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### CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

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Item 4.5 of the provisional agenda<sup>\*</sup>

### **REPORT ON THE BELGIAN CLEARING-HOUSE MECHANISM PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES FOR THE PERIOD 2008-2010**

*Information note by the Executive Secretary*

1. The Executive Secretary is pleased to circulate herewith, for the information of participants in the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, an information document entitled “Report of the Belgian Clearing-House Mechanism Partnership Activities for the Period 2008-2010” submitted by Belgium as a contribution to the progress report on the clearing-house mechanism (document UNEP/CBD/COP/10/15).
2. The document is being circulated in the form and language in which it was provided to the Secretariat.

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# Report on the Belgian Clearing-House Mechanism partnership activities 2008 - 2010

Enhancing biodiversity information networks



Early 2010, Mrs Manou Aï Kassomou, CHM National Focal Point for Niger, left us unexpectedly. She was one of our CHM partners since the early days and a driving force behind biodiversity conservation in Niger. The Belgian CHM team will remember her for her kindness and her untiring contribution to the CBD and its CHM.



## Results achieved

Expected results (ER)	Indicators and targets	Results achieved
Operational biodiversity information networks contribute to increased information sharing and use in policy-making, communication, education and public awareness and generate scientific and technical cooperation for biodiversity.	Persons trained per year (at least 25 per year).	<p>2008 (from May onwards): 40 persons trained in Belgium and <i>in situ</i>.</p> <p>2009: 70 people received training in Belgium or <i>in situ</i> (three of which received training on several occasions).</p> <p>2010 (till 15 July): 18 people received training in Belgium or <i>in situ</i>.</p>
	E-learning site running and updated.	<p>2008: The site was developed and several e-learning modules were made available.</p> <p>2009: 9 modules were updated in French and in English and a new module on photos was added.</p> <p>2010: Work started on video-manuals.</p>
	CHM websites running and regularly updated (at least 50% of websites updated).	<p>2008: 9 out of 16 websites running and updated regularly. Out of these, 4 websites thoroughly updated.</p> <p>2009: 12 CHM websites regularly updated, out of the 21 officially hosted websites (57%).</p> <p>2010: 14 CHM websites regularly updated of the 21 officially hosted websites (66%). Ghana, Liberia and Yemen started CHM sites that should be available online later this year.</p> <p>The web statistics increased significantly for the websites that were thoroughly updated (see table 5).</p>
	Level of activity of the network of partners (at least 5 activities per year).	<p>2008:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Public awareness workshops organised in Mali.</li> <li>- Meeting for political and religious leaders in Niger.</li> <li>- National coordination meetings organised in Morocco.</li> <li>- National workshop in Côte d'Ivoire.</li> </ul> <p>2009:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Workshop on the CHM in Benin.</li> <li>- Thematic workshop in Niger.</li> <li>- National CHM Strategy workshop in Madagascar.</li> <li>- Thematic workshop in Côte d'Ivoire.</li> <li>- Data collection on pollinators in Burundi.</li> <li>- Public awareness workshop on pollinators in Benin.</li> <li>- Awareness raising workshops on pollinators, for schools and political leaders in Cameroon.</li> </ul> <p>2010:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The 3 projects on "the importance of pollinators for our daily needs" presented their results at the Bee Party in Brussels.</li> <li>- A contract for a regional PA project through COMIFAC was signed.</li> <li>- The 2010 call for projects for reinforcement of the CHM was launched.</li> </ul>

## Background

Efficient biodiversity information networks are essential for the successful implementation of biodiversity policies. Scientific information is crucial to establish adequate policies and to plan management interventions in the field. In turn, information on national and international policy needs and constraints is necessary for scientists to frame their research work.

The Convention on Biological Diversity encourages the setting up of electronic networks. At their core, the national 'CHM websites' link together electronic information (reports, policies, etc.) and databases (species, habitats, experts, etc.). Their aim is to help implement the national biodiversity strategies and action plans of each country.

In 1998 the Royal Belgian Institute for Natural Sciences (RBINS), Belgian Focal Point for the CHM, received a request from the Democratic Republic of Congo to cooperate in developing and hosting its clearing-house mechanism. Several other countries submitted similar requests for the development of their national CHM in the years that followed.

Since 2000, the Belgian Development Cooperation grants RBINS funds to promote the use of the CHM in developing countries<sup>1</sup>.

The Belgian CHM works with its partners to improve the access to information and furnish means to relay this information efficiently through web-based technologies. In addition, the CHM encourages using the information to raise awareness on the importance of biodiversity.

The general objective of this programme is to enhance biodiversity information networks for scientific and technical cooperation, in line with the philosophy of the Clearing-House Mechanism of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The specific objective is to improve the access to biodiversity information and develop means to relay it efficiently at national level, among others through web-based technologies and networking.

This report covers the period May 2008-July 2010, which corresponds to the inter-sessional period between COP 9 and 10.

