



**Capacity Building in Biodiversity and Impact Assessment,
Southern Africa**

**CBBIA-IAIA
An IAIA / Dutch Government Project**

In partnership with SAIEA

**And with input from:
SANBI
Botanical Society of South Africa**

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 International Perspective

The CBBIA is a three-year global project managed by IAIA and funded by the Dutch government. The programme steering committee has representation from the CBD and Ramsar secretariats, IAIA and the donors.

The project aims to integrate biodiversity conservation with impact assessment (both EIA and SEA), and develop requisite capacities among stakeholders in developing countries in several regions, including southern Africa, Central America and Asia. The modality of implementation is to work with and through focal organisations which can effectively implement the project at regional and country level.

This programme seeks to build capacity in the southern African region through training, knowledge-transfer, institution building and networking as well as other activities outlined below. It is based on the discussions and results of the meeting held in Vancouver, Canada on April 24 and 25, 2004 and subsequent meetings and discussions. The Southern African Institute for Environmental Assessment (SAIEA) will coordinate the project in the sub-region and will establish a project team that will undertake most of the technical work. SAIEA will establish and maintain a “counterpart network” of knowledgeable persons from within South Africa and neighbouring countries. This network will contribute in various ways to the research and the development of project outputs. It is anticipated that the network will strengthen the existing “coalition of champions” whose interest is ensuring that the need for biodiversity conservation is consistently integrated in development planning in southern Africa.

1.2 Southern African Perspective

One of the main objectives of impact assessment in Southern Africa (as elsewhere) is sustainable development.

Safeguarding the natural environment is built into South Africa’s constitution. Environmental management principles, including those related to the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems, form part of the National Environmental Management Act. South Africa has legislation for mandatory EIA, and has recently promulgated specific legislation to conserve its biodiversity. South Africa can thus be thought of as a developing country with a sound basis for both EIA and biodiversity conservation.

In order for impact assessment to be effective, consideration of biodiversity (and associated ecosystem services) must be soundly addressed at all levels of the impact assessment process, namely by a) consultants and contributing specialists, b) decision-makers and c) the proponent (as shown overleaf). In Southern Africa, therefore, capacity building is required at all three levels of the impact assessment process:

Impact Assessment
CONSULTANTS/SPECIALISTS

Decision-making
AUTHORITIES

Implementation
PROPONENT

With regard to impact assessment consultants and other specialists:

Current initiatives around building capacity on biodiversity focus on impact assessment consultants and specialists. There are a number of tools in the form of courses, guidelines, working groups and other forums available to consultants and specialists (eg Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning guidelines for involving biodiversity specialists in EIA, Botanical Society's Conservation Unit ecosystem-specific guidelines, Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism's Information Series, etc).

With regard to decision-makers:

A survey conducted by the University of Stellenbosch in 2002 found that Provincial and Local Government department officials highlighted several key areas of concern, which hinder clear, unambiguous environmental decisions from being made:

- Lack of staff, resulting in an overload of work, with insufficient time to devote to the consideration of key issues;
- High staff turnover resulting in delays and inconsistencies in approach;
- Young, inexperienced staff who do not have the training and experience to make difficult value judgements around conflicting biophysical and socio-economic conflicts, or the ability to differentiate between good and poor environmental reports;
- Lack of sufficient training, or the time to attend training courses (Seeliger and Hattingh, 2004).

Work by the Conservation Unit of the Botanical Society of South Africa (2004) suggests that many decision-makers do not understand what is meant by 'biodiversity'; biodiversity is given a low priority relative to short-term socio-economic factors; and that decision-makers allowed continual "cashing in" of biodiversity to enable development.

The process of decision-making is seen by many as a 'black box', where information is fed in and a decision emerges, with the decision-making criteria being uncertain. In some provinces in South Africa, the biodiversity conservation agency has found itself in the position of appealing decisions taken by the

environmental authority where it believes that inadequate attention has been paid to biodiversity.

With regard to proponents:

Generally speaking, industry still views environmental management as non-financial, non-core and “soft”. Developers/industrialists have not yet made the mental or physical connection between biodiversity conservation and financial performance and, until they do, issues relating to biodiversity will remain non-core, in spite of the best efforts by consultants in their EIA reports and Authorities in their decision-making.

Of the three groups discussed above, it is felt that the decision-makers and proponents are the two most in need of capacity building and guidance with regard to the consideration of biodiversity in impact assessment; impact assessment practitioners and specialists are relatively well-resourced with regard to guidance and support in this regard.

This proposal, therefore, focuses on the objectives, scope of work, outcomes and budget required to build capacity within decision-making authorities on biodiversity issues.

