

 <p>UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA</p>	<p>Business and Biodiversity workshop report</p>
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Business and Biodiversity: Breaking the Boundaries

Report of the workshop on
15 September, 2010



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Executive Summary

This exploratory workshop brought together interested stakeholders for investigating the opportunities and challenges relating to the interface between business and biodiversity - the importance of which has been highlighted explicitly by *inter alia* conventions such as the Convention On Biological Diversity, charters such as the Jakarta Charter on Business and Biodiversity, and research reports such as the TEEB report¹ for business:

“...the economic invisibility of nature’s flows into the economy is a significant contributor to the degradation of ecosystems and the loss of biodiversity. This in turn leads to serious human and economic costs...and will be felt at an accelerating pace if we continue business as usual.”

In recognition of the importance of research and collaboration into this area, the Centre for Responsible Leadership at the University of Pretoria and the Forestry and Agricultural Biotechnology Institute (FABI) wanted to explore the current actions already undertaken by business and other stakeholders in this area. The workshop focus was therefore to obtain stakeholder perspectives on the uniqueness, potential format, as well as value proposition of a platform for hosting collaboration and research in the Southern African context. The workshop was attended by representatives from the Endangered Wildlife Trust, the environmental media, the CSIR, the South African National Biodiversity Institute, Eskom, and the Department of Environmental Affairs, as well as a multidisciplinary group of staff members from the University of Pretoria.

Outcomes of the workshop included the following:

The key differentiator (focus area) of the business and biodiversity initiative came to be seen as ***Thought leadership for a changing paradigm***. Further unpacking of this focus is still required, and developing a business and biodiversity charter was seen as a first step towards defining a common goal.

Main ideas in terms of ‘how’ this focus could be achieved, included 1) **awareness raising and training**, 2) **generating impetus for changes in policy**, and 3) **inter-disciplinary research and collaboration**.

Participants envisaged a one-stop shop (institute) on advisory and expert opinions/services, in which options and approaches (information, best practice, tools, collation) could be provided to business, so that business could adapt as they see fit. There would also have to be targeted science/policy dialogues. In the interest of maintaining effectiveness, participants also highlighted general principles that they considered important on an operational & strategic level, for such a ‘one-stop shop’.

‘Next steps’ included the following:

- Investigate the establishment of an institute for business-biodiversity education and networking
- Engage with business leadership to take on the challenge
- Extended dialogue sessions with better representation

¹ The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) is a global study, initiated by the G8 and five major developing economies and focusing on “the global economic benefit of biological diversity, the costs of the loss of biodiversity and the failure to take protective measures versus the costs of effective conservation”. TEEB makes the case for integrating the economic values of biodiversity and ecosystem services in decision-making. The report can be downloaded from www.teebweb.org.

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1 Background

This exploratory workshop brought together interested stakeholders for investigating the opportunities and challenges relating to the interface between business and biodiversity - the importance of which has been highlighted explicitly by *inter alia* conventions such as the Convention On Biological Diversity, charters such as the Jakarta Charter on Business and Biodiversity, and research reports such as the TEEB report² for business:

“...the economic invisibility of nature’s flows into the economy is a significant contributor to the degradation of ecosystems and the loss of biodiversity. This in turn leads to serious human and economic costs...and will be felt at an accelerating pace if we continue business as usual.”

Another good example of how the importance of this interaction is increasingly recognised, is the forthcoming (October 2010) ministerial dialogue with business CEOs on achieving biodiversity targets, in Nagoya, Japan. This international dialogue session is endorsed *inter alia* by the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Global Environment Facility, and the Japan Business Federation.

In recognition of the importance of research and collaboration into this area, the Centre for Responsible Leadership at the University of Pretoria and the Forestry Agriculture and Biodiversity Institute (FABI) wanted to explore the current actions already undertaken by business and other stakeholders in this area. The workshop focus was therefore to obtain stakeholder perspectives on the uniqueness, potential format, as well as value proposition of a platform for hosting collaboration and research in the Southern African context. The workshop was attended by representatives from the Endangered Wildlife Trust, the environmental media, the CSIR, the South African National Biodiversity Institute, Eskom, and the Department of Environmental Affairs, as well as a multidisciplinary group of staff members from the University of Pretoria.