### What is the Clearing-House Mechanism (CHM)?

The 'Clearing-House Mechanism' is a networking tool that encourages the exchange of information, and promotes scientific and technical cooperation.

Today, the CHM network consists of the following components:

- the CBD Secretariat (and its website that includes a comprehensive digital information centre)
- a network of national CHM focal points in member countries (and their own websites)
- various partner organisations who host comprehensive biodiversity information (and their own digital data centres).

In practice, the expression 'CHM' often refers to the electronic components of the network, i.e. the CHM websites.

At European level, the network is the EU CHM (European Union Clearing-House Mechanism).

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<sup>1</sup> In addition to this CHM cooperation, the RBINS is also involved in other programmes, such as the Belgian cooperation for the Global Taxonomy Initiative and cooperation for the inventory, monitoring and assessment of biodiversity.

## CHM-01. Training of CHM webmasters and web content managers

Several training courses are offered, depending on the level of advancement of the partner: basic and advanced webmaster courses, web content manager courses, networking, databasing. A good proportion of the training is devoted to learn how to use the web content management tool developed by the European Environment Agency (the 'European CHM Portal Toolkit' or PTK as referred further in this report). The PTK is an 'out-of-the-box' CHM website with integrated content management and administration features. It facilitates greatly the establishment of websites by non-specialists, since it does not require any programming. The toolkit also provides a number of predefined sections that provide guidelines for establishing the content of the website.

The trainees have to be actively involved in the management of the national CHM website and in the implementation of the Convention in their country. They do not necessarily have to be IT professionals, but must show sufficient experience with computer applications. Thanks to the long term running of the CHM programme, most trainees are now well established in their webmaster function and have already participated in several training sessions.

### *Training in Belgium*

The CHM focal point from Ghana came from 22 to 26 May 2008 to Belgium for the individual follow-up of his webmaster activities. Although Ghana is not a priority country of the Belgian Development Cooperation, this visit was made possible thanks to the contribution of the Dutch CHM Focal Point (Ghana being a priority country for the Netherlands).

The CHM-18 training session took place from 2 to 6 June 2008. It was a session targeting the advanced use of the PTK, where the tutor introduced advanced options and new developments in the software. It was also the occasion for the partner countries to update and enhance the contents of their CHM websites.

The CHM-19 training session took place from 16 to 27 March 2009. This session was devoted to a mixture of initiation and advanced training on the use of the PTK. Four countries attended the training course.

Table 1. Persons attending the CHM training sessions in Belgium.

Person	Country	Dates	Language	Purpose
Erik OKOREE	Ghana	22-26.05.2008	EN	Individual follow-up
Voahangy RAHARIMALALA	Madagascar	02-06.06.2008	FR	CHM-18; advanced training
Mostafa MADBOUHI	Morocco	02-06.06.2008	FR	CHM-18; advanced training
Manou AI	Niger	02-06.06.2008	FR	CHM-18; advanced training
Saïdou DOUMBOUYA	Guinea	16-27.03.2009	FR	CHM-19; mixed training
Hugues AKPONA	Benin	16-27.03.2009	FR	CHM-19; mixed training
Guy MBOMA	D. R. Congo	16-27.03.2009	FR	CHM-19; mixed training
Ibrahima DIAKITÉ	Mali	16-27.03.2009	FR	CHM-19; mixed training
Nzigidahera Benoît	Burundi	17.02-16.03.2009	FR	Individual follow-up
NKULA MWANZA	Zambia	23-27.11.2009	EN	CHM-20; Advanced training
BOYE JOHNSON	Liberia	23-27.11.2009	EN	CHM-20; Initiation



The CHM-20 training session took place in Belgium from 23 to 27 November 2009. It was a session in English, with only two trainees, who each had a different level of CHM knowledge: one trainee from Zambia received advanced training, while the other trainee, from Liberia, benefited from an introduction to the CHM and the use of the 'Portal Toolkit' (PTK).



Figure 1. Highlights of the CHM-19 training session in Belgium. Above left: Marie-Lucie Susini providing explanations to Saïdou Doumbouya. Above right and below left: Closing ceremony with respectively D. Molderez (above) and P. Hollebosch (below) from the Belgian Development Cooperation. Below right, city trip to Bruges.

### *Training in situ*

There were a record number of national training sessions provided in 2008-2010: 8 training sessions (and a one-day follow-up session) were provided *in situ* (Table 2). Several of these were carried out as part of 'enabling activities' set up under the Global Environment Facility (GEF). They allowed the training team to answer requests from countries which are not listed in the priority partner countries for the Belgian Development Cooperation.

A national training session was held from 3 to 6 March 2009 in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. Participants came from a panel of administrations, scientific institutions, NGOs and international organisations. The objective of the workshop was to increase the visibility of the CHM in Côte d'Ivoire, mobilise potential contributors, strengthen the technical and scientific information present on the CHM website and enable a better cooperation between local actors. The training session was complemented by one day of training in May 2009 in order to finalise the practical exercises that could not have been given in March because of network problems.

