

# The Darwin Initiative: Achievements in 'Communication, Education and Public Awareness'

## Communication, Education and Public Awareness and the Convention on Biological Diversity

Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) is recognised as an essential part of achieving the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). It is referred to specifically in Article 13 and was incorporated as a key cross-cutting theme within the CBD in 1998. In 2002 the Convention adopted a Global Initiative and Programme of Work (PoW) to improve the effectiveness of CEPA within biodiversity conservation actions.



Image credit: Balkani Wildlife

Engaging with schoolchildren is highly effective to change attitudes about conservation issues.

## Defining Communication, Education and Public Awareness

The profile of CEPA within the CBD reflects a wider change within the conservation field of practice, recognising the role of CEPA activities in promoting the necessary community involvement and social change. It is important to recognise CEPA as a dynamic, two-way process allowing for understanding stakeholder situations and the listening and exchange of ideas that is critical to

achieving equity in conservation. This has been reflected in a shift away from product-based "awareness-raising" to more comprehensive communications processes supporting conservation activities. IUCN has stated that CEPA "is about thinking about the most effective intervention to cause a change in a system" and that "often it is not the individual who has to change but the system in which people operate".

Article 13 of the CBD states that 'the contracting parties shall:

- a) *promote and encourage the 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) *co-operate, 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.'*

## CEPA - an instrument for social change

Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity must refer to social issues and peoples' needs. This was noted by the CBD in 2002 when COP 6 stated "biodiversity conservation, sustainable use and equitable use call for social change". IUCN and other conservation organisations concur that CEPA should be viewed as "a social instrument for the management of change in conservation and sustainable development". CEPA is seen as an essential tool to facilitate real and meaningful stakeholder involvement, build trust and influence policy.



## CEPA activities in Darwin Projects

The Darwin Initiative works across the globe, to help countries to deliver their commitments to the CBD. A recent review commissioned by Defra investigated how Darwin Initiative projects have contributed to the CBD's Global Initiative on CEPA.

The Darwin Initiative places high emphasis on environmental awareness and education as one of the four priority areas that projects are invited to focus on. The DI has supported 125 projects (out of 450) that include CEPA in their project objectives. However, most projects (84%) report doing some "communication" activities, and an increasing number are taking up the principles of CEPA best practice. Some projects have their focus on "education and public awareness" processes, benefiting from specialist inputs. This demonstrates how seriously CEPA is taken within the Darwin Initiative. The range of activities included in Darwin projects is increasingly broad and innovative.

## Darwin Initiative's contribution to the Global Initiative on CEPA

Darwin Initiative projects have contributed in many ways to the CBD's Programme of Work (PoW) on CEPA. Taking the three elements of the Programme, some examples of projects demonstrate this contribution. Many Darwin project activities cross-cut all the elements.

### Element 1. Towards a global communication, education and public awareness network.

Operational objectives:

1. To establish and manage a global communication, education and public awareness network composed of new information technologies and traditional communication mechanisms;
2. To stimulate the creation of national, sub-regional and regional communication, education and public awareness networks;
3. To create synergy between existing networks relevant to communication, education and public awareness.

A number of Darwin Initiative projects have acted as catalysts in forming regional or national networks bringing together and sharing good practice between organisations and specialists working in biodiversity communications and education. Such networks are an important legacy of Darwin investments. Darwin projects have also been very successful at linking into existing events or networks for synergy between project activities and local motivations.

## Case study - A schools network in Kyrgyzstan.

One project adopted an "on the ground" approach, working at the local school level to raise awareness about biodiversity issues. "Micro-biosphere reserves" were created in school grounds throughout the country, to be used for environmental education. Teacher training and a practical handbook helped the teachers to do this. Students were involved in the whole process from designing the reserves to using them in other lessons. Networking between the schools shared lessons and created demand and ideas for simple but effective resource materials that the project could supply. The project has left a legacy of a thriving network of 25 schools in Kyrgyzstan with active biodiversity reserves in their grounds, and an increased appreciation of biodiversity amongst teachers and students.

*Project 11-024: School Green Land Community Biodiversity Awareness of Kyrgyzstan (UK Field Studies Council in partnership with BIOM in Kyrgyzstan). Information from FSC, photos from BIOM.*



## Element 2. Exchange of knowledge and expertise

Operational Objectives:

1. To enhance exchange of knowledge and expertise among professionals, enhancing development and innovation on communication, education and public awareness;
2. To meet knowledge needs of Parties and other stakeholders for Article 13.

The sharing of knowledge and expertise, especially between UK institutions and partners in host countries, is at the core of the Darwin Initiative programme. There are numerous examples of sharing knowledge and expertise in CEPA – within and between host countries, through networks, workshops, seminars, and well-informed media attention.

## Element 3. Capacity Building for CEPA

Operational objectives:

1. Develop capacity of the Parties to market biodiversity to other sectors, and mainstream biodiversity into the work of other sectors;
2. Develop professional capacity of educators and communicators;
3. Enhance stakeholder participation and community development through communication, education and public awareness.

