

Global Strategy for Plant Conservation
Objective (d) Promoting education and awareness
about plant diversity

Consultation Document

1st Draft

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Target 14: The importance of plant diversity and the need for its conservation incorporated into communication, educational and public-awareness programmes.

Introduction

The Global Strategy for Plant Conservation was approved in decision VI/9 of the VI Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Convention on Biological Diversity on 19 April 2002, in The Hague, The Netherlands.

The GSPC contains 16 outcome-orientated targets aimed at achieving a series of goals by 2010. Target 14 on communication, education and public-awareness is considered a cross cutting target in the Strategy. At the request of the CBD's Executive Secretary, during 2003 a series of international stakeholder consultations were held to review the implementation of the GSPC and specifically to consider the scope of activities under each target, available baseline data and a series of indicators needed to monitor the achievement of each target. It was originally proposed that each stakeholder consultation would review the achievement of each target in relation to the needs for communication, education and public awareness and propose specific recommendations for the achievement of each target in these regards.

Following a review of the work on consultations achieved in 2003, it was found that not all groups had addressed Target 14 as part of their deliberations. It was therefore agreed that a separate stakeholder consultation on Target 14 should be initiated. At a Technical Expert Group on the GSPC convened by the Executive Secretary in Ireland in October 2003, BGCI was requested to act as facilitating agency for this stakeholder consultation. The first step for the stakeholder consultation is therefore this consultation paper on education and the GSPC, focussing specifically on Target 14. This document proposes a draft series of recommendations through which measurable targets in education, communication and public awareness can be set to act as indicators and milestones towards the achievement of the targets of the GSPC by 2010. BGCI would welcome comments and input to this document.

Context

Terminology

Awareness brings the issues relating to plant diversity to the attention of key groups who have the power to influence outcomes. Awareness is an agenda setting and marketing exercise helping people to know what and why this is an important issue, the aspirations for the targets, and what is and can be done to achieve these. The tools to develop awareness range from a personal phone call, a sign, brochure, seminar, in-flight magazine article, reports in the press, or testimonials by popular figures. The tools used depend on who is to be reached, why, and with what key issues. Awareness programmes may also be oriented to explaining the legal and financial instruments associated with implementing plant diversity conservation.

Education is a set of processes that can inform, motivate and empower people to support plant conservation, not only by making lifestyle changes, but also through promoting change in the way that institutions, business, and governments operate.

In the *formal* sense, education tends to take place in schools and other formal settings. It aims at a more profound, long-term understanding of the issues, uncertainty, possible solutions and the clarification of and development of values that can motivate decisions and practice. Education tools include workshops, interactive online resources, texts, videos, CD-ROMS, research projects, as well as presentations by experts and discussions. Though relatively expensive and long-term, its benefit is that educated people have a more deep-seated appreciation for the issue and have the ability to incorporate the principles into their way of working and living, or follow a career in the field.

Education – meaning learning - can also take place in *informal* settings, by dialogue, use of internet, through art and media, short courses, in-service education programmes associated with work or leisure, seminars, training, reading, travel and ecotourism, as well as visits to museums and botanical gardens. It is in this context that the greatest value can be gained for the plant diversity outcomes.

While a necessary first step, *awareness* alone is not enough. It only leads to conservation if people who can do something about it gain interest and follow through with an appropriate action. Without that level of co-operation the Strategy outcome targets will not be met. Awareness needs to be an initial learning stage in an instructive process towards adopting certain practices.

Wendy Goldstein, Head of Environmental Education and Communication, IUCN

Scope of Target 14

Plants are the basis for life on earth. For the future of all species it is vital that people understand the importance of plant diversity and the need for its conservation. How this is achieved however will be dependent on national and local circumstances.

Target 14 refers to formal and informal education at all levels. The stated key target audiences are children, other students, policy-makers and the public in general. Worldwide, there are millions of educators delivering programmes to these target audiences: primary,

secondary and tertiary teachers, lecturers, trainers, youth leaders, site-based educators (museums, protected areas, botanic gardens), etc. To reach these educators and affect change in their curricula, a massive consultation exercise is required and a series of education and training programmes will need to be developed. Reaching the general public will require a strategic framework of its own.

Considering **formal education**, it often takes several years to influence the national curriculum of a country. As such, the consequent impact of educated individuals is unlikely to effect the achievement of the GSPC targets by 2010. That being said, the importance of educating tomorrow's generation cannot be underestimated. It should also be acknowledged that educating young people can influence the decisions of their parents and peers for the benefit of the environment.