The second national training session was in Ghana, from 11 till 15 May 2009. The training session was organised in the framework of the "Review of the National Biodiversity, Strategy, Development of the Action Plan and Participation in the Clearing House Mechanism", with financial support from the Global Environmental Facility (GEF). Twelve participants took part in the training, which was devoted



to an introduction to the use of the CHM Portal Toolkit. The training session also included an introduction to the Tematea Project on Issue-Based Modules.<sup>2</sup>

Table 2. List of national CHM training sessions and their main characteristics.

Dates	No.	Type	Place	Country	Trainees	Language	Trainers
3-6.03.09	06	National training	Université de Cocody, Abidjan	Côte d'Ivoire	21	FR	H. de Koeijer
11-15.05.09	07	National training *	CNRST, Accra	Ghana	12	EN	H. de Koeijer
19.05.09	06bis	Follow-up training	Université de Cocody, Abidjan	Côte d'Ivoire	5	FR	H. de Koeijer
08-09.10.09	08	National training *	Eau de Web, Bucharest	Romania	1	EN	H. de Koeijer
02-06.11.09	09	National training	INECN, Bujumbura	Burundi	10	FR	H. de Koeijer, M.-L. Susini
03-04.12.09	10	National training *	Eau de Web, Bucharest	Romania	3	EN	H. de Koeijer
15-18.12.09	11	National training	ITT Informatique, Niamey	Niger	16	FR	H. de Koeijer, M.-L. Susini
03-08.02.10	12	National training *	UNDP offices, Freetown	Liberia	4	EN	H. de Koeijer
04-07.05.10	13	National training	Hotel l'Oriental, Cotonou	Benin	19	FR	H. de Koeijer, M.-L. Susini

\* With the financial contribution of the Global Environment Facility (GEF)

In September and December 2009, 2-day training sessions were organised in Romania in order to help the authorities set up their national CHM website and network. The Romanian partner in charge of the technical aspects of the project is the IT Company 'Eau de Web', who also happens to be the developer of the Portal Toolkit.

The third full-fledged national training session for African partners was organised in Burundi in November. The aim of the training was double: reactivate the CHM network in Burundi (and its "inter-institutional focal points") and provide an introduction in the use of the Portal Toolkit. The training session was hindered by repeated power and network shortage; nevertheless the enthusiasm of the participants made up for the problems.

The fourth national training session of 2009 for African partners was organised in December in Niger. It was organised for 16 participants coming from various administrations, institutions and NGOs acting as inter-institutional focal points for biodiversity information management in Niger. After a first exchange of experiences, training was provided on the use of the Portal Toolkit. As the working conditions were good (no power and network shortages in this case), progress was fast. As a direct contribution to the CHM of Niger, the participants put online the 'Fourth national report to the CBD'.

<sup>2</sup> This project supports a better and more coherent national implementation of biodiversity-related conventions. It is implemented through IUCN and UNEP (and beneficiaries from Belgian support).

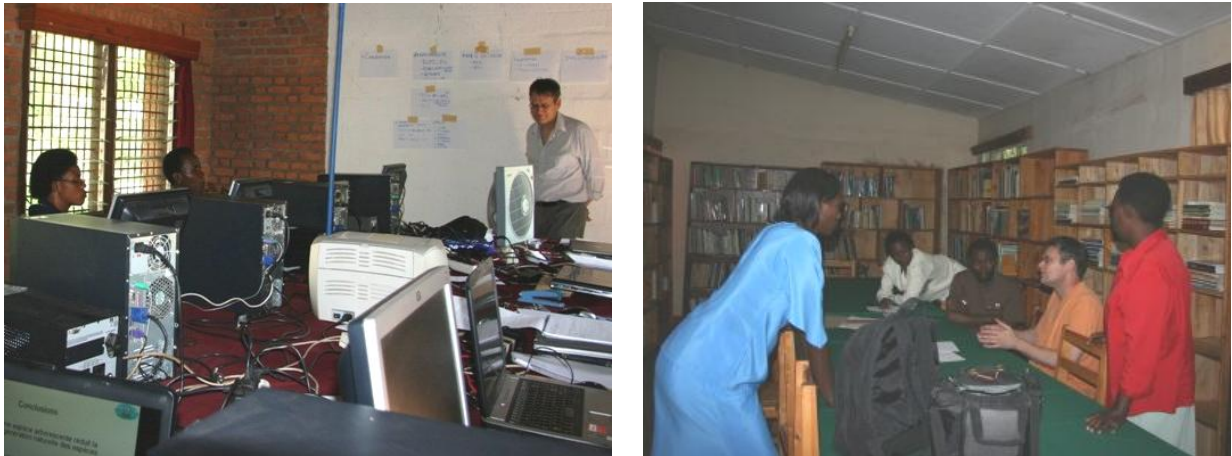


Figure 2. On the left, national CHM training at the INECN, Bujumbura, Burundi. On the right, discussion at the library of INECN.

