

# Assessment of Education Components in Grants Projects in Africa

**IUCN NL Small Grants Programmes  
Knowledge Management Series**

**Number 4**

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**IUCN NL** ([www.iucn.nl](http://www.iucn.nl))

The IUCN National Committee of the Netherlands (IUCN NL) was founded in 1983 as a platform of the Dutch member organizations of IUCN, and the Dutch members of the six Commissions. The IUCN NL office is based in Amsterdam and employs almost thirty staff, making it the largest IUCN National Committee office. Since 1994, IUCN NL has managed several small grants funds for NGOs in the South that work on the linkages between ecosystem and biodiversity management and the livelihoods of rural communities.

The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect those of IUCN or IUCN National Committee of the Netherlands.

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## 1. Introduction

Many project proposals that have been submitted to the Grants Programmes<sup>1</sup> of IUCN NL since 1994 contained an education component. Some proposals concentrated on education per se, but the majority of the proposals had a more 'technical' character focusing on natural resource management, poverty reduction or ecosystem conservation, with education as an integrated strategic component.

Over the years IUCN NL has assessed dozens of proposals and projects on the quality of education as one of the strategies. A first and rough analysis of a number of project proposals and activities from West (and sometimes Central) Africa shed light on a number of general characteristics (see checklist in Annex 1). Two constraints in particular emerged from those assessments:

1. the description and use of education activities were not always consistent with the real nature of education; education is a learning *process* while educational issues in the proposals and projects were often expressed in terms of *materials* without a plan how to use them.
2. the planning and execution of education activities was not always relevant to the objectives of the project, and the results of proposed education activities were often not well connected to other project activities but stood more or less by themselves.

The original design of this study was as follows. Some 50 projects in West and Central Africa that had been submitted to and funded by IUCN NL would be scanned according to the checklist in Annex 1. After this step a more detailed in-depth analysis of 15 projects would follow. The study was carried out by an MSc student<sup>2</sup> from Wageningen University, under supervision of the editor of this paper and a staff member from IUCN NL. In reality, the study only consisted of an in-depth analysis of 21 projects, most of which from West and Central Africa. The work of the student was taken as the basis for this paper, followed by considerable editing to enhance its readability and accessibility; some new text elements were added by the editor.

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<sup>1</sup> TRP=Tropical Rainforest Programme, DAS=programme for Dry And Sub humid areas, SWP=Small grants for Wetlands Programme, EGP=Ecosystem Grants Programme.

<sup>2</sup> Julia Ouallet, 2010. Quick scan of Western and Central African projects linked to environmental education. Draft report. Unpublished.

## 2. Main lessons

This study has shown that education, as part of an overall strategy to achieve project goals, was not yet easy to handle for most of those responsible for such projects. That applies to both partner NGOs in the African regions concerned and to IUCN NL itself.

Outcomes of education activities were quite difficult to grasp as so many factors determine human behaviour. In other words: was it the contribution of the learning process that made people change their behaviour or was this due to other external and maybe non-identifiable factors? Nevertheless, education as the '*deliberate organization and guidance of learning processes*<sup>3</sup>' is indispensable in *any* project which proposes changes in knowledge, skills or attitudes of people, alongside with goals as the alleviation of poverty and a better quality of the environment.

Looking specifically at the partner organizations in Africa, the main lesson seems to be that many projects lacked the knowledge and skills about how to integrate the (intended) outcomes of education processes in the mainstream of the project of which they are part. And secondly, those responsible for the education component of a project should also better understand the procedures along which to select activities: their nature, their possible results, and their target groups. This lesson could be dealt with in a course for which a knowledgeable training consultant may be hired. The financing of such training courses should be part of the overall project costs.

Turning to IUCN NL, something similar applies to those responsible for assessing the quality of education proposals. There seems to be room for strengthening the expertise of IUCN NL staff in monitoring changes in human behaviour in relation to the environment and in assessing the specific role, set-up and results of education activities.

Training of those staff could take two forms:

- a. training about the principles of (environmental) education – formal and non-formal, given by a local service for environmental education in the Netherlands.
- b. training on the assessment of the role, organization and impact of education activities in projects in developing countries.

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<sup>3</sup> See chapter 3 for an explanation of this definition of education.

### 3. Research methodology

#### Introduction

Education can be defined as the '*deliberate organization and guidance of learning processes*<sup>4</sup>'. That means that formal (in schools) and non-formal (in community development) education are planned and organised activities to help people acquire knowledge and skills, adopt values and prepare to act, in one's personal life, and/or in social or institutional settings. In this respect education differs from other kinds of communication, in that it:

- meets specific learning needs of persons
- helps persons to take a stand in an issue and choose one's own position
- has a perspective for a person's own actions.

The kind of education IUCN NL is interested in, is environmental education (or education for sustainable development) as one of the strategies to help achieve a sound balance between biodiversity conservation, sociocultural values and the sustainable use of natural resources in complex rural situations.

