

NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN - INDIA

EDUCATION, RESEARCH AND TRAINING Thematic Concept Note¹

NOTE: Please note that there is a suggestion that Research should be dealt with separately and not clubbed with Education and Training. With this in mind, there are two separate sections below. A decision on this needs to be taken.

RESEARCH

India has an extensive network of research institutions and a very large amount of activity, in various aspects of biodiversity. However, research still suffers from the following problems:

- It is still seriously inadequate on many aspects of biodiversity;
- Even where it does exist, there are problems in making it applicable to ground situations, i.e. the linkage between research and practice is not very strong;
- Similarly, there are gaps in making the research results available to the concerned and interested public;
- There is a serious lack of linkages between community-level knowledge and informal research on the one hand, and formal research systems on the other;
- There are formidable problems of monitoring and judging reliability and quality of the research going on.

Given the above, this Working Group should:

- Assess the current levels, scope, and effect of ongoing research work on various aspects of biodiversity;
- Identify the kinds of existing institutions, expertise, and experience in biodiversity related research;
- Explore long-term benefits of investments by the corporate sector in R&D and in conservation/sustainable use related activities.
- Identify critical gaps in ongoing research and its application: what fields and aspects are inadequately researched, what gaps exist in the links between research and application, what deficiencies exist in disseminating research results; and what gaps exist in linking informal and formal systems of research;
- List the key measures needed to plug the above gaps;
- Assess the importance of research for the validation or testing of beliefs and priorities;
- Design effective mechanisms for engaging knowledgeable women & men of communities inhabiting biodiversity rich areas in participatory community based research both for validating rich indigenous knowledge and enriching research outcomes.
- Prioritise the research actions needed in terms of their importance and immediacy;
- Identify the resources (human, institutional, and economic) that are necessary to undertake these steps.

The WG might want to consider some specific case studies to analyse the impact research has had on conservation and other aspects of biodiversity.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

¹ This note was prepared by Seema Bhatt, Member, TPCG, with inputs from other members of the TPCG.

There is a considerable amount of activity in India in the fields of education, awareness spreading, and training, with regard to various aspects of biodiversity. However, there remain critical deficiencies, such as:

- Poor out-reach to different sections and age groups of the general public with messages that they would relate to;
- Failure of standardised, urban-set programmes to be relevant to localised, gender differentiated and community/site-specific situations and priorities;
- Failure to learn from the educational practices of local communities and other parts of the 'informal' sector;
- Inadequate acceptance of 'non-formal' methods of awareness, education, and training;
- Poor integration of biodiversity concerns into formal curricula of educational and training institutions.

Given the above, the Working Group should:

- Identify the different audience/client groups requiring education, awareness and training programmes, and the specialised requirements of each audience; in particular, identify groups and sectors that have been poorly represented in past programmes;
- Identify, and assess, ongoing activities (formal, informal and community based) in this field (building on existing assessments);
- Identify the kinds of existing institutions, expertise, and experience in this field;
- Identify the critical gaps in this field, such as the infusion of biodiversity concerns into the formal curricula, or the orientation and training of specialised segments of society (lawyers, political leaders, development planners, corporate managers) that deal directly or indirectly with biodiversity;
- List measures needed to fill these gaps, including through site-specific, culturally sensitive methods, capacity-building, and focusing on hitherto neglected segments (political leaders, legal fraternity, and so on);
- Prioritise these measures in terms of their importance and immediacy;
- Identify the resources (institutional, human, and economic) needed to undertake these measures.

The WG might want to consider some specific case studies to analyse the impact environmental education has had in increasing awareness regarding biodiversity concerns. For example, it would be interesting to look at the impact of nature camps on their 'target' groups, or at the impact of media campaigns on increasing awareness about biodiversity, including high profile species like the tiger.