Early 2010, a national training session for Liberia (under GEF funding) took place from 4-7 February in the offices of UNDP-Liberia. This venue provided a relatively fast Internet connection and a stable power supply (although some slight problems were encountered). The participants received a hands-on training using the CHM website of Liberia. On the last day of the mission the participants discussed the proposed structure for the CHM website, the menu items and who would be responsible to add information to which section. A programme was established for future work, with the view of organising a follow-up session in 2010.

The last training session took place from 4 to 7 May in Cotonou, Benin. The first day a total of 25 people showed up for the start of the training! The training was originally planned for 15 participants and therefore people that had not received the official invitation were asked to come on another occasion. Yet, 19 people participated in the training and people brought their own laptops or shared computers to be able to attend the course. The last day of the training the participants agreed on the sections they would work on in the coming months and who would be responsible for these sections.



Figure 3. Community-managed mangrove nature reserve in Benin

© H. de Koeijer

## **CHM-02. Remote learning through the Belgian CHM website**

Following recommendations made by the trainees, the training team is regularly updating the modules developed for the CHM training activities (CHM-01) for their dissemination through the Internet.

The first courses were posted online in 2008. In 2009, the training team prepared comprehensive support material to help use the Portal Toolkit. A special web portal dedicated to this 'PTK training' was tested in Côte d'Ivoire in March 2009 and is now fully operational at the following URL: <http://training.biodiv.be/formationptk>.

The training portal includes:

- training manuals in French and English
- exercise sessions in French and English, with the option to work on-line (e-learning section) or to download the documents (downloading section)

The situation is as follows:

- Manuals in English updated in 2009 are: Introduction and login in to a PTK website; Adding folders; Metadata; Adding files; Edit text in an object; Adding HTML documents; Adding news; Adding events; Adding hyperlinks to the site and pages.
- Manuals in French updated in 2009 are: Introduction d'un site PTK et comment se connecter; Métadonnées; Ajouter des répertoires; Ajouter des fichiers; Ajouter une page web; Editer du texte; Ajouter des actualités; Ajouter des hyperliens vers une page du site CHM ou vers un autre site web.
- Manuals in English new in 2009: Adding photos to a PTK site.
- Manuals in French new in 2009: Ajouter des photos sur une page web.

It should be stressed that the maintenance of the training portal requests quite a lot of involvement as it needs updating after each new development in the Portal Toolkit.

## **CHM-03. Technical support and cooperation for the maintenance of CHM websites**

The development of CHM websites of the partner countries is often hindered by various technical problems, not the least a difficult access to the Internet. Even though conditions have improved substantially, the situation remains difficult in some countries (slow bandwidth, frequent power shortages, decentralised offices with little or no equipment, etc.). This activity offers support through various means such as helping installing appropriate equipment, providing opportunities to organise national 'data providing' meetings, hosting of websites on the RBINS server, providing a helpdesk for partners who encounter difficulties in using the 'Portal Toolkit' web content management tool, etc.

In 2008 and 2009, two calls for proposals for the reinforcement of the CHM websites were launched. These calls complement the training activities by boosting the national contribution to the websites. The outcomes of the project should yield websites that

- are officially endorsed by the national authorities
- are operational both in terms of format and content
- are updated with relevant data
- contain comprehensive information and national documents
- make links with other relevant websites at national and international level

In 2008, four projects were selected: Côte d'Ivoire, Madagascar, Morocco and Niger.

In 2009, five projects were selected: Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Madagascar and Niger. The contracts were signed relatively late, meaning that the projects have reached various levels of implementation as of June 2010.

Table 3. List of projects selected in the framework of the reinforcement of national CHM 2008 - 2009.

