data from more than two dozen U.S. Government agencies. The data are stored and accessible through an online public database. Many of the database features were emulated in a subsequent effort by the WTO and OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) to create a database to track TCB funding by all donors and multilateral institutions.

The TCB Database has been used extensively by the U.S. Government as it has engaged in WTO Ministerial meetings and regional trade agreements negotiations. As the world trading community moves beyond the Doha Development Agenda, there will

be new forums for negotiation and new regional trading agreements to be implemented. Whatever direction these trade agreements take, there will be a continuing need for improved and flexible information systems such as the TCB Database.

For example, the U.S. Government has provided extensive support to the Integrated Framework process, an initiative of the donor community and developing countries to boost trade and incomes in the poorest countries. At working group and steering committee meetings, U.S. Government briefing books have relied on the funding data and activity descriptions mined from the TCB Database.

Similarly, as the U.S. Government worked with Central American trading partners to forge a free trade agreement, two areas of special concern were labor rights and environmental standards. The TCB Database enabled advocates for CAFTA to quantify the extent to which the U.S. Government has been assisting those countries in these key areas of adjustment and capacity.

In recent years, Congress has put specific funding levels for TCB into the budgets for the Development Assistance account. Each year, USAID is called upon to confirm that the funding level has been met or exceeded. The TCB Database is the only means by which USAID can respond to this congressional query.

Much of TCB assistance is not "traditional" foreign aid, in the usual context of country strategies and objectives. TCB engages the technical savvy and resources of a wide variety of U.S. Government agencies. For example, the Millennium Challenge Corporation supports extensive TCB efforts through its compacts with partner countries, reaching nearly a billion dollars over the latest two-year period. The Departments of State, Agriculture, and Labor, among others, have been engaged in TCB for many years.

The broad range of U.S. Government agencies involved in TCB reflects the wide variety of development activities that contribute to trade capacity. Programs work closely with host government ministries to build their technical capacity and implement pro-trade reforms. One key area of technical assistance is with customs agencies, promoting streamlined and efficient procedures. Other activities engage the private sector directly by disseminating market information, modernizing financial and accounting systems, and introducing new technologies. DevTech's innovative work on the data collection and database website has provided U.S. Government agencies a powerful tool for reporting on their TCB work to Congress and the donor community. Throughout this process, DevTech analysts have refined and improved survey data instruments and database features to meet new needs and requests. To learn more about the U.S. Government TCB and other Economic Analysis and Data Services activities, please visit DevTech's website: [www.devtechsys.com](http://www.devtechsys.com).

*Michael Shea, Senior Economist  
Adam Tabaka, Senior Program Associate  
DevTech Systems, Inc.*

# ADDRESSING BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION ACTIONS:

## *DevTech's Experience in Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus*

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The United States Government has policies to ensure that all USAID programming takes into consideration biodiversity conservation. Section 119 of the Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) includes a requirement for USAID Missions to conduct an analysis of “the actions necessary in that country to conserve biological diversity, and the extent to which the actions proposed for support by the Agency meet the needs thus identified.” This analysis is to be conducted when a Mission completes a new strategy statement or other country plan. Commonly referred to as a “biodiversity assessment” or “biodiversity analysis,” these studies review the status of biodiversity in the country or region in question and provide Missions with valuable information that they use when creating a new country strategy.

DevTech recently led three such analyses for the USAID Regional Mission for Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus. Regional Missions such as the Mission based in Kiev provide unique opportunities to not only look at biodiversity conservation issues at the country-level, but also look at a larger regional level. This type of regional analysis has become increasingly relevant as conservation strategies have begun to utilize transboundary activities to accommodate plants, animals, waterways, and pollutants that do not recognize political boundaries.

### Legacy of the Soviet Union

The natural environments of Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus have much in common. As part of the former Soviet Union, vast tracts of land in all three countries were cleared for agricultural production. While Ukraine was known as the “breadbasket of the Soviet Union,” Moldova, and to a lesser extent Belarus, also were exploited for their rich soils and milder climate through increasingly intensive agricultural practices following World War II. Extensive clearing of forests and grasslands to create farmland destroyed critical habitat for plants and animals, and had adverse secondary impacts on biodiversity as well. With fewer trees and vegetation to literally hold the soil together, erosion became widespread, and rainwater carried increasing fertilizer and pesticides loads into the countries’ waterways. The quality of aquatic habitats fell rapidly due to the increasing concentrations of excess nutrients and toxics from farmlands. These systems received additional pressure from an influx of heavily polluted wastewater from growing industry and power plants.