Section 2 of this report focuses on the outcomes of the workshop (stakeholder perspectives), and looks at the uniqueness of this focus area (section 2.1), and in shaping something new, what should this look like (section 2.2); section 2.3 then looks at the value proposition.

2 Outcomes

This workshop generated many new ideas for going forward on this important and exciting initiative. The following sections highlight outcomes from the Ketso™ felts that were utilised to capture ideas in groups:

2.1 Why? Is this Unique?

This first part of the workshop highlighted many ‘existing assets’ in this focus area, such as SANBI’s programmes with mining and biodiversity, as well as with grasslands (biodiversity, mining, agriculture), the

² The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) is a global study, initiated by the G8 and five major developing economies and focusing on “the global economic benefit of biological diversity, the costs of the loss of biodiversity and the failure to take protective measures versus the costs of effective conservation”. TEEB makes the case for integrating the economic values of biodiversity and ecosystem services in decision-making. The report can be downloaded from www.teebweb.org.

WWF Wine and Biodiversity initiative, the Department of Environmental Affairs' Green Economy Summit (May 2010), the work that James Blignaut (UP) is doing with regard to payment for ecosystem services, and the Business Biodiversity Offsets Programme (BBOP). Other existing assets, highlighted in Figure 1 below, also included NGO/conservation forums and the national biodiversity planning forum.

In the following picture, highlighting a discussion by one of the groups, it is evident how the focus of participants moved on from some of the existing assets (see brown leaves) in this focus area, towards challenges (grey leaves), and eventually new ideas and solutions (green leaves). Challenges mentioned here in this picture, include institutional rivalry, finding a common goal / message, and understanding the level of engagement that is required. These challenges typically had to do with the formulation of a platform for dialogue, and the involvement of different stakeholders in such an initiative. Another related challenge in this regard, included the challenge of 'insularity in disparate fields'. Furthermore, challenges that went hand-in-hand with establishing a dialogue platform, included 'resources and funding', which was seen as a mechanism of influence, and 'champions' to drive the initiative.

Figure 1: ideas around the distinctiveness of the focus area



Wider contextual challenges included: the challenge of a lack of inclusivity in planning, an ad hoc approach in business to incorporating biodiversity concerns into business plans, as well as the challenge of poverty (income disparity), and making business more concerned with poverty alleviation. Other challenges mentioned, included the challenge with mindsets ('bringing to the table the unconverted') – in other words, with regard to industry buy-in, there were perceived conflicts with the profit motive. The following view was expressed regarding perceptions: *"conservation was still perceived to be in the world of the environmental activists"*. With regard to these challenges, views were expressed regarding the adequacy of the existing policy context (e.g. it was argued that current policy does not benefit from a diverse enough knowledge base).

How could some of these challenges be addressed?

Participants felt that there was a need for promoting a response (there was an urgency) – also due to growing international pressure. Due to these challenges mentioned, it was argued that innovations for social or technical changes are required, and inputs for teaching (e.g. in business schools), and it is necessary to address the challenge at various levels (influence top-down and bottom up).

So from an ethical mandate perspective, a gap was identified: while the business and biodiversity focus was not necessarily unique, the area was still not sufficiently explored, and there was a gap for having a platform with an explicit focus on this area (in other words – *“more is better”*). The argument was that in such a broad field, that there would always be gaps and needs:

- *“More teaching and learning”*
- *“Need for greater link between science and business fields”*
- *“Biodiversity needs to be better brought into mainstream reporting”*

While some argued that smaller focus groups needed to be identified in order to get a better outcome, others argued that the focus of such a platform that would make it more distinctive and worthy, would be if it focused on facilitating a change / shift in paradigm (e.g. the way we do business) – such a vision / outcome needs to be identified, and then we can work our way backwards from this vision.

Furthermore, one of the areas of distinction that was highlighted, was that there was a linking role to play:

- the link between biodiversity loss and poverty
- engaging or linking people that would have to form forums and share ideas
- there was a need for understanding linkages (e.g. between business and biodiversity / ecosystem services), and helping businesses to understand the importance of and manage these linkages