Title	Partners
Élaboration d'une base de données numérique sur la flore et la végétation du Parc National de la Comoé au Nord-Est de la Côte d'Ivoire	Centre national de floristique, Université de Cocody, Côte d'Ivoire
Développement d'une Stratégie et d'un plan d'action nationaux du centre d'échange d'information sur la biodiversité (CHM)	Département de l'Environnement / Division des Projets Pilotes et des Etudes d'Impact, Rabat, Morocco
Mise à jour du site web CHM / CDB Madagascar – rubrique : mise en œuvre	Office national de l'Environnement, Madagascar
Projet de renforcement du site web CHM du Niger	Secrétariat exécutif du Conseil national de l'environnement pour un développement durable, Niger
Mise en œuvre d'une stratégie opérationnelle d'amélioration et de promotion du centre d'échange d'informations (CHM) du Bénin	Direction Générale des Forêts et des Ressources Naturelles, Ministère de l'Environnement et la Protection de la Nature. Cotonou, Bénin
Élaboration d'une base de données numériques sur la flore du Nord-Est de la Côte d'Ivoire : Cas particulier du Parc National de la Marahoué	Centre national de floristique, Université de Cocody, Côte d'Ivoire
Réhabilitation de la connexion Internet de la Direction Nationale de la Biodiversité et Aires Protégées en vue du transfert du site web CHM/GUINEE vers le nouveau site créé avec le PTK	Direction Nationale de La Biodiversité et des Aires Protégées, Ministère de l'Environnement et du Développement Durable, Guinée
Création d'une section thématique sur les espèces exotiques envahissantes : cas de la Jacinthe d'eau : <i>Echornia Classipès</i>	Secrétariat exécutif du Conseil national de l'environnement pour un développement durable, Niger
Élaboration d'une stratégie et plan de communication en vue d'une meilleure disponibilité d'informations au niveau du CHM/CDB de MADAGASCAR	Office national de l'Environnement, Madagascar

## Selected calls 2008

### *Côte d'Ivoire: initiation of a database on the vegetation of Comoé National Park*

Since 2004, the 'Centre national de Floristique' has benefited from the support to popularise scientific information on the protected areas in Côte d'Ivoire. The projects lie at the boundary between CHM reinforcement (by enabling scientific cooperation and feeding information into the CHM website) and public awareness. The project had for objectives to integrate the collection of information on the plant diversity of Comoé National Parks (through field trips and bibliographic study), its digitisation into a database and its popularisation via the CHM website of Côte d'Ivoire.

The report of the project, available on the Ivorian CHM website indicates a flora rich of 1001 species, distributed in 562 genus and 131 families. The report also identifies new, endemic and threatened species and analyses the major types of habitats found in the park. Interviews with more than 100 persons identified 344 species that were used by the local population such as medicinal plants (128), food plants (90) and plants with other uses, i.a. sheltering and horticulture (126). Although the study did not focus on the fauna, it gathered testimonies showing that primates and other big mammals are being excessively hunted and poached, calling for urgent conservation measures and for alternatives for local populations.

Such information, made publicly available on the CHM website will prove extremely useful for administrations, scientific institutions and NGOs working in the field of the conservation of biodiversity. The report and information on the activity can be found on the CHM of Côte d'Ivoire <http://ci.chm-cbd.net>.

#### *Niger: reinforcement of the CHM website (phase II)*

The actions were articulated around the following activities:

- The transfer of information from the old website to the new version using the 'Portal toolkit' was continued as an ongoing activity.
- On 11 March 2009, a meeting was organised to increase the awareness of political and religious leaders on the CBD and CHM. These two categories of actors play a major role in the political decisions of the country. It is therefore important to make them pay more attention to the importance of biodiversity and of the need to set up CHM networks in the different regions of the country. About 30 participants attended the meeting.
- Special pages for children were prepared for posting on the CHM website. Children are the decision-makers of the future and making them aware of biodiversity is considered as crucial. These pages highlight species useful for humans (both domestic and wild species), they present the main habitats in Niger (desert, forest, etc.) and make the link between species and habitats<sup>3</sup>.

The report and information on the activity can be found on the CHM of Niger <http://ne.chm-cbd.net>.



Figure 4. Left: CHM meeting for political and religious leaders. Right: Excerpt from the children's pages to be placed on the CHM website.

#### *Morocco: development of a strategy and action plan for the CHM*

Morocco's CHM website is online since 2004. In 2006 it switched to using the 'Portal Toolkit' content management system. Since then, updates are made more regularly with the consequence that the number of visitors has increased substantially. The request for information is also more diverse and more specialised.

<sup>3</sup> The children's section is announced at <http://ne.chm-cbd.net/nouveautes>



The project had for aims to

- analyse the content and ergonomic conditions of the CHM website
- establish the pathways for the development and follow-up of the contents of the website
- propose a strategy for the management of the content of the website

The project had some difficulties to start because the director of the unit that is responsible for the CHM changed in 2008. The new director first needed time to get acquainted in his position and was not able to sign the contract till May 2009. The CHM focal point however continued the preparations and after the signature was given, the project was accelerated. The report and information on the activity can be found on the CHM of Morocco <http://ma.chm-cbd.net>.

#### *Madagascar: update of the CHM website and of its section 'mise en oeuvre'*

Madagascar carried out a project to reinforce its CHM website. The project concentrated on the section 'mise en oeuvre' (implementation) of the Convention. The transfer of information was accompanied by the addition of new data. The option was chosen to integrate data by themes, each theme being fed by thematic focal points. The thematic focal points participating in the project are GTI, biosecurity, access and benefit sharing, protected areas, agricultural biodiversity, marine and coastal biodiversity, and the international NGOs active in the country. This would have the advantage to have regular updates of specific themes under the CBD. In addition, data would also have been organised per region under each theme. The report and information on the activity can be found on the CHM of Madagascar <http://mg.chm-cbd.net>.