The most well-known impact from industry in the region is the devastation caused by the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant disaster in 1986. The plant, located in the northern part of Ukraine near the border with Belarus, suffered a massive explosion during a test, spewing radioactive material into the surrounding areas. The radioactive fallout was spread throughout much of

Europe, but due to its proximity to the plant and wind conditions at the time of the accident, Belarus absorbed approximately 60 percent of the radioactive contamination, with 1.6 million hectares (over 6,000 square miles) of forest in Belarus contaminated. Though the exact impact on biodiversity in this area has not been well-documented due to limited human access to the area, it is safe to assume that the impact has been significant. A lingering threat is the fear that a forest fire could re-release the contamination that has accumulated in trees and vegetation in the twenty years since the accident, spreading the radioactive material further.

### Since Independence

Following the fall of the Soviet Union, Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus have struggled as newly independent countries to balance their goals of economic growth and prosperity with restoration of biodiversity and ecosystems that had been damaged while protecting what remained. Biodiversity and the environment took a backseat to economic growth and development, as has been the case in most developing (and developed) countries worldwide.

In recent years, due to increased worldwide awareness and appreciation for the valuable services that the environment provides, greater consideration has been given to environmental protection and biodiversity conservation. Much of the momentum in conservation and restoration activities comes from civil society. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including international groups such as Greenpeace and BirdLife International and local NGOs like Eco-Pravo in Ukraine and Biotica in Moldova, have been at the forefront of the environmental movement in the region. Change can be slow however, particularly when it comes to building support from the government. One key commitment by each of the three governments is a commitment to the creation of a National Ecological Network.

The governments of Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus have each committed to the development of their own National Ecological Network, and are at various stages of implementation. The goal of these networks is to create corridors that link core protected areas, effectively creating a web of diverse habitats and ecosystems. Certain sections in these networks will be transboundary, such as the marshy Polessia region in northern Ukraine and southern Belarus, and the Danube River delta that touches the southern tip of Moldova before flowing into Ukraine. The creation of such transboundary networks feeds into a key transboundary biodiversity conservation strategy in Europe, namely the Pan-European Ecological Network (PEEN), which is being promoted by the Council of Europe. The PEEN is based on the hope that the synergy of each European country’s national network coming together will create a massive network through which natural migration corridors and habitats will be preserved. An additional incentive for countries to create a National Ecological Network is that this action can be considered responsive to a requirement for inclusion into the European Union.

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## Moving Forward

Biodiversity conservation will remain a challenge in Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus for some time. The legacy left from unchecked agricultural and industrial development during Soviet times has left a dramatic footprint on the landscape. While all three countries have made strides to restore and rehabilitate habitats and ecosystems, much remains to be done.

The main hurdle in Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus continues to be successful implementation of policies that on paper appear sound, but in practice are not implemented or enforced. One key step in recreating natural habitat that has been damaged and destroyed will be the successful implementation of National Ecological Networks that can then be integrated into larger regional and European Networks. Donors can help further by integrating biodiversity-related activities into their array of programs, and projects such as ecotourism initiatives can have positive measurable impacts both on economic growth and biodiversity conservation.

*Brian Bean, Program Associate  
DevTech Systems, Inc.*

*To read more about DevTech's biodiversity analyses in Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus, please visit [www.devtechsys.com](http://www.devtechsys.com).*

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Established in 1984 by economist Jorge A. Sanguinety, Ph.D., DevTech Systems, Inc. is a consulting firm that offers technical assistance in the following practice areas:

- Economic and Social Development
- Education and Human Capacity Development
- Environment and Natural Resource Management
- Gender Integration (Women in Development)
- Governance and Decentralization
- Performance Monitoring and Evaluation

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1700 N. Moore Street, Suite 1720  
Arlington, VA 22209

Tel: 703.312.6038 Fax: 703.312.6039

9350 South Dixie Hwy., Suite PH-1  
Miami, FL 33156

Tel: 305.666.5150 Fax: 305.666.5165

Email: [devtech@devtechsys.com](mailto:devtech@devtechsys.com)  
[www.devtechsys.com](http://www.devtechsys.com)

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DevTech Systems, Inc.  
1700 N. Moore Street, Suite 1720  
Arlington, VA 22209 USA