

From Kew to Montserrat and beyond: the development and delivery of training programmes to meet the challenges of the *Global Strategy for Plant Conservation*

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Effective Training for the Conservation Challenge

The *Global Strategy for Plant Conservation* (GSPC), the key underlying theme of this Congress, has as its central objective “to halt the current and continuing loss of plant diversity”. This is the key challenge for the world’s plant conservation community and provides a clear role for botanic gardens worldwide.

Target 15 of the GSPC calls for “The number of trained people working with appropriate facilities in plant conservation increased, according to national needs, to achieve the targets of this strategy”. Meeting this target is central to successfully achieving the overall objective of the GSPC. It places a great responsibility on those Institutions that have the capacity to provide effective training and support to raise the overall capacity of the world’s botanic garden community to meet the challenges and opportunities provided by the adoption of the GSPC.

The two components of target 15 identify that needs may be based at the individual level by identifying training needs in specific disciplines needed for conservation practitioners (Figure 1). The needs may also be at the Institutional level where the improvement needs to be in providing ‘adequate facilities’ for conservation practitioners to be able to meet the targets of the GSPC (Figure 2). The balance between these two types of requirements needs to be established on a local and national needs basis.

This session explores a range of approaches and successful examples that the botanic garden community has implemented in their efforts to provide “effective training for the conservation challenge” and in this way enable colleagues internationally to achieve the targets of the GSPC.



Figure 1. Field training in plant identification – Colin Clubbe (RBG Kew) working with Calvin Fenton and Gervaine Greenaway on the Darwin Initiative Centre Hills Project in Montserrat. (Photo: Andrew McRobb, RBG Kew)



Figure 2. Martin Hamilton (RBG Kew) demonstrating the use of a hand held computer for collecting data in the field (Photo – Colin Clubbe, RBG Kew)

Travelling training courses

Staff at the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew are actively committed to sharing information and expertise with colleagues from other botanical institutions around the world. As the need for specialist skills in botany, horticulture and conservation increased, RBG Kew responded by establishing a series of international diploma courses to provide training in identifying and conserving biodiversity and in using it sustainably. The continuing need to build capacity for the conservation of plant diversity is highlighted in two key commitments made by global conservation community: the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC). Article 12 of the CBD and Target 15 of the GSPC highlight this need to help build capacity to conserve, sustainably utilize and manage our botanical resources. These have become the two key drivers for the further development of Kew's capacity building programme at home and internationally.



Figure 3. Four international diploma courses are run at Kew aimed at plant conservation practitioners and the international botanic garden community

The international diploma programme at Kew is now well established and 377 practitioners from 103 countries have participated in this programme over its 20 year history (Figure 3). This in itself is an important contribution to Target 16 of the GSPC –“networks for plant conservation activities established or strengthened at national, regional and international levels”. Designed to provide specialist training for people working in botanic gardens, arboreta, herbaria and other conservation organisations, these courses bring together participants from around the world. Through lectures and workshops with staff from RBG Kew, BGCi and other international conservation bodies and visits to other UK organisations, they explore a wide range of topics related to their chosen disciplines (Figures 4 and 5). Specialist options and projects enable each participant to become more confident in developing plans for implementation at home. By exchanging ideas and sharing problems amongst themselves, participants from different countries often discover common solutions. Funding for participation in this programme remains a challenge, but solutions are being found. For some participants their home institution is able to sponsor participation either from core funds, directly from a Government Ministry or as specified in a technical training budget line of a project. Recent examples of the latter are within Darwin Initiative funded projects (www.Darwin.gov.uk). Others have been successful in gaining Winston Churchill traveling fellowships (www.churchilltrust.com.au), or grants from educational charities. We strongly encourage applicants to register their interest for course participation early so that help in securing funding can be provided.



Figure 4. Participants from the 2005 Plant Conservation Strategies course discuss issues during a fieldtrip to a local nature reserve (Colin Clubbe, RBG Kew).



Figure 5 Participants from the 2004 Botanic Garden Management course demonstrate materials they have developed for providing a conservation message in Kew Gardens (Colin Clubbe, RBG Kew).

Long after a course ends, the links between its participants remain strong through individual contacts and through the wider network of International Diploma alumni and its regular newsletter *OnCourse* (www.kew.org/education/highered.html). Details of the programme are illustrated in the poster ‘*Growing Expertise: courses@kew.org.uk*’.