#### *Burundi: Butterflies of Burundi*

In addition to the four projects selected by the call for proposals, the Belgian CHM had the chance to welcome a DES student from the Université Catholique de Louvain, J. HAVIGUMANA, for a training internship. She contributed to the reinforcement of the CHM website of Burundi by collecting information on butterflies of Burundi. This project was carried out in cooperation with the CHM Focal Point of Burundi, B. NZIGIDAHERA and with the Royal Museum of Central Africa (Dr U. DALL'ASTA, African Zoology Department).

The aim of the project was to extract the data on butterflies from Burundi that are present in the Albertina database of the RMCA and provide this extracted data on CD-ROM with a user manual so that students and researchers in Burundi could use the data in their work. The data are also made available online, with its inclusion in the GBIF worldwide database on biodiversity. It is now accessible to anyone interested:

Burundi: [http://www.biodiv.be/burundi/biodiversity/especes/Lepidopteres\\_du\\_Burundi.doc](http://www.biodiv.be/burundi/biodiversity/especes/Lepidopteres_du_Burundi.doc)  
GBIF website : <http://data.gbif.org/datasets/resource/8098>

### **Selected calls 2009**

#### *Benin: implementing a strategy improving and promoting the CHM*

The main aim of the project was to gather the existing information and place it on the CHM website, as to make this information widely available. In practice, the work consisted in finding the relevant information, reorganising the structure of the website, in digitising the documents and data, and finally, in placing online all the information collected. A second aim of the project was to make the CHM better known to the main stakeholders. This was achieved by organising a national restitution workshop on 2 February 2010. A total of 40 participants from various ministries, scientific institutions, projects and programmes and NGOs were invited to participate in the workshop. During

the workshop, a presentation on the current state of the CHM was made, and was followed by discussions on how to improve the CHM website. The workshop also aimed at mobilising the various actors present and at elaborating a roadmap on the roles of each actor and on the timing of the operations. The updated and reorganised website can be found online at: <http://bj.chm-cbd.net/>

#### *Côte d'Ivoire: initiation of a database on the vegetation of Marahoué National Park*

The project had for objectives to update the information available on the vegetation of the Marahoué National Park and to integrate it on the CHM website of Côte d'Ivoire.

The survey of the vegetation has been carried out using the classical methods of transects. It has been complemented with interviews with the local populations through focus group discussions and the gathering of individual testimonies. The aim of these interviews and testimonies was to characterise the driving forces of the loss of biodiversity within the park and in the surrounding villages. In addition, knowledge on the traditional use of the plants has been gathered.

The report of the project, now available on the CHM website indicates a flora rich of 607 species, distributed in 402 genus and 95 families, with the most important genera being the Fabaceae and the Rubiaceae. 23 species are endemic to West Africa, and one is endemic in Côte d'Ivoire; while 19 recorded species belong to the red list of threatened plant species in Côte d'Ivoire. The updated website of Côte d'Ivoire can be found online at: <http://ci.chm-cbd.net/>

#### *Guinea: rehabilitation of the Internet connexion and transfer of website to the PTK*

The objective of the project was to update the equipment and rehabilitate the Internet connection, in order to modernise the website and transfer the content into the Portal Toolkit structure. Part of the project was also devoted to gathering new information to feed into the website.

Guinea has encountered political unrest in 2009 which has hampered the start of the work. Only in the beginning of 2010 a real start was given to the project. The Internet connection has been established and the configuration of the computers at the Centre has been done. This allowed the national focal point to transfer the data from the old MS Frontpage website to the new site. However this information still needs updating. Therefore a small training will be given, probably mid 2010 and the information will be approved quickly after that. A preliminary version of the new website can be seen at the URL: <http://www.biodiv.be/guinee>. Ultimately, it will have to be transferred to the official website of Guinea: <http://gn.chm-cbd.net/>, which is still visible with its old version.

#### *Niger: reinforcement of the CHM website (phase III: creation of a section on invasive species)*

For the third year, Niger was selected to carry out a project to reinforce the contents of its CHM website. This year, the actions were articulated around the following activities:

- collect and synthesise data on invasive alien species
- organise a validation workshop
- post the information on the CHM website

A workshop was organised on 4 January 2010, but there is no further information on the advancement of work. It should be noted that the work in Niger has been destabilised by the decease of Mrs Manou Aï Kassomou, the CHM's coordinator.



### *Madagascar: elaboration of a communication strategy for the CHM*

This is the third year that Madagascar carries out a project to reinforce its CHM website. During the previous years, the transfer of information from the old site to the new PTK structure was initiated. The current project focused on elaborating a communication strategy for the CHM, coupled with its implementing action plan, in order to enable a participatory updating of the CHM website.