Looking at **informal education**, locations such as protected areas, museums, botanic gardens, parks, etc, would appear to be 'natural' places for learning about plant diversity and conservation. It may be easier therefore to influence the incorporation of education about plant diversity and conservation into already established education programmes. Nevertheless, these institutions will only reach a limited section of the population and countries cannot rely on this path alone to educate the target audiences about plant diversity and conservation. The lack of succinct, simple and consistent messages about biodiversity and its conservation also needs to be addressed; notwithstanding the complexity of the issues and the great diversity of audiences, an agreed communication strategy needs to be developed.

The ultimate goal of Target 14 is for the target audiences to conserve plants. It is unfortunately true however, that awareness and recognition of the importance of plant biodiversity does not necessarily translate into action for conservation and sustainability. The education provided will therefore need to include a social, political and economic perspective so that people better understand the ways in which they interact with their environment and influence those forces that cause the loss of plants and diversity. By identifying the root causes, people can be encouraged to develop skills that will enable them to participate in finding solutions.

The fact that the loss of plant diversity is complex means that it cannot be looked at in isolation of other factors. It therefore makes sense to view Target 14 within the context of the **Convention on Biological Diversity**.

Article 13 of the Convention states that The Contracting Parties shall:

- a) Promote and encourage understanding of the importance of, and the measures required for, the conservation of biological diversity, as well as its propagation through media, and the inclusion of these topics in educational programmes; and
- b) Cooperate, as appropriate with other States and international organisations in developing educational and public awareness programmes, with respect to conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity.

There is much commonality between Target 14 of the GSPC and Article 13 of the CBD. Rather than treating Target 14 separately, it is important that it is integrated within Article 13. One of the concerns of Target 14 however, is that plants are given a higher profile in education programmes than they currently receive. There is much anecdotal evidence that plants lose out to animals and the belief is that this balance needs to be redressed.

At COP VI, a programme of work was agreed on for Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) as a means towards implementing article 13 (decision VI/19, see:

www.biodiv.org/decisions). To date very little has happened. Nevertheless, a structure has been created in the Convention and it is through this that Target 14 of the GSPC could be addressed.

From 27-29 October 2003, UNESCO hosted the IV Meeting of the Consultative Working Group of Experts on Biodiversity Education and Public Awareness. The meeting, convened by the Executive Secretary of the CBD, was held to assess the implementation of decision VI/19. It recommended that each National Focal Point for the CBD should develop CEPA strategies and that the Executive Secretary of the CBD will be responsible for coordinating the implementation of the Programme of Work. To achieve the proposed outcomes of the GSPC, it is important that Target 14 is incorporated into the CEPA work programme.

Recommendations for Sub-targets, Milestones, Baseline data and Indicators

Three sub targets are proposed at national level with milestones. The timetable for completion of these targets will vary from country to country depending on the levels of commitment to the process.

Sub target 1: A national survey carried out among target audiences to determine the general level of awareness of plant diversity and conservation to provide baseline data for Sub target 2

Suggested National Milestones

- National level of awareness established
- Survey results published and distributed through the CEPA electronic portal

Sub target 2: A framework for the implementation of Target 14, including indicators, established by all parties by the end of 2005

Suggested National Milestones:

- Workshops organised on Target 14 and their results and recommendations incorporated into national CEPA programmes of work

Sub target 3 Analysis of how education and communication instruments can be used to support the implementation of all targets of the GSPC

Suggested National Milestones:

- Workshops involving stakeholders concerned with the implementation of specific targets of the GSPC and education and communication experts

Recommendations

I) Actions by Parties

- A. Recommend that the Parties incorporate target 14 into national biodiversity strategies and action plans and into national education curricula
- B. Recommend that Parties adopt education and communication sub targets and milestones towards the achievement of the GSPC

- C Recommend that Parties review, build and support the capacity among educators for the achievement of Target 14 of the GSPC
- D Recommend that Parties appoint or designate an education and communication expert to support the work of CEPA and to ensure that Target 14 is incorporated within national level responses to the CEPA work programme

II) Actions by International/Regional Agencies

- E Recommend that agencies support a series of regional workshops between stakeholders implementing specific targets of the GSPC and education/communication experts to help establish integrated regional frameworks.

III) Actions by International NGOs

- F Recommend that international NGOs working in plant conservation promote Target 14 within their work programme

IV) Actions in relation to regional initiatives for plant conservation

- G Recommend that regional initiatives for plant conservation ensure that Target 14 of the GSPC is specifically addressed and incorporated through specific measures in relation to communications, education and public-awareness.

V) Actions by CBD, Advisory bodies (eg. SBSTA) and the COP

- H Recommend that COP-7 instruct the financial mechanism to support the implementation of education throughout the GSPC, including Target 14, by prioritising and allocating funds for the development of education programmes
- I Recommend that COP-7 invite Parties to adopt measures to strengthen networks working on environmental education