Many project proposals received by IUCN NL are area- or region-specific. They are often designed to improve the balance between social, cultural, economic and ecological issues, and/or are designed to safeguard nature and biodiversity directly. In most cases education serves as a method, activity or strategy to enhance the social acceptance of (technical) measures that are taken by the project.

Sustaining agreed measures for conservation and/or wise use of biological resources in the long term is not achieved automatically: it requires a permanent level of building awareness, knowledge, (change of) attitudes and decision making by the community. Ongoing investments in educational efforts are vital to this process.

#### Selection of projects

As a first step in this study, 50 projects related to environmental education in West and Central Africa were selected from a long-list. Projects were selected according to four criteria:

- **geographic distribution:** the idea was to integrate in the analysis as many countries as possible.
- **target groups:** the primary focus is on non-formal education and, to a smaller extent, on formal education.
- **relevance:** the extent to which environmental education could contribute to achieving the objectives of the project.
- **ecosystems:** projects were selected from all three ecosystem-based grants funds.

The period covered by the sample of projects ranges from 1998 to 2007, concentrated around 2005. From these 50 projects, 21 were analysed more closely.

#### Method of review

The projects have been analysed from three different angles:

1. Problem analysis and relevance of environmental education (proposal phase: what they suggested to do).
2. Implementation of environmental education activities (execution phase: what they actually did).
3. Results and impact of environmental education activities (results + effects phase: what they achieved).

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<sup>4</sup> Prof. J.C. Smyth (IUCN Commission on Education and Communication), pers. comm. 2004.

Region	Country	N and % projects	IUCN NL Grants Program			# Partner NGOs
			TRP	SWP	DAS	
West Africa (28%)	Benin	6 (28%)	2	1	3	3
Central Africa (62%)	Burundi	2 (10%)	2			1
	Cameroon	5 (24%)	2	1	2	5
	Rep. Congo	2 (10%)	2			2
	DR Congo	3 (14%)	3			3
	Gabon	1 (5%)	1			1
East Africa (10%)	Kenya	2 (10%)	2			2
Total		21 (100%)	14 (66%)	2 (10%)	5 (24%)	17

*Table 1: Basic data on projects selected for the analysis.*

Annex 2 has more details of the projects that were studied.

The details of the analytical approach can be found in the original document<sup>5</sup>; the current report summarizes the issues that were taken into account during the analysis.

The assignment was based on secondary data found mainly in hard copies of project proposals (final or draft), technical and financial progress and evaluation reports and other documents, retrieved from the IUCN NL archives. For some cases, electronic files were used to complete files or add substantive information.

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<sup>5</sup> This document can be ordered from the editor (bronmaas@gmail.com).



## **4. Problem analysis of projects**

### **4.1 Problem description**

Out of the 21 analyzed proposals, one third was assessed as 'weak' (6 projects) with regard to the problem description, another third as 'intermediary' (6 projects) and another third as 'strong' (8 projects). For two projects, it was impossible to assess the proposal as they could not be traced in the archives. Projects show a huge variation in the framing of problem descriptions.

#### **Causes and potential effects**

In most project proposals, causes of environmental problems are mainly explained by human factors such as 'shifting cultivation', 'timber extraction' or 'poverty', without area-specific data. In most cases lack of knowledge or insight into the underlying causes of environmental degradation are seen as direct problems. A few proposals describe natural phenomena as potential causes of environmental problems.

Cause-effect relationships are often simplistic: it is suggested that one cause generates one effect (i.e. generally ecological degradation), which does not take into account the complexities of causal relations. Only a few projects describe problems by integrating different scales (i.e. global, regional, and local) from which causes may originate. Except when projects built on earlier phases, the perspectives of the realities of the beneficiaries were usually only described in very general terms, with little reflection on the specific context of the project area.

#### **Social, political and economic aspects**

Project descriptions are often too limited to fully understand the potential causes of conflicts of interest in environmental problems.

In almost every proposal the NGO partner puts emphasis on building upon the list of previous projects conducted with IUCN funds or other donors' funds. However, relevant elements and results from these previous projects are rarely mentioned.

Proposals are often limited to descriptions of environmental problems and their causes while rarely, or too little, attention is paid to the context of what already exists in terms of social and political infrastructure. Relevant questions, e.g., could be:

- Which are existing and relevant informal or formal institutions?
- Which are local authorities' decision-making procedures related to the environment?
- Who are the formal and informal leaders?
- What are main constraints for people to participate in environmental decision making?
- What communication channels already exist?

When in one project 'civil war' was indicated as a cause of environmental problems, an effort had been made to describe the socio-political context. In most other cases, however, those aspects are missing but are crucial to understand complex realities in the project area. Such complexities are not only decisive for the method of (public) education but also determine to a certain extent the themes in education. Finally, in most of the proposals existing measures and activities in the field of environmental management were mentioned, but not in environmental education. Thus it would be difficult for a project to build on what already existed.