To this date, the project has not been completely finalised, but potential users of the CHM have been identified and were asked to respond to a survey on their information needs. The results of the survey have been analysed and are now being processed into a CHM strategy.

### **Other activities**

As in previous years, the RBINS hosted websites of partner countries and provided helpdesk support in the maintenance of the websites. The Belgian CHM also continued the cooperation with the European Environment Agency (EEA) in Copenhagen and with the consulting firm Eau de Web (Romania) for the development of the 'Portal Toolkit'. In collaboration with the CHM of the Netherlands, support was given to the CHM of Ghana, for the hosting of the site and training as mentioned in CHM-03 of this report.

On a request from Yemen to develop a national CHM site, their site was created on the local CHM server. It was mentioned to them that the Belgian CHM could not assist them with training and directed them to the remote learning site mentioned under CHM-02 for training material and distance learning. The Belgian CHM also asked the Moroccan CHM focal point if they could assist Yemen with advice on the Arabic version of the site as well as training. The Moroccan focal point proposed to invite a person from Yemen to Morocco to participate in a national training under CHM-01 in the beginning of 2011.

The Ministry of Environment of Zambia has developed a cooperation agreement with Finland for the development of an information network on the Environment. The Zambian CHM focal point asked comments from the Belgian CHM on the project proposal and advice on how to continue the partnership in this regards. In the final accepted project proposal a large part of the project involved the CHM. The Finnish executing agency contacted us to see how the Belgian CHM could collaborate in the project to avoid overlap. It was decided that the Belgian CHM could give trainer support while the costs for organising the training would come from the Finnish project.

### **Evolution of web statistics**

Web statistics have to be considered carefully, as they are not entirely reliable. However, they can give an indication of trends. In the table below, data were considered for 6 months in a row, from January till July each year from 2008 onwards. Websites which have benefited from the reinforcement programme tend to show the steepest increase in visits. The effect is more pronounced on the first year of such programme, and stabilising later on for projects benefiting from support several years in a row, as seen for Côte d'Ivoire, Madagascar and Niger. The number of visitors and pages viewed on the Moroccan website are exceptional and illustrate how pertinent it is to establish and implement a national strategy for the CHM.

Table 4. Web statistics for a selected number of CHM websites and for a limited period during the year (01.01-30.06, a total of 6 months each year for purposes of comparison).

Country	Numbers per year						% changes			
	2008		2009		2010		2008-2009		2009-2010	
	visitors	pages	visitors	pages	visitors	pages	visitors	pages	visitors	pages
Burundi	377	1271	1080	3197	1249	3618	+186	+152	+16	+13
Benin	166	476	1363	3926	3160	12458	+721	+725	+132	+217
Côte d'Ivoire	249	1291	4462	10820	6219	12323	+1692	+738	+39	+14
RD Congo	1679	2747	1252	3294	1914	3651	-25	+20	+53	+11
Madagascar	1038	5073	3612	9982	3520	10140	+248	+97	-3	+2
Morocco	13472	41523	31224	75366	30915	75981	+132	+82	-1	+1
Niger	1276	7573	6035	20476	6796	20691	+373	+170	+13	+1
Zambia	1338	4367	1525	5020	670	2056	+14	+15	-56	-59
Belgium	14849	47327	18994	47849	15974	46664	+28	+1	-16	-2

#### CHM-04. Networking activities at national level

Networking activities take various forms. They can be organised as workshops gathering the main biodiversity stakeholders of the country. The workshops are devoted to the exchange of experiences, the identification of difficulties and the elaboration of solutions. These workshops are usually organised in complement to – and back-to-back with – the training of CHM web content managers (CHM-01). They last from one day to several days.

Also under activities for CHM-03 there are meetings of stakeholders for the national CHMs. It can be concluded that the Networking activities have not been organised directly under CHM-04 but are integrated under the other activities.

#### CHM-05. Networking activities at supra-national level

The principle of this activity is similar to the one just above, except that the scope goes beyond the national level. Networking activities are undertaken in the form of workshops involving participants from several countries in a given region or sub-region.

A sub-regional technical workshop on 'Mechanism for Biodiversity Information Sharing and Harmonisation' was organised through the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Biodiversity Centre in Chiang Mai, Thailand, from 23 to 28 November 2008<sup>4</sup>. The workshop was part of a series of activities designed by ASEAN Biodiversity Centre to assist ASEAN Member States establish their CHM national focal points and websites. It was essentially sponsored by ASEAN. The Belgian contribution by Han DE KOEIJER consisted in presentations on what are national/regional CHM networks and on the process of establishing a national CHM.

