

Advice on establishing cross-discipline partnerships for tree conservation

Despite the loss of tree diversity having wide reaching effects, integrated tree conservation projects that engage with partners outside the botanic garden sector still have considerable potential for expansion. Botanic gardens have been amongst the most important agents to save endangered tree species from the brink of extinction, their horticultural expertise and botanical collections are therefore an indispensable resource to support other sectors interest in or already participating in tree conservation. In turn, non-governmental organisations, government agencies, academic institutions, specialised research organisations and the private sector, equally bring an enormous range of skills, resources and facilities that complement, enhance and innovate conservation strategies for trees. Botanic gardens can benefit greatly from outside partnerships which can help build capacity to establish new projects and conquer new challenges.

When establishing cross-discipline partnerships for tree conservation a number of factors should be taken into consideration to maximise collaboration success:

- **Cross-discipline partnerships do not happen overnight**

Developing a robust partnership is often a lengthy process due to the multitude of interests which need to be considered and discussed. It is important that assumptions should be avoided during discussions and that time is taken to ensure that each partner's goals and priorities are thoroughly understood. It is much easier to find common goals if there is a will to discuss them.

- **Defining roles and responsibilities**

It is important to define each partner's role in a formal agreement to ensure there is no ambiguity over partner responsibilities. Overly ambitious promises should be avoided and the process should be as open and transparent as possible.

- **Make allowances for language and cultural differences**

In many cases cross-discipline partnerships will involve working with people whose first language is different to your own. It is necessary to take appropriate actions to ensure language is not a barrier to communication, e.g. by having a translator present during meetings and translating key documents. It is also likely that partners will operate in a different cultural environment to your own, although this can at times be challenging, it is important to be open minded and patient. You may well learn a better way of doing things!