



ICLEI 2008

Involving citizens in biodiversity management

- The future of biodiversity depends on the action and values of people. Local authorities and governments are in the best position to reach out to citizens and involve, enable and inspire local stakeholders.
- Cultural diversity and biodiversity exist hand in hand. By facilitating a deeper relationship with the environment, the world's diversity can be conserved for the future. It is in consumers' and voters' everyday choices and understanding that the future of biodiversity will finally be determined.

Biodiversity conservation gains from citizen involvement

Biodiversity efforts are more successful if local and regional authorities involve citizens and stakeholders because the future of biodiversity depends on all members of society. In turn, all people are dependent on biodiversity's services for survival. Local and regional authorities are in the best position to reach out directly to citizens, compared to other levels of government.

Not only does every citizen contribute to biodiversity 'in their own backyard', but the acceptance of municipal and regional biodiversity management relies heavily on the understanding and valuation from stakeholders and citizens. Their involvement is thus a main mechanism for raising awareness and spreading responsibility.

Biodiversity management is a topic likely to attract the at-

tention of citizens who value green recreation space or connect deeply with nature. It is the responsibility of local authorities to expand this connection to a deeper understanding of ecosystems.

Authorities can also use this as an opportunity to receive feedback and advertise their

efforts. Indeed, individual citizens may already be active in biodiversity efforts via other interest groups that can multiply awareness and be effective partners for collaboration and key stakeholders. The following is an overview of involvement approaches with increasing intensity of participation.



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Information provision and awareness raising

This generally one-way communication is ideal for simple issues or as an initial phase of biodiversity processes to see to what extent and who are interested in biodiversity efforts. More complex issues may be better dealt with using more engaging strategies.

Providing information can also be a side activity during a participatory process to inform non-involved community members and keep active stakeholders engaged.

If used persistently, sharing information on local biodiversity with the public through signboards, instructive displays, leaflet dissemination, instructive nature paths, botanical gardens, newsletters or local media, can be effective. Recreation and awareness campaigns, consumption guidelines, consumer education can

inform citizens to change their daily choices to biodiversity-friendly activities.

For instance, the magazine *Geo* hosts a biodiversity day each year that brings together schools, community members and public and private partners to search and identify as many plant and animal species within twenty-four hours. Each year there is a different theme to look for, such as biodiversity in protected areas. As many as 20.000 people participate.

Besides providing information about biodiversity, sharing the local and regional policy strategy towards biodiversity conservation with citizens and special interest groups can help identify new stakeholders and reveal conflicting interests at a time when they are still easily resolved.



Multi-stakeholder participation

Involving stakeholders actively may seem like a slow and complex process, but results in changes being more accepted and people taking more responsibility due to their direct involvement.

Participatory processes involve stakeholders directly in the policy process. The results of participation processes need to be clear to participants. These results can take the form of an individual

policy or be integrated into existing policies or spatial planning. What kind of contribution expected should also be clearly established. Once stakeholders are identified, informal or formal communication can begin.

When more deeply integrating stakeholders, it is useful if stakeholder groups can identify group leaders as responsible representatives and for local and regional authorities to arrange a regular forum for discussions on biodiversity activities. Identifying key stakeholders and gaining their support for biodiversity efforts is important for successful integration.

Setting an agenda together with stakeholders and sharing responsibility begins before a formal policy proposal exists. Actors are treated equally in the process and research information together, the moderation, however, is the responsibility of local and regional authorities.

The City of Zagreb has successfully facilitated a participatory project, *Community involvement in biodiversity assessment*, in 2007. The rich knowledge on the local biodiversity by various stakeholders was brought together as a basis for future target setting and action planning.

Local & regional stakeholder examples

- Nature protection organisations
- Citizen interest groups and neighbourhoods
- Church groups and sport clubs
- Businesses, SMEs
- Land and forest owners
- Academic institutions and schools
- Media
- Environmental department
- Planning and management departments
- Other local, regional or national administrations
- Superiors, planning staff and colleagues

Dealing with conflicting interests

Biodiversity conservation and management often conflicts with the interest of other local and regional authorities, business owners and private landowners. For instance, protecting a wetland area that could otherwise be profitable as a new apartment complex or shopping centre. Many conflicts arise over land use changes, road construction, new building planning, intensification or abandonment of agricultural practices, recreation and hunting, and policy related issues. Dealing with conflicts can be seen as a typical and inherent part of biodiversity management.

Through a well-facilitated process of participatory planning that includes stakeholders, conflicting interests can be discovered at an early stage, brought up and dealt with constructively. When an

issue within a participation process escalates to become a conflict, direct conflict resolution may be useful.

Conflict types can centre on structural, interest, process or interpersonal differences. Biodiversity conflicts are complex due to multiple authorities involved, different legislation to adhere to and various interests to consider.

