

UNESCO Chairs and Biosphere Reserves



UNESCO CHAIRS AND BIOSPHERE RESERVES: PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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TWO PROGRAMS, SIMILAR MISSION

The Biosphere Reserves and the UNESCO Chairs constitute two programs or initiatives with similar missions.

Biosphere Reserves began in 1976 and are today linked in a world network of 531 Reserves in 105 countries. They are defined as “Areas of terrestrial, coastal and marine ecosystems established to promote and demonstrate harmonious and sustainable interactions between biodiversity and socio-economic well being of people, through research, education, monitoring, capacity building and participatory management.”

UNESCO Chairs began in 1992 and today sum 630 in 125 countries. They are defined as “think tanks” and “bridge builders” between the academic world, civil society, local communities, research and policy-making, strengthening North-South and South-South cooperation, creating poles of excellence and innovation at the regional or sub-regional level and reinforcing the dynamism of networks and partnerships.”

Those similarities and numbers indicate enormous potential to be explored for generating synergies and strengthening partnerships.

BUILDING UNESCO CHAIRS AND BIOSPHERE RESERVES PARTNERSHIPS IN THE AMAZON

There are 09 Biosphere Reserves totally or partially located in the Amazon Region:

- Biosphere Reserve Manu, Peru, created in 1977
- Biosphere Pil n-Lajas, Bolivia, created in 1977
- Biosphere Reserve El Tuparro, Colombia, created in 1979
- Biosphere Reserve Beni, Bolivia, created in 1986
- Biosphere Reserve Yasuni, Ecuador, created in 1989
- Biosphere Reserve Alto Orinoco-Casiquiare, Venezuela, created in 1993
- Biosphere Reserve Sumaco, Ecuador, created in 2000
- Biosphere Reserve Amazonia Central, created in 2001
- Biosphere Reserve Podocarpus-El Condor, created in 2007

The UNESCO Chair in South-South Cooperation for Sustainable Development was created at the Federal University of Par , in Bel m, Brazil, in 2006, with the purpose of implementing South-South cooperation in order to improve synergy in the delivery of high-

quality scientific information on the current understanding of environmental change, emerging environmental issues , the interactions between humankind and the environment, and their consequences for human well being in line with specific foci identified in concrete activities.

Headquarters of the Chair are located at the Center for Advance Amazonian Studies of the University (NAEA).

According to its mission, one priority of the Chair is to establish and reinforce partnerships with and between the 9 Biosphere Reserves located in the Amazon. So far those partnerships have occurred through the following activities:

Workshops

- Georgetown, Guiana, 2006
- Belem, Brazil, 2007
- Cusco, Peru, 2008

Those workshops are programmed and coordinated by the Chair and serve several purposes, including the following: (1) interaction between managers of different reserves, learning experiences from each other and facilitating cooperation activities; (2) involvement of several actors in presentations and discussions of issues affecting the implementation of BR; (3) involvement of national and international agencies supporting the events; (4) dissemination of the purpose and results of the BR; (5) formulation and implementation of joint activities and projects coordinated by the Chair; (6) visits to the BR.

Publications

The Chair created a series of publications disseminating the work of the BR, which are distributed internationally.

Network

One of the results of the last workshop was the establishment of the network of the BR of the Amazon, coordinated by the Chair in Belem through the site of the Chair (being implemented).

Joint project

The participants of the last workshop recommended the formulation of a regional project involving all 09 BR. The project is being formulated under the coordination of the Chair. Through the MAB Programme resources from the Ministry of Environment of Spain were obtain for the formulation of this project. A meeting of managers of the 09 RB in 2010 will conclude the formulation of the project.

PERSPECTIVES

- Complete the series of workshops in the other countries
- Production of Masters and Doctoral thesis related to BR in the Amazon
- Implementation of a new BR in the Amazonian coast (The Marajó BR). The Secretary of Environment of the State of Para established a group in charge of elaborating the proposal to be submitted to UNESCO. It is expected for 2010 the creation of this BR.

This is an opportunity to include a partnership between the Chair and this BR since the very beginning.

- Involvement of RB initiatives in other activities of the Chair

UNESCO Chair in relation to Biosphere Reserve: Linking research and management



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URDAIBAI Biosphere Reserve

1. Aims of the project

- transferring knowledge from science to managers, particularly in Biosphere Reserves
- promoting the direction of research towards practical application in biosphere reserves
- using reserves as important testing and demonstration centre for research to increase knowledge and come up with solutions for sustainability-related problems

2. UNESCO Chair at the University of the Basque Country (2002)

- UNESCO Chair was created in an agreement between UNESCO and the University
- UNESCO Centre of the Basque Country promoted the project
- Department of Environment of the Basque Government offered economical support
- The purpose is to drive applied research, teaching and specialized studies on Sustainable Development and Environmental Education subjects from an interdisciplinary focus covering natural, social, and technical sciences

3. Strengthening science, education and environmental management

The UNESCO Chair of the University of the Basque Country partnership with Urdaibai Biosphere Reserve serves as a model for the application of research, science and education in benefit of Biosphere Reserve's management

Financed projects are from diverse disciplines, including biology, geology, economy, politics, history, among others.

4. Advantages and challenges of the model

Advantages of the model

- It enables links between research and management.

- Research is targeted at the needs of the Biosphere Reserve managers and policy makers.
- A UNESCO Chair contributes to the development of applied research, increasing the possibilities of a rapid response to management needs
- The University provides a complete range of disciplines required for research on sustainable development, from social to technical and natural sciences.
- This model brings the Biosphere Reserve concept closer to academic groups and researchers: 'Researchers become learners'.
- It encourages the researchers to work together and think in a multidisciplinary manner.

Challenges of the model

- Efforts needed to effectively coordinate the UNESCO Chair and the Biosphere Reserve.
- UNESCO Chair should comprehend and deal with the nature and sensibilities of two significantly different actors like the scientific community and BR managers.
- Research results are to be properly transferred to BR managers and policy-makers in order to become useful information for consultation and decision making.

5. Promoting and piloting the model: UNESCO Chair – Biosphere Reserve partnerships

- The MaB Programme has identified this UNESCO Chair/BR partnership as a useful experience to promote BRs as learning sites
- The UNESCO Chair of the University of the Basque Country, in cooperation with MaB-UNESCO and UNESCO Etxea –UNESCO Centre of the Basque Country and Basque Government, are interested in promoting and supporting the implantation of this partnership in other countries

6. Basic conditions and recommendations

- A critical number of researchers working in or willing to apply their research in the framework of a Biosphere Reserve
- The Biosphere Reserve will establish preferences regarding the research topics
- The UNESCO Chair will ensure the quality of the research projects and will promote collaboration between diverse research groups
- The UNESCO Chair, should establish the criteria for research and to evaluate progress
- The support of the University where the Chair is settled and a financing institution for the research projects (e.g., the local government) are key to ensure the success and continuity of the research.

6. Conclusions: work together to translate global principles of sustainability

- The reserve constitutes an important testing and demonstration centre for research to increase knowledge and come up with solutions for sustainability-related problems
- This cooperation Chair/BR is an example of transfer of knowledge from applied sciences to management

- Based on the experience, we would like to promote and implement this UNESCO Chair/BR collaborative model in other regions, within the framework of the UN Decade on Education for Sustainable Development

More information

- <http://www.ehu.es/cdsea/>
- <http://www.unescoeh.org/>
- <http://www.ingurumena.ejgv.euskadi.net>