#### **Target groups**

Only a few projects had been designed after a diagnosis of work, structure and relationships of relevant target groups and key actors (apart from the submitting NGO itself). This, however, will strongly direct the issues and methods in the project as a whole; and thus for education as

part of it. And even in the rare cases where such diagnoses were made, they were not participatory and usually did not take into account the perspectives, worldviews and concepts of the beneficiaries.

Thus, except for some cases, target groups were not described very specifically and were not linked very well to objectives or activities as planned in the project. For formal education activities, 'youth' or schoolchildren were often taken as target groups. However, no indications were given on how the NGOs used sampling methods to select target groups: which children do they talk about? What gender ratio? What ethnic background?

#### **Recommendations on problem description**

1. In IUCN NL project guidelines to NGO partners with which IUCN is working for the very first time, attention should be paid to ways how to make a proper relevant analysis of environmental problems in the project proposal. This should include key social, political and economic issues of the project area, and a rationale for environmental education as a strategy to address the issues and their causes.
2. In order to make a proper analysis of problems in a project description, it is advised that IUCN NL sets aside some budget for a 'trial-and-error' project with those NGO partners which have trouble in framing such problems. For instance, in the case with Nature Tropicale in Benin this has proven useful.
3. In the analysis it should also become clear which are the relevant key actors for the project, and what will be expected from them. This is needed to lay a sound basis for educational work during project implementation.

#### **4.2 Project goal and objectives**

In half of the projects, goal and objectives were mentioned without any explanation and relevant links with problems they were expected to address. Usually, NGO partners presented a logical framework, but without concrete plans how to use it properly. As terminology is often overlapping, it showed no sequences or progress of a project. Expected results as well as indicators to measure or determine progress towards achieving these results and means of verification were rarely presented. Thus, capacity building of NGO partners on how to understand and to use a logical framework would be more than welcome, if only as an instrument to reflect critically on (the description of) their own proposals.

#### **Recommendations on project goal and objectives**

1. Putting goal and objectives into words is probably one of the most difficult things in developing a project as it requires considerable analytical skills. NGO partners should be trained in that sense by skilled organizations or experts.
2. IUCN NL is advised to set aside funds for such capacity building in future grants programs.

#### **4.3 Relevance in the choice of education activities**

Very few project descriptions addressed the *relevance* of an education activity for the project, once it has been selected. Besides, education is rarely viewed as a process but more as a (material) instrument, or a tool of communication; therefore, a methodology on how to practise it is usually absent. In Benin, as an example, Benin Nature wanted to take leadership in implementing activities related to a national environmental education strategy because 'the lack of such strategy' is a cause of poverty and degradation of forested areas in Benin. In the two projects aiming at the delivery of such a strategy to the minister responsible for

education, the proposed tools were information awareness, cooperation between (conservation) professionals and NGOs, and information sharing during visits, but not *educational* activities at all.

Furthermore, the various potential contributions to the project of 'non-formal education' (education not related to schools – for the public), let alone 'informal education' (unintended learning – television, friends, 'the street', etc.) was never explicitly brought up. Education in the projects was exclusively *described* in terms of formal education: only dedicated to teachers and children at school. In the next chapters, however, we will see that *in practice* much has been done to make non-formal education contribute to achieving the goals of projects.

In five projects an interesting combination was the integration of income generation activities (based on sustainable practices such as agroforestry, beekeeping, snail domestication, etc.) and environmental education activities. Usually, such income generation activities are practice-oriented in order to enable user groups to more easily change over towards more sustainable sources of income. Such education practices are also incentives for people to participate in more thorough training activities.

The Kipepeo project in Kenya is a good example of integration between ecotourism activities (income generation) and education programmes for schools. Taking the butterfly as an icon and a focal point, the project established 'links' around that animal by addressing different groups of people which influence its life cycle: children, farmers, civilians, tourists, etc.

#### **Recommendations on relevance in the choice of education activities**

1. It is crucial for NGO staff involved in the formulation of projects to really check the relevance of proposed education activities for their contribution to the achievement of the project goals. In this way they can better judge to what extent an activity adds value to other measures.
2. Combining non-formal and formal education usually has positive effects on the level of commitment of a community to issues related to environment and livelihood. Those involved in defining activities for these target groups might complement their expertise by being trained how to apply such a methodology in practice.
3. Education strategies, meant as activities within projects, are best carried out by project collaborators by focusing on specific ecological topics of a local nature (e.g. butterflies, bees, wildlife, forest, etc.) and combining them with development issues. They should also be designed in such a way that they fit well in the various phases of a project. This means in practice that they may differ considerably in those phases.

## **5. Project implementation**

For the assessment of this stage, many criteria were taken into consideration, which follow below. Nine projects have been assessed as 'weak', eight as 'intermediary' and one project as 'strong'. Three projects showed a very mixed picture and were hard to assess. Assessment of the 21 projects indicates how difficult it is to select convincing activities for the proposals. The focus of the descriptions below is on environmental education activities.