Conflict resolution techniques vary by the amount of control by individual parties or stakeholders versus the intervention of a neutral third party. Negotiation, facilitation and mediation are three types of conflict resolution.

In negotiation, involved parties control the decision-making and process themselves. Negotiation does not involve a neutral third party and stakeholders deal directly with each other, therefore

parties must be able to work with each other.

In a facilitation process a neutral third party focuses on moderating discussion, improving communication and clarifying viewpoints among participants rather than finding a solution. Facilitation can be particularly useful when many parties are involved.

A mediation process takes facilitation one step further to use a third party to help find creative solutions and move beyond the disputed issues. This is a type of conflict resolution that intensely uses a neutral third party to keep movement of communication in a conflict situation.



Partnerships, stewardship and active collaboration

Local stewardship councils for biodiversity conservation and wise use help local people become active citizens instead of passive observers of policy change. By supporting stewardship and partnership projects, local and regional authorities mobilise citizens' own capacities.

Programmes for 'adopting' a particular nature reserve, habitat, forest section, stream, roadway or local species have proven particularly successful in biodiversity conservation by creating a sense of responsibility for participants. A range of activities within adoption programmes can include keep-

ing the area clean, planting native species, restoring an area or planning outreach days within the wider public sphere. Citizens may also enjoy collaborating with landscaping activities, urban beautification projects, community garden projects and green roof projects.

Local citizens and businesses can engage with already existing interest groups. Such partnerships, stewardship or sponsorship programmes often depend on volunteered time from citizens. As part of deepening citizen understanding, local authorities can initiate, coordinate and help find access to funding for these programmes.

Real stewards: The City of Freiburg's Adopt-a-Stream Programme

Freiburg's successful twenty year old waterway adoption programme involves over 2000 stewards from the city of Freiburg and the surrounding region. They strive to educate, motivate and manage conflicts relevant to the region's rivers and streams.

In 2007 they hosted their first national conference and received the regional Baden-Württemberg award for nature conservation. The city of Freiburg initiated the programme and provides coordination support.

Endorsed by the former mayor of Freiburg and supported within the local administration, as well as sponsored by local energy, transport and radio companies, the programme welcomes anyone or any group to join. The group combines efforts with schools to educate young children about stream ecology and caring for the environment as well as conducting hands-on stream cleaning and river bank planting. www.bachpaten-freiburg.de

Youth participation

Involving children and youth in biodiversity projects not only contributes to their education, but is an investment in the future leaders and stakeholders that will have an influential role in environmental issues. Biodiversity management requires a long scope, involving youth reaches out to the next generations. Youth can spread the importance and awareness of biodiversity among their friends, families and other youth.

Youth can be involved through already existing youth clubs and through partnerships with schools. Opportunities for youth participation can take the form of youth research projects like monitoring a local habitat or collaborating with a nearby nature reserve.

Children can also express their connection and interest in biodiversity through creative activities like art and music programmes, shar-

ing their connection with the community. Especially within cities, exposing youth to natural environments with hands-on projects can inspire their understanding of ecosystems and nature.

Youth can make a difference locally, and also gain experience at the international level directly through the CBD youth initiative. www.cbd.int/youth

Facts & Figures

- It is estimated that non-wood forest products, such as watershed protection and carbon sequestration, in certain regions account for 25-96% of forests' total economic value.
- Biodiversity damage from agriculture alone cost the UK an estimated \$2,6 billion in 1996.

Urban biodiversity ...

is biological diversity of urban areas. It is heavily influenced by the built environment and the economic, social and cultural dynamics of these densely populated places.

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Johannesburg reaches out

The City of Johannesburg raises environmental awareness among its citizens through various school-based and capacity building programmes. An estimated 28.500 people are reached per year through the activities. A city-wide activity are seven themed environmental days that take place each year. A variety of other projects reach out to citizens groups with sustainability implementation programmes, environmental education programmes, projects dealing with specific ecological aspects and. Programmes include an indigenous garden project called *Schools Going Green* and a biodiversity education programme, *Conservation Education for the Nation*.

Engaging students and youth, Johannesburg education and environment departments conduct a *My Dream Park Competition Project* in which area schools win funding and support each year. School children work in groups to submit drawings for the competition with plans to green their school's playgrounds and parks. The programme teaches kids about taking care of the local environment while actively improving land areas important to the community. www.joburg.org.za/content/view/1630/207/

This document is part of a series of factsheets that are intended to provide guidance and information on biodiversity management to decision-makers at the local and regional level. For more detailed information on how local and regional authorities have contributed to stopping biodiversity loss, please visit our web site www.countdown2010.net/lara or contact us directly. All factsheets can be downloaded from www.countdown2010.net/lara.



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