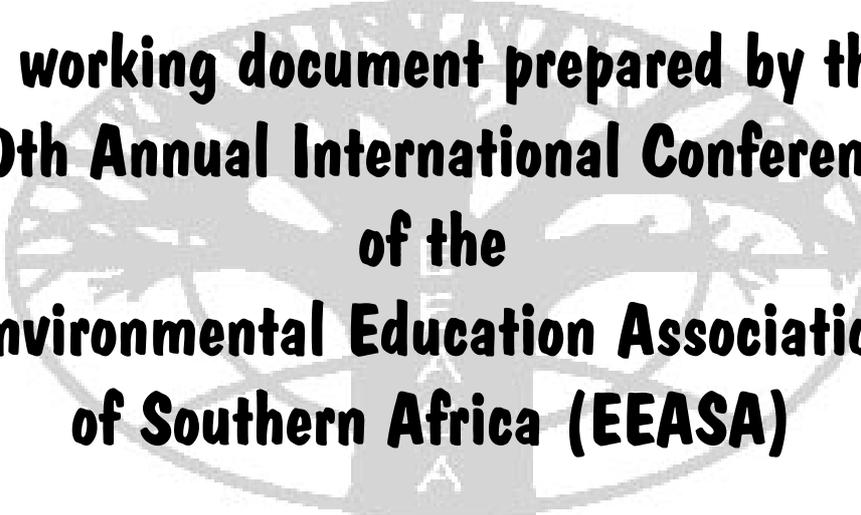

GABORONE DECLARATION

**A working document prepared by the
20th Annual International Conference
of the
Environmental Education Association
of Southern Africa (EEASA)**



**Environmental Education Processes
for Sustainable Development**

**Gaborone, Botswana
19 - 21 August 2002**



Overview

This working paper, known as the Gaborone Declaration, was prepared by the participants at the 20th Annual International Conference of the Environmental Education Association of Southern Africa (EEASA).

This conference was organised in Gaborone, Botswana by the Kalahari Conservation Society from 19 - 21 August 2002 and was attended by over 250 participants from the following countries: Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The theme of the Conference was 'Environmental Education Processes for Sustainable Development' with a view to informing a long-term vision for environmental education processes towards sustainable futures in southern Africa.



Environmental Education Processes in Southern Africa – Declaration from the EEASA Conference held in Gaborone, Botswana

BACKGROUND

This Position Statement and Declaration, the Gaborone Declaration on Environmental Education Processes, was drawn up by an international gathering of environmental education practitioners who met on 19–21 August in Gaborone, Botswana, under the auspices of the Environmental Education Association of Southern Africa (EEASA). EEASA is a network of environmental educators from diverse fields from across the region, with a track record of some 20 years. It acts as a responsible body for the purpose of consultation and coordination on matters of public and professional interest concerning environmental education processes in southern Africa.

In 2002 EEASA dedicated its annual conference to the development of this Declaration in support of environmental education processes in Southern Africa, and beyond, in the next decade. The Declaration is aimed at educators and at decision-makers who plan for and support environmental education processes (such as governments, planners and managers, donors). It will be used as a working document in diverse contexts of environmental education practice. EEASA's Council will also offer it for wider deliberation at the Civil Society Global Forum of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg during August – September 2002.

HISTORY & CONTEXT

Environmental education processes in the region takes place in a context of:

- post-colonial and post-apartheid governance and education systems.
- globalisation of cultural and economic systems.
- the formation of a new African Union and a New Partnership for Africa's Development.
- increasing uncertainty in human capacity to resolve issues through science, technology and existing political and economic frameworks.

Environmental education practice in southern Africa has been informed by a number of international developments and declarations. These include:

The Tbilisi Principles for Environmental Education, developed at a UNESCO conference in 1977, which recognise environmental education as lifelong processes based on an interdisciplinary approach and diverse methods.

Agenda 21, a mechanism to promote sustainable development and address environmental issues, produced at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (the Earth Summit). The means to achieving sustainable development include education, public awareness and training, as outlined in Chapter 36 of Agenda 21. This Chapter calls for the setting up of training programmes which encourage public participation, recognise indigenous knowledge and the reorientation of education towards sustainable development.

The NGO Forum *Treaty on Environmental Education for Sustainable and Socially Just Societies* drawn up by the NGO Forum, which highlights the role of NGOs in environmental education processes, the importance of mass media that serve democratic interests, recognising indigenous peoples and knowledge; the importance of disseminating information not in order to market messages and change people's behaviour according to the messengers' criteria, but to broaden participation in critical deliberation and action; and in developing educational processes which recognise that all people have something to learn and something to contribute, rather than assume that technical experts hold all answers.