### **5.1 Target groups**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, identifying target groups for the activities is not specific enough in most cases. This is especially important for assessing the intended results of activities and of the project as a whole. In some cases activities were organised with staff of the NGO partner as the target group; examples are Potal Men in Benin, PAL in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Alliance Nationale pour la Nature (ANN) in the Republic of Congo (Brazzaville).

### **5.2 Educational methods and tools**

In the majority of projects, as was concluded earlier, target groups, objectives and expected effects (results) of environmental education activities were rarely described in proper, distinguishing terms. In most cases, only some process objectives were described and linked to indicators. In the original draft of the current research report a distinction was made between 'products' and 'sensu stricto categories of educational activities', as proposed by Stokking et al.<sup>6</sup>. And a broad interpretation of environmental education, including communication aspects, has been used. Each category of environmental education activities as proposed in the 21 proposals is briefly analysed below.

#### **Promotion / media coverage**

This category of environmental educational activities has been found in 7 projects. In all these cases journalists and public media were targeted as intermediaries to promote or cover the changes expected by implementing the project. They were usually asked to visit the project area and to write articles about them. Field excursions, lectures and consultative meetings were used as instruments. Journalists themselves never participated in hands-on trainings on sustainable techniques. In one project, in Kenya, tour operators were the target group of promotion activities. Some promotion activities delivered products such as flyers and brochures, i.e. printed media. Electronic media have been mentioned in one project but in practice they were never used. Mass media were also used for promotion when NGO staff directly spoke on radios, as was the case with a project enhancing the integrated management and conservation of wetlands in the Republic of Congo (Brazzaville).

In most cases, no information was given on the promotion channels that were already available, nor on the specific goals or content of communication products. In that sense, many activities were purely instrumental and it may be questioned whether they contributed to the achievement of project objectives.

#### **Information campaigns / awareness raising**

All projects investigated included some information and awareness raising activities. These activities were very diverse: from organising consultations with officials and local people to sharing information, and informing the public by mass media campaigns, using radio and

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<sup>6</sup> Stokking, K., van Aert, L., Meijberg, W., Kaskens, A. (1999). Evaluating Environmental Education. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, U.K.

television. Nine projects produced typical information campaign materials like magazines, flyers, brochures, posters, videos and audio tapes, directed at a large public. Videos and audio tapes are usually used for broadcasts on national television and radio channels. Details on specific target groups for these activities and products were often scarce. Descriptions of products could have been more precise on aspects like format, frequency of broadcasting or use, extent to which existing communication channels were used and relevance to the target groups. In other words, activities and products were described in an instrumental, not very result-oriented manner.

Fourteen projects included awareness raising activities dedicated to more specific target groups within the general public, making use of intermediaries like local authorities, experts in environmental education, officials, or beneficiaries of the project. Tools used to share knowledge and information, were: workshops, consultative meetings, observation walks in the field with people, local exchanges and visits. Some projects developed creative activities very well linked to African culture such as public sport games or tree planting, in close cooperation with public institutions, such as churches. In one project, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, rural meetings were organized for information sharing and theatre acts, which are a very popular tool in Africa. Furthermore, many activities were focused on the production of new materials without taking into account what already existed and could have been relevant to the project.

### **Formal education**

Fifteen projects dealt with formal education: project activities directed at teachers as intermediaries or at school children as the target group. Indirectly, parents of the children were reached as well, but this was rarely mentioned explicitly. Usually, both primary and secondary schools were involved. Higher (tertiary) education levels were not dealt with in any project. Target groups within the school population were generally vaguely described in terms of gender and ethnic origin; this is surprising as the design of educational activities in Africa usually cannot ignore these features. Furthermore, there have been cases where one teacher had 50-100 children in one class, that there was very little learning material and that the distance between home and school was very long. Under such conditions, conducting proper education activities for school children is a true challenge. It could also be noted that the quality of formal education activities within the projects was very diverse. Such challenging conditions sometimes raised questions about the achievement of the project goals.

Education activities aimed at school children can be school-based (in-school or around them) or take place outside the school context. In the first group, activities were based on the formal – often unidirectional – transfer of knowledge on different thematic modules, games, writing essays, holding interviews, trainings around schools (i.e. tree planting, gardening at schools, managing nurseries, etc.). Teachers and children were targeted at the same time, making no distinction in their position. Didactic materials used for lectures or trainings were often produced by the NGO partner and distributed to children. Except for a few projects, clear objectives were missing, and the frequency and content of those activities, lectures and trainings were not well specified. Other unanswered questions were if children proposed topics, how activities were linked with national environmental curricula or curricula that already existed in neighbouring countries, and which balance existed between interactive learning processes and top-down knowledge transfer. This kind of information is needed to be able to assess the relevance and effects of formal education activities.

