

# Protected areas

Cornerstones of biodiversity conservation

## Goal 3.5: To strengthen communication, education and public awareness

**Target:** By 2008 public awareness, understanding and appreciation of the importance and benefits of protected areas is significantly increased.

### Suggested activities of the Parties

3.5.1 Establish or strengthen strategies and programmes of education and public awareness on the importance of protected areas in terms of their role in biodiversity conservation and sustainable socio-economic development, in close collaboration with the Communication, Education and Public Awareness Initiative (CEPA) under the Convention on Biological Diversity and targeted towards all stakeholders.

3.5.2 Identify core themes for education, awareness and communication programmes relevant to protected areas, including *inter alia* their contribution to economy and culture to achieve specific end results such as compliance by resource users and other stakeholders or an increased understanding of science-based knowledge by indigenous and local communities and policy makers and an increased understanding of the needs, priorities and value of indigenous and local communities' knowledge, innovations and practices by Governments, non-Governmental organizations and other relevant stakeholders.

3.5.3 Strengthen, and where necessary, establish information mechanisms directed at target groups such as the private sector, policy makers, development institutions, community-based organizations, the youth, the media, and the general public.

3.5.4 Develop mechanisms for constructive dialogue and exchange of information and experiences among protected-area managers, and between protected area managers and indigenous and local communities and their organizations and other environment educators and actors.

3.5.5 Incorporate the subject of protected areas as an integral component of the school curricula as well as in informal education.

3.5.6 Establish mechanism and evaluate the impacts of communication, education and public awareness programmes on biodiversity conservation to ensure that they improve public awareness, change behaviour and support the achievement of protected area objectives.

### Suggested supporting activities of the Executive Secretary

3.5.7 Collaborate with IUCN and other relevant organizations to collect and disseminate educational tools and materials for adaptation and use in the promotion of protected areas as an important means of achieving the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

3.5.8 Establish, in collaboration with the IUCN and other relevant partners, an initiative to engage the global news and entertainment industry (television, film, popular music, internet, etc.) in a global campaign to raise awareness of the consequences of biological diversity loss and the important role of protected areas in biodiversity conservation.

### Learn more about Goal 3.5:

#### Key activities include:

- Establish education and public awareness programmes, focusing on their role in biodiversity conservation and sustainable development
- Identify core themes for education, awareness and communication programmes, including their contribution to economy and culture
- Strengthen and/or establish information mechanisms directed at target groups
- Develop mechanisms for dialogue and information exchange among protected area managers and with local communities
- Incorporate protected areas as an integral component of school curricula
- Establish mechanisms to evaluate the impacts of communication, education and public awareness programmes

### **What is protected area communication, education and public awareness?**

Protected area communication, education and public awareness are all aspects of engaging relevant stakeholders in a dialogue about the values, resources, benefits, management objectives and management activities of a protected area. The potential range of topics of communication programmes can be very broad. Some examples include: a programme aimed at plant nurseries to reduce the sale of invasive alien species and at boat users to ensure they are not spreading aquatic invasive species; a programme aimed at hikers about the ecological sensitivity of certain areas, such as wetlands and alpine meadows; and a programme aimed at policy makers about the value of protected areas in enabling climate change adaptation and in maintaining ecosystem services.

### **What are some mechanisms for dialogue and information exchange?**

There are many potential mechanisms for fostering dialogue and information exchange between protected areas and local communities. Public meetings can help community members better understanding the protected area, and key management issues, as well as help protected area staff understand how communities use, value and perceive the protected area. Partnerships with schools to conduct educational field trips, with universities to conduct ecological and social research, and with local businesses to conduct feasibility studies on ecotourism opportunities, can also help foster dialogue and information exchange.

### **What kind of mechanisms can evaluate the impacts of communication, education and public awareness programmes?**

Communication, education and public awareness programmes should have clear goals and objectives. In evaluating the impacts of these programmes, protected area managers can assess both programme *outputs* (e.g., how many meetings were held, how many people attended), and programme *outcomes* – whether or not the specific goals and objectives of the programme were achieved. They can do so using traditional social science methods, such as surveys, questionnaires, interviews, opinion polls and focus group discussions.

### **What are some key documents that can help in the implementation of Goal 3.5?**

Resources on protected area communication, education and public awareness can be found at: <http://www.cbd.int/protected/tools/>