Drawing on international experience, EIA results are often “insufficiently used”, neglected, or the influence on decision-making has been ‘unclear’ (Sager 2001, Hilding-Rydevik 2001 in Nordic countries), and their contribution to consent and design decisions is limited (Cashmore *et al* 2004). Ultimately, an understanding of the way decision-makers draw on, use, and weight information on biodiversity in reaching decisions, is believed to be essential to inform efforts to improve consideration of, and build capacity for the improved consideration of biodiversity in EIA. Without an understanding of the way decision-makers regard biodiversity, what specific biodiversity information they regard as important, and how trade-offs with socio-economic issues are made, and how the legal and policy framework is applied, sustainable development is doomed to fail. “A detailed and rich understanding of the decision processes is a critical prerequisite to more effective practices...” (Cashmore *et al* 2004).

2 OBJECTIVES

2.1 Objectives of the CBBIA programme

The regional (Southern Africa) CBBIA programme will contribute to the general objectives of the international CBBIA programme as summarised below:

- Provide practical, demand-driven support for development of capacity for integrating biodiversity and impact assessment in developing countries.
 - Actively support the work of the biodiversity-related global Conventions.
 - Support capacity-building through knowledge-transfer, institution-building and networking.
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2.2 Objectives of Capacity building for Authorities in South Africa

The objectives of this project are to:

- Determine the level of understanding of 'biodiversity' amongst the Authorities (decision-makers).
- Determine the importance given to biodiversity by decision-makers, particularly in relation to social and economic issues.
- Determine on what basis, and using what criteria, decision-makers make decisions with regard to biodiversity impacts.
- Determine whether – and how – decision-makers decide on a) 'bottom lines' or acceptable thresholds and b) appropriate compensation for biodiversity impacts.
- Determine what biodiversity information is seen to be of most importance to decision-makers.
- Determine how decision-makers address cumulative impacts, and how they apply the precautionary principle.
- Determine how, and on what basis, decision-makers make trade-offs between socio-economic and biophysical/biodiversity issues in reaching a decision.
- Determine whether decision-makers feel that there is any particular information which would assist them in a) determining 'bottom lines' for biodiversity impacts, and b) making trade-offs between biodiversity and socioeconomic impacts.
- Provide training, posters, case studies, and other capacity building tools to assist Authorities in making sound decisions.

3 SCOPE OF WORK

The scope of work can be defined by answering:

- Who is to be targeted?
- What types of projects should be addressed?
- What stages in the impact assessment process should be considered?

There are many agencies that are responsible to a greater or lesser degree for environmental decision-making in South Africa, particularly as it affects biodiversity. Furthermore, decision-making is taken at national, provincial and local government levels by representatives of the Departments of: Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Water Affairs and Forestry, Minerals and Energy, Agriculture, Planning, Roads Agencies, Housing etc. It is recommended that in order for any capacity building to be effective, it is necessary to target all of these authorities. In some provinces the biodiversity agency is not the decision-making authority but rather a commenting body; the extent to which they are consulted and/or influence decisions is not clear.

We are concerned that the focus on biodiversity is often confined to the big, headline-catching projects, while the smaller, incremental developments pass by unnoticed. We are particularly interested therefore, in building capacity at the local planning level to ensure that strategic development plans take due cognisance of the

value of ecosystem services and that the cumulative impacts of small-scale developments on biodiversity are properly considered. However this focus will not be at the expense of large projects and we will also address the difficulties inherent in value-driven decisions regarding biodiversity, socio-economics and development issues in large projects.

We propose that “capacity building for biodiversity in *impact assessment*” should be taken in its widest context, and should not focus narrowly on the EIA study. Therefore, we propose to develop capacity to make effective decisions about biodiversity at all stages of a project life cycle, whether it be in a SEA process or EIA process: policy – planning – design – assessment – decision-making – implementation – monitoring and auditing – enforcement – continual improvement.

4 APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The proposed approach for **Phase 1a** has three main tasks:

- The first constitutes a ‘Situation Assessment’ and synthesis of existing experience and lessons learned in relation to biodiversity and impact assessment amongst decision-makers from **all nine provinces and the national departmental agencies.**
- The second task involves the production of training materials and guidance, based on needs identified in the Situation Assessment.
- The third task involves the provision of training courses to **selected provinces.**

The proposed approach includes a number of activities designed to meet specific training and capacity-building needs, as described below.