Outside activities consisted of excursions, open exchanges with traditional leaders or civilians, visits to environmental education centres (lectures, use of libraries, etc.) and exchanges between schools. Similar questions could be asked about frequency, time, target group, the validity of tools. One of the exceptions was ANN in the Republic of Congo (Brazzaville), which set up a centre where everybody (also children) could have access to information on the Lefini Reserve and Zoo Park. In the ANN projects, details were given on content and different approaches to specific target groups: teachers, children, general public, etc. In most proposals, however, the description of tools and activities was the same, whether teachers or children were targeted. In other words, similar tools were used: excursions, local exchanges

with traditional people, etc. In most cases, no explanation was given why the same instruments were used for such different target groups.

Six projects dealt with the creation of environmental or nature clubs at schools. In none of these cases details were provided on: (i) the status of these clubs, (ii) their goals and activities, (iii) to what extent they promoted environmental education, (iv) by what criteria members were selected, (v) to what extent new clubs were integrated with already existing clubs or groups. This scarcity of information made it difficult to understand the relevance of creating new groups. Finally, the link between activities of environmental clubs and the school curriculum was confusing or missing: did activities take place during or outside the school schedule? Could club leaders influence the selection of topics to be dealt with during lessons? These questions were not addressed in any of the proposals.

### Non-formal education

Non-formal environmental education activities were directed at local people outside the sphere of schools. Eight projects dealt with non-formal education to natural resource user groups: cooperatives, local associations, etc. These user groups had been created to help achieve the project purpose, though proposals often had limited information about the reasons why these groups were selected and under which conditions they participated. Methods and tools used in these non-formal education activities were the same as those used in schools: lectures, trainings on practice, visits to centres and to different places for local exchanges, etc. In comparison with formal education, focus was put more on learning-by-doing as these non-formal user groups were more interested in applying knowledge and methods during income generation activities. The content of education activities was generally weak and it was often not clear to what extent other relevant aspects were taken into account, such as the need to use vernacular language in educational materials.

<i>Category</i>	<i>Target groups</i>	<i>Intermediaries</i>	<i>Products</i>	<i>Methods/activities</i>	<i>Intended results</i>
1. Promotion / media coverage	General public	Journalists	Flyers, brochures, articles	Field excursions, lectures and consultative meetings	Agenda setting, enhanced knowledge
2. Information campaigns, awareness raising	(Sections of) general public	Community development organizations, authorities, experts,	Magazines, flyers, brochures, posters, videos, audio tapes	Meetings with officials and public, radio and tv, local exchanges, workshops, visits, observation walks, art and sportive manifestations, planting	Awareness raising, enhanced knowledge, forming an attitude
3. Formal education	Pupils of primary and secondary schools	Teachers, school management, NGO (partner), traditional leaders	Didactic material (from NGO), magazines	In school: transfer of knowledge on different thematic modules, games, writing essays, holding interviews, trainings around schools  Outside school: excursions, open exchanges with traditional leaders or civilians, visits to environmental education centres, exchanges between schools	Enhanced knowledge, forming an attitude, environmental club
4. Non-formal education	General public, users of natural resources	Cooperatives, local associations	Didactic and promotion materials	Lectures, trainings on practice, visits to centres and to different places for local exchanges (learning by experience)	Forming an attitude, change of behaviour

Table 2: Summary of characteristics of four categories of educational activities.

### **5.3 Participation aspects**

The project proposals and reports showed that the degree of participation of beneficiaries in education activities varies. In three projects requests from children were quoted as the reason why the NGO partner proposed one or two activities. For instance, in Benin, Benin Nature was in charge of producing and distributing the Woutoutou magazine to primary schools. Children reacted positively to the information provided in this magazine and used it for their own discussions. They also wanted to build a centre for environmental education which was a point of departure for a first project with a grant from IUCN NL.

In projects carried out by ANN in the Republic of Congo (Brazzaville), the focus was put on producing relevant materials based on topics selected by children themselves: they were asked to propose topics to teachers on which they want to develop their knowledge. Those topics were sent to an NGO partner in charge of publishing the Araignée magazine. Children now participate in the process of generating knowledge and exchange with teachers and NGO partners: they are empowered in the process of teaching. However, only a few projects emphasized such efforts to promote bottom-up approaches on schools. Maybe others did; but proposals and reports were not clear about that aspect. In a project in the Democratic Republic of Congo, children had been asked to fill in a questionnaire with their parents and relatives on sustainable practices at home. It was a competition between children and the winner received an award. In that example, the creativity of children is emphasized and intergenerational links contribute to share and create knowledge. Afterwards, the results of those questionnaires had been discussed in school classes. These are only examples of creative activities found in African projects to promote a more bottom-up, democratic, approach to teaching and learning processes. There is a very creative cultural potential to be used.