Capacity-building is a strong focus of the Darwin Initiative and the majority of Darwin Initiative CEPA projects do effective capacity building in a very active way in the community or project area. This can be through the process of developing, for example, education programmes and facilities or interpretation panels.

A number of projects have also worked at the regional or national level and have been successful in influencing policy at the government level. A project in Mexico (see case study) led to the State senate passing a motion to protect an endangered species at the heart of the project. Darwin projects have been increasingly effective at mainstreaming their issues into other sectors, particularly education.

Stakeholder participation is an increasing focus issue for Darwin projects as conservation professionals recognise the value of involvement to their objectives.

## Case study - Sharing knowledge to empower community conservation in Ecuador.

The Primenet project supports the Los Cedros Reserve which involves local people in the collection of data on the critically endangered brown-headed spider monkey, the population of which stands at only 50 breeding pairs. Some of the community members were trained to become para-biologists to collect information and report conservation threats. The project also facilitated an exchange of knowledge amongst the network of primate conservation professionals at community, national and international level.



When a mining company bought a concession in the biodiversity hotspot within the spider monkeys' habitat the opposition from the community and the local government was fierce. The network enabled them to provide evidence of the impacts of mining on the spider monkey to the appropriate audiences and allowed action in support of habitat protection. The fact that the community was linked to local and international NGOs ensured publicity about human rights as well as the threat to the spider monkey. The mining company's environmental impact assessment was rejected. The community had developed and shared knowledge that was critical in ensuring conservation and action supporting Article 13 of the CBD.

*Project 14-040: Building a sustainable future for primates in Ecuador – PRIMENET (Sussex University; Ecuador Terra Incognita; Los Cedros Reserve). Information and photos from Dr Mika Peck, Sussex.*



## Case study - Influencing education policy in the Yemen.

Providing input into the National schools curriculum has been a particularly effective way of getting a conservation message into mainstream public thinking. The Project takes a particularly effective three-tiered approach:

- Working directly with the Ministry of Education to establish biodiversity and environmental education initiatives in the schools curriculum.
- Testing the materials they have been creating with teachers and schools.
- Promoting complementary activities outside the classroom, via games and field-work in school-based environment clubs, and via 'learning-by-growing' in partnership with a local nursery.



Whilst “environmental education” does not appear on the schools curriculum, the cross-curricula approach found opportunities to include the conservation message in other subject classes – for example using a story in a language class about conserving a rare plant.



*Project 14-002: Environmental education programme promoting biodiversity on Socotra, Yemen (Durham University Geography Department; Socotra Conservation and Development Programme, EPA EE; and the Ministry of Education, Sana'a). Information and photos – Roderic Dutton, Durham.*

Many projects use traditional CEPA approaches towards this, including stakeholder workshops, participatory planning, debate and getting issues onto TV and radio. Innovations in CEPA - such as getting stakeholders to physically make models of their resources, private-sector involvement, engaging across sectors, using arts and drama, conservation projects in school grounds – are all being used to promote people's engagement with conservation issues.

### Best practice CEPA for DI projects

Principles underlying best practice for Communication, Education and Public Awareness for Darwin Initiative Projects – things to think about.

#### Support a change process

- Recognise that biodiversity conservation requires social and organisational change.
- Consider how CEPA activities can change attitudes and behaviours.
- Recognise CEPA as a process to support that change, not just a set of information products.

#### Think about partnerships

- Understand your audience – so you can involve them with humility and open-mindedness, using appropriate language and approach.
- Engage with social scientists to understand the dynamics of social changes.
- Partner with experts in communication, education and public awareness.

#### Make communications positive

- View CEPA as a dynamic, two-way process that allows understanding of peoples' needs, exchange of ideas, and participation in conservation.
- Use CEPA to offer positive and appealing encouragement and alternatives, not just negative messages, but real benefits of doing things differently.
- Recognise the difference between immediate communication needs and longer term education and public awareness efforts.

#### Think out of the box

- Don't be afraid of innovative approaches like: engaging with social or faith leaders; tapping into arts, drama and stories.
- Learn from local advertising and marketing techniques.
- Consider how biodiversity conservation can be mainstreamed into other sectors such as health and education.

## Case study - A popular approach to awareness raising in Mexico.

In Xochimilco, a project wanted to draw attention to conservation issues affecting a World Heritage /RAMSAR wetlands system and in particular the Axolotl (a newt species) whose habitat is under threat. The project involved CEPA at every opportunity – engaging with government, academics or the public. Amongst other activities, the project linked with tourist guides, schools, local heritage museums and journalists in radio and TV. Using a simple and easily remembered message, the project had a presence at over 400 events, including the Mexico City Flower Festival, in which they unexpectedly gained 2nd prize! The project was successful in generating interest and public awareness about the conservation issues around the Axolotl. Key outcomes have been that the Axolotl has been adopted as a symbol for several heritage organisations and a motion has been passed by the Senate to protect the Axolotl and its habitat.