Table 1: Other ideas and possible focus areas included:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Responsible reporting. How far back research? ○ WBI should be involved ○ Explore how a paradigm shift might happen ○ Quantifying & linking intangible impacts of wellbeing to business ○ Bring together all learnings in the African context ○ Biodiversity tax rebate ○ Green bonds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wetland banking ○ take green decisions out of consumer hands ○ Consolidate all the knowledge existing with stakeholders ○ how should we get to ...?? ○ Leadership ○ biodiversity IS business ○ Design innovative teaching curricula ○ Voter education ○ Evidence-based approaches
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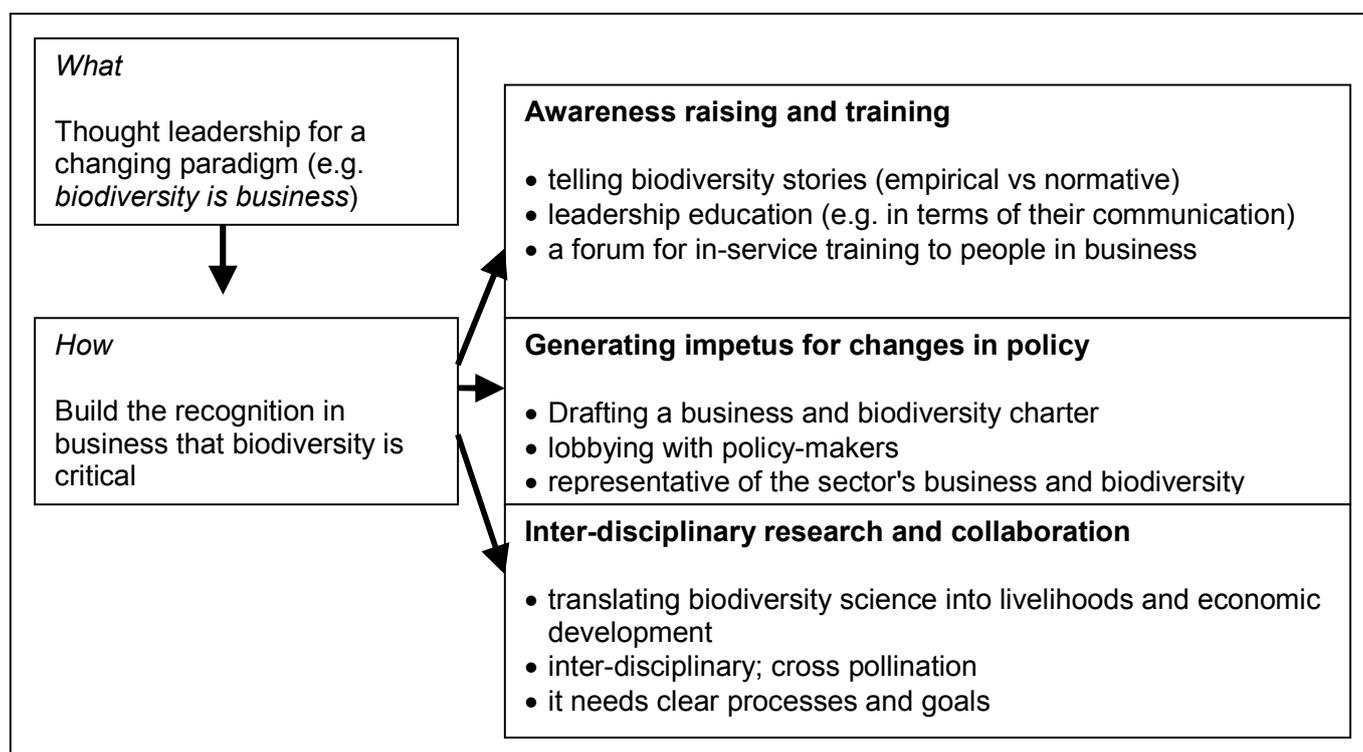
2.2 What does this look like?

Having justified that there was indeed a gap / legitimacy to continue with this focus area, be it from an ethical (urgency) 'more is better' perspective, focusing as platform for educating and facilitating stakeholders on the links between biodiversity and 'business', or whether from a perspective of a gap in knowledge, the next part of the workshop focused on building on this mandate, and conceiving / envisioning what this initiative could look like. The next section highlights themes that emerged from this brainstorming session.

2.2.1 The 'what' and the 'how' of this initiative

The following figure highlights themes that emerged from this brainstorming session.

