

## User Needs Assessment: Training and Capacity Building on Biodiversity Offsets

Prepared for the Business and Biodiversity Offsets Program by Susie Brownlie

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### Executive Summary

The Business and Biodiversity Offsets Programme (BBOP) concluded its first four years of work in July 2009. To inform its work plan up to July 2012, BBOP commissioned a User Needs Assessment to understand, through a series of interviews, who might be interested in, and/or need training on biodiversity offsets, what kind of training they would like, and what length, content and format the training courses should have. A questionnaire was prepared and sent out to a range of potential stakeholders. Seventy-six completed questionnaires were received and analysed, and 28 follow-up interviews were conducted to obtain an in-depth perspective.

Those interviewed included: Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) practitioners from large, multinational consultancies; solo EIA practitioners and those from small companies; ecological or biodiversity consultants; environmental regulators and government biodiversity conservation agencies; financial institutions; businesses and industry associations; international conservation organizations and inter-governmental conservation organizations; NGOs; and academic and/or research institutions.

Ninety-six percent of individuals interviewed in the User Needs Assessment felt that there was an urgent need for training and capacity building on biodiversity offsets in all stakeholder groups. Eighty-eight percent stated that they and/or their organization or institution would be interested in training on biodiversity offsets. Key groups needing training were seen to be: environmental consultants; regulators; business; financial institutions; and conservation bodies, including non-government organizations (NGOs). Academic and research institutions, communities, landowners and land occupiers would also benefit from training.

On average, 66% of interviewees were familiar with the mitigation hierarchy and biodiversity offsets; large environmental consulting firms and financial institutions were most aware of these concepts. Almost 80% of those interviewed were not aware of any training opportunities, and had not received training on biodiversity offsets.

Most interviewees across stakeholder groups would use training to design and implement biodiversity offsets in terms of current good practice, and to improve approaches and methods for mitigation, including offsets. To a lesser extent, they would use the training to help decide when or if an offset would be appropriate or possible, build internal awareness, make the business case for offsets and identify biodiversity risks. Financial institutions would use the training to help decide whether or not to finance a project.

Respondents expressed the view that training should be offered on two levels: director-level staff and policy makers in all stakeholder groups; and technical staff. They also offered invaluable opinions on the context, length, scope, content, materials, location and mixture of audience for the training.

To those of you who contributed to this assessment, many thanks indeed for your time and advice. BBOP will use this tremendously valuable feedback as the basis for the training programmes and materials it is now developing. We will keep Learning Network members updated, and pass on opportunities for attending training sessions.