One of those more general activities was the organization of training sessions for user groups on specific sustainable techniques such as agroforestry, hearth cooking, sugar cane growing or snail domestication. The focus is on learning about the sustainable use of natural resources by acquiring practical skills, thus functioning as an educational activity. Top-down approaches are limited. Those activities are concretely linked to livelihood development and poverty alleviation. While their objectives and methodologies are very positive, it appears from the study that the description of such activities in the project proposal usually lacks a tangible input from participants and is weak in terms of intended results.

#### **Recommendations on project implementation**

1. Concrete efforts need to be made to relate specific target groups to the objectives of an activity. A clear distinction between primary and secondary target groups needs to be followed by a description of the activities intended. These should not overlap and be consistent with goal and objectives of the project.
1. A large part of the proposals and reports is dedicated to the description of activities. Many descriptions, however, are not adequately formulated which makes interpretation difficult, let alone the proper assessment of their relevance and effects. It is suggested that more attention is given to what kind of achievements activities really should lead to.
2. Increased participation of target groups in the proposal phase of a project generally needs to be enhanced in order to make tools and instruments operational.
3. Prior to implementing new proposals, an assessment of available materials, programmes and structures in local schools (for example school libraries, environmental clubs), and local or regional education centres is required.

4. Activities are opportunities to establish or enhance cooperation with relevant existing networks, authorities and partners. This can be much improved by requesting applicants to describe their efforts and results in this respect.
5. Some projects consisted of too many activities of which the relevance was not always clear. In order to overcome this, NGOs may zoom in more strongly on participatory and demand-driven activities which do directly contribute to the achievement of the project goals.
7. Efforts to describe process objectives (related to activities) are useful but 'effect objectives' are crucial in achieving project goals. Leaving the latter out may cause the risk of investing funds into materials or creating new environmental clubs without ensuring their follow-up.



## 6. Results of education activities

### 6.1 Effects of education activities

#### Outputs

The frequent lack of criteria for the contribution that education activities should make towards the achievement of project goals makes it almost impossible to assess the effects of these activities. Reporting is dominated by figures (like attendance of meetings, copies distributed), without analysis of the quality of education activities they refer to (see also under 'Evaluation of projects' below). Nearly all projects mention some means of verification of their output in their reports, but these means often differ from the ones which were identified earlier, in the proposal.

#### Outcomes and sustainability

All projects report that gaining knowledge and/or changes in attitudes or behaviour by target groups as a result of the project have been achieved properly. However, reporting staff usually did not realise the potential power of building partnerships (regionalisation, mixing competencies of people from other NGOs, etc.) to perpetuate and practice acquired skills in such fields. Just a few projects use already existing skills and competencies from other organizations.

Most projects try to reach, at different levels of participation, local authorities to increase their awareness of the project and to make them co-responsible for the success as well, as a warranty for sustainability. But, as there is a continuous problem of dependency on external funding, follow-up activities are often weak or non-existent. Only a third of the projects investigated combine educational activities with incentives for income generation activities that can provide a certain level of continuity. Finally, the development of public demand for follow-up activities may also be a good way to make education activities more sustainable. Communication without this specific pressure element may only help to some extent. If a combination with development strategies is realised, however, success might be greater (e.g. the Kipepeo project in Kenya).

#### Recommendations on the effects of education activities

1. Educational output of a project, as the direct results of a project should be followed by those activities that allow for the achievement of *intended* outcomes (= lasting effects).
2. NGOs may make better use of skills, expertise and competencies of other organizations, in their own country or even abroad. The multiple effects resulting from such cooperation may lay a more solid foundation for lasting project results. This is also true for cooperation with governments.
3. In order to achieve greater continuity in projects, income generating activities may become part of projects. The same applies to making use of public demand for follow-up activities.

### 6.2 Evaluation of projects

In general, indicators for the evaluation of educational activities are not expressed in project proposals. Some projects take into account gender considerations by mentioning the gender ratio in absolute figures (and, again, not mentioning their actual influence). Indicators mainly deal with 'products' (i.e. numbers of magazines, units to be produced, number of TV shows,

number of audio tapes, number of persons in an audience, etc.) whereas 'effects' in terms of changes in skills, values (towards an issue) or behavioural changes are not considered. Just two projects mentioned an attitudinal survey and school presentations as a means of verification at the outcome level.

#### **Recommendations on the evaluation of projects**

1. NGO staff of most projects that were reviewed does not have a solid idea about how to evaluate environmental education activities. A first step could be to safeguard some funds for capacity building of NGO staff in the field of evaluation – within the project itself. Colleague NGOs which are already skilled in this field could become peer reviewers.
2. As a basis for capacity building, it is advised to use available methodologies such as the IUCN study by Stokking et al. (see summary table<sup>7</sup> in Annex 3) who provided a methodology in thirteen steps for assessing environmental education progress during all project phases.
3. Absolute numbers need to be seen as a relative source of information when one deals with educational activities. They say little about understanding an issue, nor about results or impact. This is why they should be accompanied by more qualitative information.