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The Earth Charter drawn up by the Earth Council (2000), which calls for a sustainable global society founded on ecological integrity; democracy, non-violence and peace; and social and economic justice.

THE SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL ISSUES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

The environment and associated issues have political (power, policy and decisions), economic (jobs and money), social (people living together) and ecological (living things and life support systems) dimensions. There are intimate links between a healthy environment, human rights and social justice, democracy and inclusivity.

Considering the challenges of poverty alleviation in the southern African region, which include the integration of economic development, social justice, and the conservation of the earth's life support systems and natural resources, and moved by the need to identify solutions and open up possibilities, EEASA has identified a number of issues that need urgent attention:

Ecological Dimensions:

- Water scarcity
- Land degradation, the depletion of soils and deforestation which are affecting livelihoods across the region
- Food security
- Loss of biodiversity

Economic Dimensions:

- The inequality gap – the human development index dropping in several countries despite economic growth in some, and the two countries with the highest income inequality *in the world* are both in southern Africa
- Employment and economic opportunity (current economic models resulting in slow or negative growth and failing to improve employment)
- Economic mis-management
- Excessive consumption and consumerism replacing broader social values among sectors of society

Social Dimensions:

- Urban drift and poor living conditions
- Conflict over resources & access to jobs
- Epidemic diseases
- Educational backlogs and poor skills base (Southern African learners attend school for an average of 1,6 years)

Political (Governance) Dimensions:

- Ineffectual governance (poor leadership and implementation of policy, laws)
- Corruption and mis-use of state resources for individual or sectoral interest
- Despotism and other forms of undemocratic rule
- The privatisation of public resources & services putting human rights up for sale

These complex issues and associated risks require a radical re-orientation of society at a global level and a radical re-orientation of education and training in all sectors. We therefore believe that environmental education processes need to be socially transformative, supporting environmental learning that involves a deeper understanding of environmental issues and an action-oriented approach.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Following deliberations at the 20th Annual EEASA Conference, delegates therefore make the following recommendations to guide environmental education processes. These are posed as challenges to decision makers and educators, as a means of engaging ongoing, sustained debate and interaction around their implementation.

While the recommendations are framed under separate sections, EEASA acknowledges that these different dimensions of environmental education practice are interrelated. Curriculum recommendations should not be seen in isolation from recommendations on learning support materials, policy or culture and indigenous knowledge for example. Recommendations for the development of environmental education and training programmes should draw on recommendations for curriculum development and so forth.

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

ISSUES:

- Learning is often poorly understood by educators, leading to simplistic curriculum activities and narrow or prescriptive learning experiences
- Assessment practices do not support and enhance environmental learning
- Environmental and educational policies do not provide adequate guidance for environmental education processes
- Curriculum practices do not mobilise prior knowledge and experience (including indigenous knowledge) in learning processes
- Integration models can lead to curriculum overload, and superficial approaches to environmental learning, while subject-based models can be too narrow for the scope of knowledge and skills required to respond to environmental issues and risks
- There is a tendency to interpret environmental issues, and sustainability issues superficially, and to present learners with knowledge that is out of context
- Institutionalisation of environmental learning in systems is problematic and underfunded
- Participation in curriculum development is often limited to stakeholder participation, which does not enable meaningful participation amongst teachers at a local level
- Educators often lack the skills to implement action oriented, inquiry based approaches to learning

RECOMMENDATIONS:

We acknowledge that we need to strengthen our role in supporting a re-orientation of curriculum development policies and practices. The delegates of the 20th EEASA Conference in Botswana challenge decision makers and educators to:

1. Design curricula that are tolerant of diversity, and that are contextually responsive to diverse environment and development issues and risks.
2. Design curricula that emphasise the relationship between human rights, a healthy environment, and social justice, and that respond to livelihood issues and the challenge of enabling more sustainable futures.
3. Support environmental learning processes that reflect a commitment to action and that foster action competence through contextual, open-ended inquiry and issues-based approaches to learning.
4. Recognise that environmental learning involves cognitive competence, critical thinking, values, and social and individual confidence and competence, as well as a mobilizing of prior knowledge and experience (including indigenous knowledge).
5. Establish assessment systems and practices that are part of the learning process, and that contribute positively to environmental learning and sustainability.
6. Design curriculum policies that 'follow through' to, and include assessment policy.
7. Implement curriculum development processes that draw on educators knowledge and experience; that recognise the dynamic and changing nature of knowledge, and that ensure continuous deliberation on key implementation issues.



8. Provide funding and support for institutionalising environmental education at school and system levels.
9. Critically assess, and apply appropriate curriculum models (e.g. infusion, integration, thematic, separate subject) to ensure a focus on environmental learning in formal education curricula.
10. Ensure that professional development programmes are put in place (pre-service and inservice) that enable educators to implement action-oriented, contextual environmental education processes.

