

# **What, where and how to conserve plants: a preparatory project**

**Douglas Gibbs**

Botanic Gardens Conservation International, Richmond, Surrey, UK

A preparatory project to improve plant conservation through the protection and management of threatened plant species and Important Plants Areas in Cameroon, Costa Rica, Madagascar, Morocco, the Philippines and Sri Lanka, and their surrounding regions.

The goal of this project is to design programmes that will assist participating countries to improve the conservation of their native flora. Activities will focus on the assessment of threatened species and the identification, protection and management of sites that are internationally important for wild plant diversity; thus supporting the implementation of targets 2 and 5 of the CBD Global Strategy for Plant Conservation. This project will also support the implementation of national biodiversity strategies and conservation plans, and will link to national and regional priorities for plant conservation.

The preparatory project is supported by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), through the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and will be led by IUCN the World Conservation Union and Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI). The following organisations will coordinate the national preparatory work: UICN, Bureau régionale pour l'Afrique Centrale (Cameroon); Inbio (Costa Rica); Université de Madagascar (Madagascar); Université Mohamed V Agdal, Institut Scientifique (Morocco); and IUCN Sri Lanka.

The preparatory phase will conclude in October 2007. Within the preparatory phase national coordinators will work with national conservation stakeholders to plan for the execution of:

- An assessment of the wild plants at greatest risk of extinction (Component 1: Plant Conservation Assessments)
- The determination of internationally Important Plant Areas as a focus for conservation work (Component 2: Identification of Important Plant Areas)
- The development of national strategies that aim to conserve the most important areas for plants (identified under component 2). Through the promotion of the sustainable use of plant resources and enhancing conservation focussed management on Protected Areas. This will include carrying out pilot projects to implement these strategies (Component 3: Protection and Management of Important Plant Areas)
- The dissemination of best practice in plant conservation, up to date information, knowledge, and experiences within and between regions (Component 4 Public communications)
- Working to build capacity for plant conservation throughout the regions in which the countries are located (Component 5: Training and Capacity building)

From the outset it is important that this project involves as many stakeholders as possible in each country, to ensure the plans have been discussed openly and people's opinions and reactions have been sought. In each country individuals and organisations in the public and private sector, voluntary and non government organisations and community institutions will be contacted about the project, and we hope to hear from a representative cross section of the community. To be a success this project will need both scientists and the agencies and organisations that implement plant conservation at national and sub national levels to work together.