4.1 Task 1: Situation Assessment: Impact Assessment, Decision-Making and Biodiversity

An assessment will be carried out of the extent to which biodiversity is currently taken into account by different decision-makers in Impact Assessment and at different levels of decision-making. It will help to provide an understanding of the way in which decision-makers draw on, use and weight information on biodiversity in reaching their decisions, how well mitigation measures have been implemented and the extent to which successful EAs have resulted in minimal negative impacts upon biodiversity as a result of the project or activity. Our approach will involve sending out pre-workshop questionnaires to each participant to help them prepare for the workshop, followed by structured workshops at which representatives of as many of the different agencies identified in section 3 above as possible, will be invited to work through a SWOT analysis.

The results of the workshopped SWOT analyses and the questionnaires will be summarised, reported and used to refine and prioritise the scope and content of the training and capacity building materials required. Key strengths and weaknesses will be identified. If successful this activity could be repeated in other countries in the region. A status report will be produced to summarise the results of the study.

The main output of task 1 will be a **status report** that will include a synthesis and / or assessment of the following:

- Legal provisions in SADC countries (initially focused on RSA) relating to biodiversity, the provisions contained in UN and SADC treaties and the commitments of signatories.
- The “Africa vision” – NEPAD, the AU etc., the political context and Constitutional provisions.
- The current levels of understanding of the importance of biodiversity for human health, economic development, livelihoods.
- Current practice – to what extent is biodiversity incorporated in development planning, impact assessment, decision-making and development implementation, illustrated by a collection of case studies.
- Knowledge, attitudes and opinions of high-level decision makers in RSA.
- Implications for capacity building efforts.

4.2 Task 2: Preparation of guidance and training materials

Based on the output of Task 1, the project team will adapt existing international guidance on EIA and SEA (e.g. IAIA, CBBIA, Ramsar, Netherlands EIA Commission) and local guidance (e.g. Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning guidelines) to produce a regional guidance document for decision-makers. The counterpart network will review the guidance document and provide advice about modifications required. The project team will provide relevant examples through the use of case studies to illustrate key principles. The results of this exercise will be used as a basis for training and capacity building and will feed into the further development of EIA and SEA guidance by the CBD. The guidance will emphasise the link between biodiversity and ecosystem services, development and human wellbeing, the value of early, proactive consideration of biodiversity through exploring alternatives, and the importance of reducing opportunity costs of development. The recent publication of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment lends global support in this regard.

The guidance document will also provide advice on the integration of biodiversity and ecosystem services in impact assessment and development planning.

The main outputs of task 2 will be a **guidance document and training course materials**.

4.2 Task 3: Awareness and Training Courses

There are nine provinces in South Africa as well as the national departmental bodies. We propose to spread the provision of training over two years, with KwaZulu-Natal, Western Cape, Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga and the National Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism receiving training in year 1, and Limpopo, North-West, Northern Cape, Gauteng and Free State being covered in year 2.

These training courses will extend over 5 days and will target key individuals from agencies and groups active in biodiversity and impact assessment in participating provinces and national departments. The training courses will be based on the

guidance and training materials developed in task 2 and will also draw heavily on the work done in task 1. The course will rely heavily on the use of case studies and group work. We have found that multi-disciplinary courses (intra-departmental) have far greater added value than just working at a single departmental level, in terms of sharing experiences, different view points, joint problem solving and recognising the complexity of different expectations and values.

The 5-day course will aim to:

- Place impact assessment in the context of sustainable development.
- Place biodiversity and ecosystem services in the context of sustainable development.
- Present the challenges and lessons learned (with case studies) with regard to incorporating biodiversity in impact assessment at strategic (planning) and project levels.
- Present the challenges of decision making for sustainable development, including values and ethical aspects, and the due consideration of biodiversity and ecosystem services (with case studies).

The training materials will be configured in such a way that they could be used for at least four purposes:

- As a five-day course as outlined above;
- As a stand-alone introduction, which might be a 1 day module in an existing EA course at a local university, technikon, business school etc.;
- As a dedicated one-day course on “biodiversity and EA”; or
- As a one-day course on “biodiversity and the proponent”...

Feedback from each course will be constantly used to refine and improve the course content and presentation.

4.4 Phase 1 Report

The final Phase 1 Report, **to be compiled in Year 2**, on “integrating biodiversity issues in decision making processes in southern Africa” will include:

- a summary of the Status Report produced at the end of task 1;
- a case studies booklet highlighting lessons learnt;
- a guidance document;
- a ready-to-use set of powerpoint slides with hand out notes that can be used by trainers; and
- a list of other resources that relate to the subject.

5 PROJECT TEAM AND ADMINISTRATION

SAIEA will be the Regional Project Coordinator of CBBIA activities in the region and will co-ordinate the project team and make recommendations concerning suitable members of the Counterpart Network. Sub-contracting arrangements will be made in

consultation with the CBBIA Technical Project Manager (TPM). SAIEA will appoint a Project Officer who will be responsible for coordinating all the activities of the project.