CULTURE AND INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

The role of culture and indigenous knowledge in educational processes forms a base for stimulating and facilitating the transformation of school curricula and learning in civil society. Considering Indigenous knowledge as practical and multifaceted knowledge it is possible to make an ongoing creative and reflexive process towards better understanding of environmental practices.

ISSUES:

- Traditional cultures are often romanticised or stereotyped
- Research on indigenous knowledge processes is often conducted in insensitive ways
- Traditional cultures and knowledge is often commodified in ways that lead to trivialising, vulgarising or degrading them
- Environmental learning processes often neglect to draw on indigenous knowledge and prior experience
- Sacred and guarded cultural knowledge should not be exploited for educational purposes
- There is a need for tolerance and a respect for diversity, and a recognition of the dynamic nature of knowledge and culture

RECOMMENDATIONS:

We acknowledge that we need to strengthen our role in enabling a focus on culture and indigenous knowledge systems in environmental education processes. The delegates of the 20th EEASA Conference in Botswana challenge decision makers and educators to:

1. Refrain from romanticising traditional cultures and from stereotyping indigenous peoples; recognise the dynamic nature of culture and indigenous knowledge and note that not everything in our past is worth reviving.
2. Conduct research for indigenous knowledge processes respectfully, informed by an understanding of the context, local protocol and context-appropriate research methodology, and without symbolic violence to the people we research with.
3. Recognising that the values associated with traditional culture and indigenous knowledge are much more than commercial, guard against commodifying traditional cultures and knowledge in ways that trivialise, vulgarise or degrade them, and consider the equity of benefits from such commodification.
4. Clarify ways in which cultural traditions and indigenous knowledge can support environmental learning, and develop a guiding framework for working with them in educational settings and helping learners respond better to current environmental issues.
5. Explore diverse teaching and learning strategies that draw on indigenous knowledge, involving wise elders where appropriate while noting that indigenous knowledge is often part of the every-day knowing and doing of people.
6. Develop and promote curricula and learning support materials that draw on indigenous as well as other scientific forms of knowledge to support environmental learning.
7. Explore and apply the educational value of sacred and guarded cultural and indigenous knowledge processes only with great respect and sensitivity to their context.
8. Promote tolerance and appreciation for diversity and guard against the marginalisation of any culture in the process of giving prominence to indigenous knowledge.



FINANCES IN SUPPORTING OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROCESSES

ISSUES:

To ensure ultimate effectiveness environmental education processes must be adequately funded in a manner that is economically sustainable.

- Donor dependency creates false-economies that are not economically sustainable
- Projects of a short-term duration seldom have meaningful outcomes

RECOMMENDATIONS:

We acknowledge that we need to strengthen our role in achieving financial sustainability. The delegates of the 20th EEASA Conference in Botswana challenge decision makers and educators to:

1. Fund environmental education processes adequately in an economically sustainable manner.
2. Consider a diversity of funding sources as these are more likely to be economically sustaining in the long term than the reliance on one funding source.
3. Encourage state-civil society partnerships involving government, local government and non-government organisations.
4. Establish meaningful relationships between donor and recipient that are mutually accountable.
5. Challenge inappropriate development models and policies critically.

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY

ISSUES

- Training models in industry tend to be narrow and limited in scope and depth
- Unsustainable production patterns leading to overexploitation of resources, high levels of environmental impact
- Information on environmental impacts (potential and real) should be available to the public
- Consumers and communities need to be more critical and aware of environmental impacts of business and industry, and need increased capacity for public participation in environmental impact assessment processes
- Enforcement of legislation to ensure environmental compliance is uneven, and southern African countries are adopting 'lower standards' to attract development
- Need for increased capacity to implement environmental management systems within industry
- Industry interprets the 'triple bottom line' superficially
- Industry interaction with communities tends to be 'one way', and superficial, emphasizing only the 'job creation' side of industrial development
- Multinational influences on local economies and contexts are both positive and negative

RECOMMENDATIONS:

We acknowledge that we need to strengthen our role in supporting the development of an environmental education and sustainable development focus in business and industry. The delegates of the 20th EEASA Conference in Botswana challenge decision makers and educators to:

1. Develop and implement environmental education and training programmes that enable action competency for improved environmental management practices in industries (with a focus on cleaner production), involving all employees (eg. management, shopfloor, middle management).
2. Include a focus on socio-ecological responsibility (a deeper understanding of the triple bottom line, and the real environmental cost of products) in industry environmental education and training programmes.
3. Develop and implement environmental education and training programmes for local government and policy makers, to increase capacity to develop and implement environmental management legislation.