In recent years we have been responding to requests for developing regionally-based training programmes in collaboration with in-country partners. The development of this regional programme is very much led by the needs of our international partners. A host institution is identified, usually as a result of an offer made by that institution and often from a suggestion by an alumnus of one of the Kew-based courses at that Institution. A small team of staff from Kew usually form the core teaching team alongside locally-based resource personnel. Countries that have hosted this type of course include Brazil, Malaysia, Kenya, Tanzania, Russia, Turkey, and China. In other cases our alumnus has organised their own country-level course based on the Kew model but adapted to meet local needs and where Kew staff may or may not join the course as a resource person. Countries that have run this type of course include Kenya, Uganda and India. This really is evidence of building capacity and delivering effective cascade training borne of the confidence gained during the Kew programme. Funding for this regional programmes has come from a number of sources including the Darwin Initiative and corporate sponsors of RBG Kew.

Most recently, in collaboration with BGCI and the CBD Secretariat, we have been developing training courses to specifically address the implementation of the GSPC. The first of these was the African Regional Training Course in Plant Conservation Strategies based on the GSPC which was held in Uganda in November 2004 and hosted by Makerere University. Local co-ordination was provided by Kew alumni and funding for the programme provided by a grant from British American Tobacco (BAT) through a capacity building project coordinated at RBG Kew. Eighteen participants from 15 countries (Benin, Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Cameroon, Ghana, Liberia, Madagascar, Morocco, Namibia, Nigeria, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe) attended the 3-week course. The main course objectives were:

- To raise awareness of GSPC and its targets
- To identify champions to help steer implementation at a national level
- To examine targets in the African context using local case studies and fieldtrips

The course drew on local resource personnel from a wide range of national and international organisations, both governmental and non-governmental as well as the course facilitators from Kew and BGCI to deliver a wide ranging programme of lectures, workshops (Figure 6) and fieldtrips (Figure 7). Several participants have since been nominated as their country’s GSPC focal point and are engaged in developing a national response to the GSPC. Others are working towards the integration of GSPC targets into national biodiversity strategies and action plans. All are determined to help implement the GSPC and strive to achieve the targets.



Figure 6. Course participants from the African Regional Training Course in Plant Conservation Strategies grapple with the targets of the GSPC (Colin Clubbe, RBG Kew).



Figure 7. Course participants from the African Regional Training Course in Plant Conservation Strategies visit the Entebbe Botanic Gardens as part of the fieldtrip programme to investigate the practical implementation of the GSPC (Colin Clubbe, RBG Kew).

In May 2006, a Caribbean Regional GSPC workshop was held on the island of Montserrat aimed at Caribbean UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs) and small island developing states (SIDS). Sixteen participants from Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Bermuda, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Jamaica, Montserrat, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago attended the one-week workshop (Figure 8). The objectives were similar to those of the African course:

- To raise awareness of GSPC and its targets
- To identify champions to help steer implementation at a national level
- To examine targets in the Caribbean context using local case studies and fieldtrips

Funding for the workshop was secured from the UK Government's WSSD Implementation fund. The grant also allowed us to invite two resource people who had experience of developing GSPC strategies at a national level in an island context, the UK and the Seychelles, to share their experiences in developing national strategies. Another highly motivated group have become advocates for GSPC implementation and are working on national responses to the GSPC and the integration of GSPC targets into national biodiversity strategies and action plans. A key information gap identified at the Montserrat workshop was the lack of accurate, reliable and up-to-date information on plant taxonomy and species status. This was seen as a potential block to achieving targets 1 and 2 of the GSPC. As a result of this a pilot study has been funded by the UK Government's Overseas Territories Environment Programme (OTEP) to investigate the enabling needs to achieve targets 1 and 2 of the GSPC for the Caribbean. This study is being coordinated at RBG Kew.



Figure 8. Course participants from the Caribbean Regional GSPC workshop consider the effects of an active volcano on biodiversity and livelihoods in Montserrat.

Publicity is a vital tool for conservation and for raising awareness of the GSPC. During all of these workshops we have tried to encourage the local media to get interested by giving interviews on radio and for newspapers. Although it is sometimes difficult to raise initial interest from the media it is worth persevering as the publicity can pay large dividends.

So some final challenges remain:

- Do we enough trained staff?
- Do we have sufficient resources?
- Can we work smarter?
- Can we establish new partnerships?
- How can we best exert political pressure?

...in order to meet the 2010 challenge. The clock is ticking.