Figure 2: themes generated during the second brainstorming exercise



The main idea in terms of *what* the initiative should look like, as illustrated in Figure 2 above, was that it should play a thought leadership role for changing the paradigm regarding the way business deals with biodiversity. What does this mean? This is still to be refined. However, as the following quotation from the author's notes highlights the 'thought leadership' role that this initiative could play in terms of guiding businesses towards a more ethical stance in engaging with biodiversity and other sustainability issues:

“There was a lively discussion during the workshop, in which participants argued that the emphasis should not be on developing a business case for biodiversity within the current paradigm, in which businesses often exploits resources to their own advantages, whilst not considering the bigger impact of their actions. The discussion highlighted examples of ‘vulgar sustainability’ (e.g. the misuse of the green shopping bags that retailers promote and sell, which still drives consumption) and more ‘virtuous’ or ethical sustainability responses by businesses (e.g. where there is a greater emphasis on responsibility and relationships).”³

Regarding the ‘how’ of achieving this thought leadership role in changing the paradigm of business’ stance towards biodiversity, the main theme was that the initiative should build the recognition (in business) that biodiversity is critical. Three main themes emerged in terms of how this could be achieved, as illustrated in the figure above: 1) awareness raising and training, 2) generating impetus for changes in policy, and 3) inter-disciplinary research and collaboration.

There were also many challenges that were identified by participants during this brainstorming session, as highlighted in the next section.

2.2.2 Challenges associated with this focus

A specific challenge, identified by participants, namely ‘finding the niche’ and having a clear outcome, required that there be a business case for participation (i.e. what will make it attractive for business?), and that it be representative of both the sectors of business *and* biodiversity.

Another challenge identified, included ‘managing different perspectives’, which would necessitate inter-disciplinary teaching. A key challenge highlighted by participants here also included ‘government/decision-maker involvement’. In response to this challenge, participants argued that a joint invite from business and research would be helpful, as well as visible leadership commitment in industry. Other challenges here included ‘administration’, as well as ‘ownership or commitment of the forum’.

Other challenges highlighted, included demographic considerations (representivity and the challenge of transformation), deciding who needs to be involved (i.e. getting the right leaders to the table), and considering how externalities could be better incorporated into business. Time was also identified as a challenge, as well as the location of the initiative (should it be at GIBS, in Johannesburg?), and its format – should it focus on success / failure stories?

Still, other challenges included ‘business greenwashing’, funding, networking and building bridges between business and biodiversity, and the importance of skills and knowledge and attitudes.

Identifying these challenges were an important stage in the brainstorming. The next section focuses on the value proposition, which was the final brainstorming session of the workshop, in which participants thought about the value proposition, which would potentially begin to address some of these challenges.

³ The reader is encouraged to read more about this differentiation between vulgar and virtuous sustainability, as highlighted by Nelson and Vucetich ‘True sustainability needs an ethical revolution’ in the 31 December 2009 edition of the Ecologist: www.theecologist.org - (I thank my colleague John North for this reference).

2.3 What is the value proposition?

Having illustrated what their expectations were in terms of what this initiative could look like, participants brainstormed on the value proposition of the initiative (i.e. what would really add value for all parties so that those involved would continually benefit).

In terms of the focus of the initiative, *thought leadership for a changing paradigm* was further established as a focus area. Participants also highlighted some general principles that they considered important on an operational & strategic level, in order to maintain effectiveness.

2.3.1 The focus of the initiative

While the idea that the focus should be on thought leadership, regarding 'changing the current paradigm' was reiterated, it would be required to have further discussions about the exact meaning of this focus – for example, does *biodiversity is business* refer to business as a whole, or just the way in which business treats biodiversity? For examples, one of the tables conceptualised the focus of the initiative to be on *aligning individual and business interest with societal benefits and goals*, which is a much broader focus than just biodiversity. One of the 'low hanging fruits' in which the initiative could help 'mainstream biodiversity into production', and help crystallise a clearer focus, could be through developing a business and biodiversity charter as tool to define a common goal.

Regarding the scope of the initiative, it was made clear that the focus should not be on sustainability as a whole, but rather on biodiversity (creating understanding of biodiversity - breaking down the boundaries between business and science (biodiversity), thereby providing credibility for business participants towards sustainability). Specific emphasis was placed on the importance of optimising resources for biodiversity gains – in other words, not just promoting rehabilitation, but promoting a net increase in biodiversity. At the same time, participants also cautioned that realistic biodiversity conservation goals should be defined.

With such a focus, one of the roles which participants envisaged, would be 'awareness raising'; another role would be 'ongoing or targeted science/policy dialogues'.