4. **Implement community education programmes to increase capacity for public participation through increased awareness of potential environmental impacts, and capacity for critical consumption patterns.**

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION POLICY PROCESSES

ISSUES:

- **Environmental, educational and environmental education policies and policy development and implementation processes are often inadequate or poorly thought through. There is a need for a clearer focus on environmental education policy**
- **Scope and Coordination: Many policies are narrow and focused on local issues and are unable to affect the bigger picture**
- **Paper Policies alone may be of little value: Without action plans that are actually put into effect paper policies can be meaningless**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

We acknowledge that we need to strengthen our role in supporting policy development and implementation. The delegates of the 20th EEASA Conference in Botswana challenge decision makers and educators to:

1. **Develop policies that are clear, functional and have action plans that are linked to tangible implications.**
2. **Ensure consultation, and ensure that policies are applicable in a practical manner. Policies also need to be reflexive – ready for change and improvement.**
3. **Develop and implement policies in accordance with global and regional policy frameworks, while responding to the local context.**
4. **Develop policies that build on existing processes, opportunities and experiences.**
5. **Encourage capacity building through collaborative initiatives within policy development.**
6. **Conduct research that documents and guides policy development and implementation. Case studies which document experiences should be recorded to enable future learning opportunities.**
7. **Establish partnerships in policy development and implementation.**
8. **Encourage an enabling orientation to policy development that supports and develops applied skills and actions.**

MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

ISSUES:

- **Environmental reporting has focussed mostly on reporting of biophysical issues and emphasising bad and sensationalist news**
- **Environmental reporting has been focusing on narrow 'getting the message across' approaches and event-centred reporting**
- **There is a lack of access to environmental information and a lack of substantive critical thinking and reflection evident in environmental journalism**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

We acknowledge that we need to strengthen our role in supporting media practitioners through partnerships and educational processes. The delegates of the 20th EEASA Conference in Botswana challenge decision makers and educators to:

1. **Encourage media practitioners to provide environmental information in ways that promotes environmental learning, empowers communities and encourages action for social change. Environmental reporting should go beyond making people aware of environmental issues and take a more proactive and critical role in addressing environmental issues.**



2. Provide diverse capacity building opportunities for media practitioners to improve their skills in promoting effective environmental learning and action for change.
3. Support the creation of, and interact with environmental desks and networks in the various mass medium to raise the profile of environmental issues and produce better environmental information
4. Encourage media practitioners to develop mutual relationships with diverse sources, including environmental educators, that are beneficial for environmental reporting.
5. Encourage media practitioners to approach their practice educationally, through a focus on critical reporting of stories in clear language according to the audience and context, and by drawing on different sources and using existing structures, institutions and publications.

LEARNING SUPPORT MATERIALS

ISSUES:

- There are problems regarding the production, distribution and use of relevant learning support materials for environmental education
- There are often tensions between donor agendas and the needs of local context in materials development initiatives
- There is a lack of research into the relationship between the quality, accessibility and effectiveness of learning support materials
- Learning support materials are often either inaccessible or inappropriate for meaningful learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

We acknowledge that we need to produce guidelines for the development, distribution and use of learning support materials as well as to strengthen our networking around learning support materials development and use. The delegates of the 20th EEASA Conference in Botswana challenge decision makers and educators to:

1. Develop learning support materials that are flexible and adaptable to diverse and changing contexts recognising aspects such as language, age, purpose and topic.
2. Develop learning support materials that are accessible to support environmental learning within the different sectors of education, and consider appropriate distribution mechanisms.
3. Develop high quality learning support materials that reflect action-oriented and contextual approaches to learning.
4. Develop policies that encourage the development of accessible learning support materials.

AGENDA 21 AND CHAPTER 36

Many of the recommendations above, support the implementation of Chapter 36 of Agenda 21. This section therefore extends the above recommendations further, by commenting specifically on the educational processes designed to address environment and development issues, and the challenges of enabling sustainable futures.

ISSUES:

- Environmental education is not adequately integrated into environment and development processes in order to ensure sustenance of livelihoods
- Action is needed that empowers educators to engage in programmes that address sustainable livelihoods issues
- Global declarations and issues associated with development and the environment are often adopted uncritically

RECOMMENDATIONS:

We acknowledge that we need to strengthen our role in contributing to sustainable livelihoods through action, and a critical analysis of issues and policies. The delegates of the 20th EEASA Conference in Botswana challenge decision makers and educators to:



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- 1. Lobby and encourage governments in southern Africa to review and integrate environmental education in educational and development processes to ensure sustainable livelihoods.**
- 2. Engage in action that empowers environmental education practitioners (from formal and informal sectors) to link environmental education to ecologically sustainable livelihoods.**
- 3. Interpret global declarations and policy frameworks critically in local contexts, in order to build critical perspectives in environmental education.**



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