Where possible and funds permitting, meetings will be convened to allow key resource persons to meet and interact, though electronic communication will likely be used to ensure that all those concerned are well informed of progress. SAIEA's chat forum on its website will be promoted as a mechanism for people throughout the region (and beyond) to contribute ideas on various issues. Moreover, electronic newsletters will be distributed to SAIEA's extensive network so that people are made aware of the project.

The Project Officer will coordinate the project technically and financially and will provide work plans and reports to CBBIA. A contract, to be signed between CBBIA and SAIEA, will set out the scope of responsibilities. These are:

1. Administering the Regional Work Plan
2. Managing and allocating the budget
3. Working with the TPM to identify and appoint suitable workplan participants and sub-contractors as necessary
4. Ensuring activities specified in the Work Plan are carried out in a timely and effective fashion
5. Setting up a network, website, generally publicising the work and providing networking opportunities
6. Providing formal and informal feedback to the CBBIA TPM and to IAIA Head Quarters
7. Helping to seek and secure follow-on funding
8. Helping to coordinate reporting and to produce final reports and outputs
9. Ensuring outputs from the Work Plan are submitted in a timely fashion and comply with contractual requirements

The project work will be carried out by Ms Susie Brownlie and Ms Bryony Walmsley under the auspices of SAIEA.

- **Ms Brownlie** has 23 years of experience in environmental assessment and management. She has an MSc in Environmental Science, and has worked in both public and private sectors in South Africa and England. She is currently a partner in a 2-person environmental consulting practice, working primarily in EIA review, with an emphasis on biodiversity issues. Ms Brownlie co-authored the country study on "The Integration of Biodiversity into National Environmental Assessment Procedures. National Case Studies: South Africa", prepared for the Biodiversity Planning Support Programme of the UNDP and the UNEP, funded by GEF. She has lectured post-graduate students on ecology and biodiversity at the University of Cape Town, and run a number of training courses on biodiversity in impact assessment, and EIA review. Ms Brownlie is a certified EIA practitioner with the Interim Certification Board for Environmental Assessment Practitioners of South Africa, and has served / is currently serving on a number of boards of professional bodies in South Africa.

Ms Walmsley has over 25 years experience in environmental impact assessment, the last 23 of which have been in southern Africa. Most of this experience was gained in the consulting sector, with MacLaren Plansearch in Canada (1980-82), Steffen Robertson and Kirsten (1983-90) and Walmsley Environmental Consultants

(1990-2004). She is currently the director of the South African office of SAIEA. In recent years she has conducted numerous independent reviews of EIAs for national governments throughout the SADC region, as well as for other parties. She has lectured on environmental management to the Department of Town and Regional Planning at the University of the Witwatersrand and has conducted a number of training courses in SEA, mining and environmental management, environmental economics and implementing environmental management plans. She co-authored five chapters of a book on Environmental Assessment in Southern Africa published by SAIEA, and has worked on many EIA, EMP and EMS guidelines series in the region. She is a registered Professional Natural Scientist.

6 WORK PROGRAMME

The preliminary work programme is set out in Table 1.

TABLE 1: PRELIMINARY WORK PROGRAMME

Month/Year	Activity	Person-days
Task 1: Situation Assessment		
June 2005	Finalisation of contract Project initiation, planning and team meetings Workshop design and preparation Design and send out pre-workshop questionnaire Administration and workshop organisation	12 Admin
July 2005	3 Authority workshops (National DEAT (Pretoria), Gauteng, Mpumalanga)	
August 2005	4 Authority workshops (Limpopo, North-West, Free State, Northern Cape)	35
September 2005	3 Authority workshops (KZN, Eastern Cape, Western Cape) Prepare Status Report	15 10
<i>Sub-total Task 1</i>		72
Task 2: Preparation of guidance and course materials		
October 2005	Prepare guidance and course materials Draft invitations and list of invitees Send out invitations	25 Admin Admin
<i>Sub-total Task 2</i>		25
Task 3: Course presentation		
November 2005	National DEAT training course Western Cape training course	10 10
February 2006	Gauteng training course Mpumalanga training course	12 12
March 2006	Eastern Cape training course	12
<i>Sub-total Task3</i>		56
TOTAL person-days (Phase 1a)		72

April-May 2006	Prepare and submit work plan and budget for Year 2 (Phases 1b and 2a)	
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7 COST ESTIMATE

The budget is described above is presented in the attached table. The cost of Tasks 1, 2 and 3 is estimated as being US\$102,000, while the cost of the Project Manager and administration officer will be US\$35,000, giving a grand total for Year 1 of US\$137,000. This excludes all taxes. The terms of payment are still to be finalised.