### **6.3 IUCN NL's selection of proposals**

General conclusions based on only 21 projects that were geographically and culturally spread over large areas, is not easy. Therefore, commenting on procedural aspects of proposal evaluation in the Netherlands is just as complicated.

In some cases, IUCN NL funded projects with badly written proposals, or projects that were not consistent enough or seemed to be irrelevant for addressing environmental problems identified in that area. With a small budget of, say, € 5000, a number of persons could benefit from well-designed training moments (workshops, courses, training sessions, hands-on practice). These could improve their capacity and competencies in project management from the beginning (formulation, preparation, logistics, etc.) to the end (execution, monitoring, evaluation, etc.).

On the other hand, NGOs need some space for flexibility and unorthodox solutions. But it appeared that, after two or three previous experiences with IUCN NL, some NGOs still did not have the capacity to manage projects properly and, in particular, to assess the project itself and to report results adequately. For instance, this was the case in a West African project which aimed to address environmental education nationally but did not even master the procedures of project formulation, after five years of collaboration. These observations lead us to some recommendations to IUCN NL staff.

#### **Recommendations on IUCN NL's selection of proposals**

1. Most of the projects could have been better implemented if two steps in the process would have been added: one dealing with capacity building of the NGO specifically and one with how to carry out the activities with the beneficiaries as proposed in the project.
2. Project managers of IUCN NL are advised to look more closely at the alignment of projects and previous outcomes of projects or experiences with NGOs to better assess the level of requirements for new proposals. Thereby making use of a checklist on how to assess project proposals is for them just as important as it is for partner NGOs.

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<sup>7</sup> Complete report is available from the editor (bronmaas@gmail.com).

# Annex 1

## Summarised checklist for the assessment of project proposals

Chris Maas Geesteranus  
2 March 2007

### Use of this checklist

The checklist below should be considered as a global guideline, it is not exhaustive. It may be used by IUCN NL staff to check the quality of educational aspects as they may appear in the (pre-) proposals within EGP. A more exhaustive checklist will be produced in due time for organizations which will submit proposals; that version might also be used for monitoring and evaluation objectives by IUCN NL itself.

#### Introduction

Education is the '*deliberate organization and guidance of learning processes*'. That means that formal (in schools) and non-formal (community development) education are planned and organised activities to help people acquire knowledge, adopt values and prepare decisions for acting, in one's personal life, and/or in social or institutional settings. In this respect education differs from many other kinds of communication, in that it:

- meets specific learning needs of persons
- helps persons to take a stand in an issue and choose one's own position
- has a perspective for the person's own acting.

The kind of education IUCN NL is interested in, is **environmental education** or **education for sustainable development** as a support mechanism for biodiversity conservation and its sustainable use.

Many projects received by IUCN NL are area- or region specific. They are often designed to develop sound balances between social, cultural, economic and ecological issues, and/or are designed to safeguard nature/biodiversity directly. In most of these cases education can serve as a method/activity/strategy to anchor (technical) measures in society that are taken on behalf of the project, whether this will be acknowledged in the original project proposal or not. The explanation is the following. Maintenance of agreed measures in the long term is not achieved automatically: it requires a permanent level of knowledge, change of attitudes and selection of decisions by the community. Ongoing investments in educational efforts are vital to this process.

### Educational checklist for submitting a project

#### **1. A contribution of education to help a project succeed**

- Which problems does the project address; are these problems translated in terms of human activities and/or in terms of management, conservation etc.?
- If (also) the former, which are most relevant?
- Can an educational strategy contribute to the results of the project?
- If so, what?
- On which level has education been described in the project: as a strategy (broad, general) or in specific terms?
- Does the project describe educational activities in terms that seem relevant and tangible?
- Does the description say anything about results to be obtained with education and if so, on which term?

#### **2. How the contents of education are determined**

- Is the issue of the project multifaceted or mono-dimensional?

- Will a straightforward 'conservation' approach satisfy for an educational strategy, or does it require contents which balance conservation with e.g. cultural values, religion, income, sustainable exploitation of natural resources etc.

### **3. How target groups are sought and by whom**

- Who are really involved in the project?
- For whom would an educational approach yield something and are those target groups relevant for the achievement of the project's objectives
- Can the target groups as identified in the project, contribute to achieving the objectives of the project, on the basis of their acquired knowledge, skills, values?
- Are the target groups in the (social) position to influence others?
- Are no important target groups excluded?
- Does government accept the target groups for educational programmes?

### **4. Educational follow-up of educational infrastructure, programmes and material**

- Who or which organization in the area is skilled/certified to organise and guide learning processes?
- Is there a resource facility (for teachers, educators) that they can consult?
- If not, can it be established (e.g. through existing centres of donors)?
- Can programmes and materials, if proposed, be used on a wider scale than that of the project alone?
- Is there a link with local and national government in case of formal education (school-based)?
- Does the educational work of this programme contribute to e.g. curriculum development? If not, can that be realised?
- Have there been made proposals to measure effects of education?
- How can such effects be 'preserved'?