*Project 11-018: Aztecs and Axolotls – Integrating conservation and tourism in Xochimilco, Mexico (Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology (DICE) and Universidad Autonoma Metropolitana y Xochimilco). Information and photos provided by Ian Bride, DICE.*

The Defra review has highlighted a number of key best practices for CEPA activities within Darwin Initiative projects.

- 1. Identify appropriate partners and objectives.** An understanding of what change is required, and by whom, is needed in order to plan effective CEPA interventions. Audiences should be regarded as interaction groups, with an emphasis on two-way partnerships rather than one-way communication, and stakeholder-led activities.
- 2. Promote community involvement – trusting, positive, communications.** Projects in which the community are involved, listened to and where respect and trust is established from the outset are more likely to succeed. Communities should be approached as equals in resolving resource problems. Good CEPA will enable them to see the relevance of the project to their lives and livelihoods. It is critical to thoroughly understand the community needs and social context and to offer positive and appealing encouragement and alternatives.
- 3. Develop effective partnerships and networks to broaden impact.** By remaining opportunistic and open-minded, new relationships can be established that allow projects to reach a wider audience and achieve more impact than initially planned. Examples include partnering with radio or television programmes or involvement in popular cultural events. This also helps to ensure that CEPA activities sit in the appropriate cultural and social context.
- 4. Use appropriate media.** “Tried and tested” media that is familiar to the conservation practitioner is often appropriate and can be effective. But it is worth looking at what works in the socio-cultural setting of the project, including in the field of marketing. Innovative approaches including the use of arts, drama, film, animation, children’s books, storytelling and the use of marketing approaches have shown themselves to be particularly effective in many cases. Always ‘field-test’ your materials.
- 5. Develop appropriate teams.** The principles of CEPA activities require skillsets beyond the natural sciences. Collaboration with social scientists, communication, and education specialists can really strengthen CEPA activities and make them more effective.
- 6. Use appropriate language and style.** Always use local languages, and aim to incorporate traditional designs. Make references to local culture or religion to help people relate to the message and improve ownership. Consider field testing CEPA material as this can really help to make it more appropriate and relevant.

Image credit: RBGE



A project supporting the Royal Botanic Garden in Bhutan incorporated motifs based on traditional Himalayan art styles and the content included references to traditional culture (including food, traditional medicine and architecture) as well as botanical information.

*Project 12-024:* Institutional capacity building and training, Royal Botanic Garden Serbithang, Bhutan. A partnership between Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh and Royal Botanic Garden Serbithang.

**7. Ensure awareness facilities are sustainable.**

For facilities (such as a visitor centre, on-site interpretation, buildings, interpretative displays, and school gardens) to operate effectively after the project closes they must ensure significant institutional involvement to assure maintenance and that they meet a real demand.

**8. CEPA as a long term process.** Successful CEPA requires a long-term commitment - it is about a long-term process of social and behavioural change, not just ad-hoc sets of products. Projects that are linked with strong host country institutions are likely therefore to have greater impact. Developing good relationships with journalists will pay greater dividends than a one-off press conference, and a teacher in-service training workshop is often more value than giving a presentation to a school.

**9. Mainstream conservation into education and other sectors.**

For example, include conservation issues in teacher training for example, and work with teachers to provide materials and new approaches (e.g. activities such as tree planting) for use in schools.

**10. Plan, monitor and evaluate for change in attitudes and behaviour.**

Aim to assess the impacts of CEPA activities. Use participatory appraisals or market research techniques to ascertain attitudes and behaviours before and after project implementation.

**Working towards better Communication, Education and Public Awareness**

This review shows that most Darwin Initiative projects are already doing CEPA activities and some are leaders in the field. With the development and implementation of the best practice guidelines above, practice can only improve. Key constraints at the moment relate to how these activities are valued and shared across and outside the Darwin Initiative. The Darwin Initiative programme has the opportunity to revise the applications and reporting procedures to promote more relevant and effective CEPA activities in its projects. It is also working towards improvement in the access to information from and between its projects. These changes will lead to substantial improvement in its already significant contribution to the CBD's Global Initiative on CEPA.

The Darwin Initiative is a distinctive programme - an important and unique source of funding for biodiversity conservation, with CEPA as a main focal area. Through this focus, the Darwin Initiative ensures that conservation efforts are embedded in local realities, involve the beneficiaries and have maximum impact. The effectiveness of CEPA activities in Darwin Initiative projects will be further improved in light of this review to help maximise the contribution of the Darwin Initiative to the CBD.

The Darwin Initiative aims to promote biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of resources around the world. It uses UK expertise working with local partners to help countries rich in biodiversity but poor in resources to fulfil their commitments under the CBD. The Initiative is funded and administered by the UK Government's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). Since 1992, the DI has committed over £45m to over 450 projects in over 100 countries.

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For information on the Darwin Initiative see [www.darwin.gov.uk](http://www.darwin.gov.uk) For information on the CBD see [www.biodiv.org](http://www.biodiv.org)

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