How would this look like?

Participants envisaged a one-stop shop (institute) on advisory and expert opinions/services, in which options and approaches (information, best practice, tools, collation) could be provided to business, so that business could adapt as they see fit. On top of this advisory service role for business, there would also have to be targeted science/policy dialogues.

The question is – how should this initiative operate?

2.3.2 Thoughts on operational principles and process

In the interest of maintaining effectiveness, participants also highlighted general principles that they considered important on an operational & strategic level, for such a 'one-stop shop':

Participants envisaged this institute to be 'an evidence-based learning forum that cross links fields'. As such, it was argued that planning should be integrated; in other words, a multi-disciplinary approach should

be followed - there needs to be a 'democracy of ideas' (i.e. listening is important, and obtaining wider perspectives). This would entail working through a coalition of organisations.

It should be ensured that this platform remains surrounded with competent people/management; in this regard, participants argued that there needs to be leadership continuity.

Other principles that were highlighted, included:

- people should be able to learn from their mistakes;
- there should be an awareness of the ripple effect of actions (i.e. view of the collective vs view of the individual)
- there should be accountability (e.g. for specific outcomes that are pre-defined)

2.3.3 Next steps

Regarding the pursuit of the value proposition mentioned above, the last part of the brainstorming focused on identifying feasible next steps, some of which included:

- There needs to be a thorough stakeholder analysis to expand participation, followed by extended dialogue sessions with better representation
- The establishment of an institute for business biodiversity education and networking needs to be investigated
- Regarding identifying leadership potential: there needs to be a discussion with business leaders or influential leaders to make the change

3 Conclusion

This report reflects main themes that emerged from the perspectives of participants in the business and biodiversity workshop, and highlights the feasibility of a business and biodiversity focus.

In section 2.1, it reflected on the existing challenges regarding business and biodiversity, as well as some of the 'existing assets' in this regard, that focus on addressing this interface (e.g. SANBI and the WWF's existing programmes in the field of business and biodiversity and the Business Biodiversity Offsets Programme). It highlighted that there was still a significant gap to address in this interface, both from an ethical perspective (in terms of the urgency) and academic perspective. Possible roles / focus areas (also section 2.1) included that it plays a teaching/educating role of the links between business & biodiversity, as well as a linking role between business and biodiversity forums, and share ideas. From a research and ethical perspective, it was argued that it could explore how a paradigm shift might happen regarding the way business deals with biodiversity.

In fact, this focus (*thought leadership for a changing paradigm*) came to be seen as the key differentiator of the initiative (see sections 2.2. and 2.3), even though further unpacking of this focus is still required. Developing a business and biodiversity charter was seen as a first step towards defining a common goal.

Section 2.2 highlighted three main themes in terms of 'how' this could be achieved (1) awareness raising and training, 2) generating impetus for changes in policy, and 3) inter-disciplinary research and collaboration), and also highlighted various challenges in this regard.

Participants envisaged a one-stop shop (institute) on advisory and expert opinions/services, in which options and approaches (information, best practice, tools, collation) could be provided to business, so that business could adapt as they see fit. There would also have to be targeted science/policy dialogues. In the interest of maintaining effectiveness, participants also highlighted general principles that they considered important on an operational & strategic level, for such a 'one-stop shop' (see section 2.3.2).

Regarding the pursuit of the value proposition, the following 'next steps' were identified:

- There needs to be a thorough stakeholder analysis to expand participation, followed by extended dialogue sessions with better representation
- The establishment of an institute for business biodiversity education and networking needs to be investigated
- Regarding identifying leadership potential: there needs to be a discussion with business leaders or influential leaders to make the change

4 Addendum

4.1.1 Programme of the day

Time	Activity
08:00 – 08:30	Welcoming and Introduction by Derick de Jongh
08:30 – 11:00	<p>A facilitated discussion and brainstorming exercise on the issue of business and biodiversity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Why? Is this unique? Is there a need? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How does this look like? (taking into account our various interest angles) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What's the value proposition? - Structuring something
11:00 – 12:00	Putting concrete next steps on the table

4.1.2 Methodology utilised

The workshop made use of Ketso™, (www.ketso.com), a useful tool for guiding discussions when diverse perspectives are present.

4.1.3 Some photographs of the day



4.1.4 Attendance register

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