## Annex 2 List of analysed projects

Code	NGO partner	Country	Project title	Grants program	Duration	Location	Budget IUCN NL in €	Additional funding
1AF00083A	Benin Nature	Benin	Creation of an EE Center	TRP	Feb 99 - Apr 01 26 mo.	Lama forest & Bohicon village	53.000 (>>)	Yes (Belgian Coop)
6AF00250A+B	Benin Nature	Benin	EE at Lama forest reserve	TRP	Oct 02 ---Jan 04 4+6 mo.	Holli center & Lama forest	22.000 (>>)	Yes (CBDD)
9AF00333A	Benin Nature	Benin	EE in Benin (phase 1)	DAS	Jun 05 – Sep 05 3 mo.	Holli center & Burkina Faso	15.000 (<)	No
9AF00333B	Benin Nature	Benin	EE in Benin (phase 2)	DAS	Mar 06 – Nov 06 8 mo.	Holli center	24.000 (>)	No
2AF00041A	Nature Tropicale	Benin	Wetland Resources Restoration & Mgt of Ouémé and Mono river basins	SWP	Mar 06 – Nov 06 8 mo.	Ouémé and Mono villages close to rivers	40.000 (>)	Yes (African Biodiv Netwrk)
9AF00332A	Potal men	Benin	Baobab school, educ. progr. In botanical garden Papatia	DAS	Apr 05 – Apr 06 12 mo.	Atakora dept	25.000 (>)	No
1AF00066A	ODEB	Burundi	Protection of Kibira forest	TRP	Jul 00 – May 01 10 mo.	10 villages around Kibira forest		No
6AF00308A	ODEB	Burundi	Advocacy for the restoration of Kibira forest	TRP	Oct 04 – Oct 05 12 mo.	10 villages around Kibira forest	39.000 (>)	No
1AF00058A	CAFER	Cameroon	Sustainable mgt. of natural resources by rural intensification	TRP	Mar 98 – Sep 98 6 mo.	Sangmelima – Mbalmayo		No
6AF00289A	CEHDEV	Cameroon	Conserving biodiversity to create wealth for poverty reduction	TRP	May 04 – Nov 05 18 mo.	Bachou'ntai forest, Manyu division	32.000 (>)	No
2AF00032A	ACEEN	Cameroon	Contribution to the sust. mgt. of the Waza- Logone floodplain	SWP	Feb 05 – Sep 06 19 mo.	Waza-Logone floodplain	78.500 (>>)	No
9AF00355A	CAPEN	Cameroon	Mgt. of bush fires in N Cameroon	DAS	Sep 05 – Oct 06 14 mo.	Mayo-Rey of N Province Bénoué NP & buffer zones)	24.500 (>)	No
2AF00043A	WTG	Cameroon	Sustainable mgt. of the Douala estuary-Lake Ossa	SWP	Dec 05 – Oct 06 10 mo.	Marine and coastal ecological zone	42.000 (>)	Yes (many)
1AF00097A	ANN	Rep Congo	NFEE and FEE	TRP	Sep 98 – Sep 00 24 mo.	Part of Lefini Nature reserve		
6AF00268A	ANN	Rep Congo	Integrated project on EE	TRP	May 04 – Nov 05 18 mo.	Zoo Park, in Lefini Nature reserve	27.000 (>)	No
6AF00204A	PIL	DR Congo	Development of agrarian production	TRP	Aug 01 – Apr 02 8 mo.	S Kivu province, Itombwe Mts.	10.000 (<)	No
6AF00205A	OCEAN	DR Congo	Integrated fight against deforestation in Kisangani	TRP	Aug 01 – Jan 03 17 mo.	Kisangani forest & surroundings	11.000 (<)	No
6AF00253A	PAL	DR Congo	Capacity building 2003-04 in North Kivu	TRP	Mar 03 – Mar 05 24 mo.	N Kivu province	75.000 (>>)	No
6AF00233A	CADDE	Gabon	EE in Combat II	TRP	Nov 02 – Nov 05 36 mo.	FCM	35.000 (>)	No
AF2052	EANHS	Kenya	Linking people, butterflies and trees: outreach for the Kipepeo project	TRP	Oct 96 – Apr 98 18 mo.	Arabuko-Sokoke forest	57.000 (>>)	Co-funding for overall project
1AF00112A	ACK ERC	Kenya	Northern Rift environmental and tropical forest conservation	TRP	Nov 98 – Nov 99 12 mo.	Marakwet & W Pokot districts		No

### Annex 3 Steps in evaluating education activities

Source: Stokking, K., van Aert, L., Meijberg, W., Kaskens, A. (1999). *Evaluating Environmental Education*. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, U.K.