From 9 till 11 February 2010, a regional workshop for the CHM was organised in Côte d'Ivoire. There were 20 participants from Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Madagascar, Morocco, D.R. Congo, Belgium, the CBD Secretariat and the Commission des Forêts d'Afrique centrale (COMIFAC). The aim of the workshop was to evaluate progress for the CHMs at national

<sup>4</sup> [http://aseanbiodiversity.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=194:workshop-biodiversity-data-sharing-nov2008&catid=65:acb-news&Itemid=92](http://aseanbiodiversity.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=194:workshop-biodiversity-data-sharing-nov2008&catid=65:acb-news&Itemid=92)

level since the 9<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties of the CBD and to evaluate the implementation of Decision IX/30 on the CHM by the countries. It also served to exchange experiences and formulate recommendations for further work.

The difficulties mentioned were lack of human and financial resources as well as difficult Internet access. It was also stressed that national CHMs should adopt strategic options to mobilise national actors to contribute to the CHM. Best practices from the Moroccan CHM (which has such a strategy) and the Romanian one (which adopted the strategy 20 May 2010) were presented. The full report of the workshop can be found on [http://www.biodiv.be/cooperation/chm\\_coop/chm-partnering/workshops/atelier-regional-abidjan2010/rapportchm\\_atelier\\_gd\\_bassam\\_2010.doc](http://www.biodiv.be/cooperation/chm_coop/chm-partnering/workshops/atelier-regional-abidjan2010/rapportchm_atelier_gd_bassam_2010.doc)



Figure 5. Group picture of the 10 CHM National Focal Points during the African regional workshop for the CHM.

#### **CHM-06. Public awareness through the CHM**

This activity aims to develop CHM activities in relation to the dissemination of information and outreach. CHM focal points have opportunities to increase their visibility in their country, and to increase the visibility of biodiversity as a crucial component for sustainable development.

In 2008, the Belgian CHM launched the fourth call for proposals. Only one country was selected in 2008, given the few proposals received. This probably stems from the fact that a greater number of countries opted to answer the call for the reinforcement of CHM websites (see CHM-03).

In 2009, the Belgian CHM launched the fifth call for proposals, as well as a special call for the period 2009-2010. The fifth call was fairly classical in its structure: the projects were to run for maximum one year, the theme was left open, but the candidates were recommended to follow the theme proposed by the Convention on Biological Diversity: 'biodiversity for development and poverty alleviation'. The Belgian CHM received 6 applications: Cuba, D.R. Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Benin and COMIFAC (2 applications).

Only one project, from D.R. Congo, was selected. It was submitted by the NGO 'Biodiversité au Katanga', with which the Belgian CHM already worked for the valorisation of the archives of the National Parks of former Belgian Congo.

For the special call on pollinators, the Belgian CHM received five applications, from Benin, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Madagascar and the COMIFAC. the Belgian CHM accepted three projects from Benin, Burundi and COMIFAC.

Table 5. List of projects selected in the framework of the public awareness activities.

Call	Title	Partners
4 <sup>th</sup> (2008)	Sauvons les zones humides du Mali	Ministère de l'Environnement et de l'Assainissement
5 <sup>th</sup> (2009)	La biodiversité et le développement durable des zones rurales du Katanga	BAK asbl (Biodiversité au Katanga)
Special (2009-2010)	Sensibilisation et éducation des acteurs locaux de développement sur l'importance des pollinisateurs dans la conservation de la Biodiversité au Cameroun	Commission des forêts d'Afrique Centrale (COMIFAC) et l'ONG Enviro-Protect, Cameroon
Special (2009-2010)	Amélioration des connaissances sur l'importance des pollinisateurs sauvages aux agro-écosystèmes	Institut National pour l'Environnement et la Conservation de la Nature, Burundi
Special (2009-2010)	Sensibilisation des acteurs nationaux sur l'importance des pollinisateurs pour la sécurité alimentaire et la diversité biologique au Bénin	Direction Générale des Forêts et des Ressources Naturelles, Bénin

## Regular public awareness activities

### *Mali: save the wetlands*

The project concerned the preservation of the internal Delta area of the Niger River, where there are many lakes and wetlands. Fishermen, farmers and herders are greatly dependent of the natural resources of the area. Public awareness workshops were organised for various categories of stakeholders.

A first workshop was organised in Mopti on 19 March 2009, and gathered 43 participants. It targeted decision-makers concerned by the management of wetlands: local councils, regional assembly, agriculture office, technical services). The workshop discussed the following themes: the Ramsar convention, the restoration of wetlands, recent research results on wetlands. It issued recommendation for the management of the area and for the strengthening of the main actors in charge of this management.

A second workshop was organised the next day for the main users of the wetlands: farmers-herders, forest exploiters, fishermen, etc. The workshop focused on the importance of wetlands, the legislation in place, the funding mechanisms in place, the restoration of wetlands and of threatened / endemic species. 45 participants attended the workshop.

### *D.R. Congo: Sustainable development of rural areas in Katanga*

The initial project did foresee activities around two important pressures on biodiversity: the production of charcoal and the consequent deforestation, and the overfishing problem in inland

water areas. The second component was put on hold, as the regional authorities closed fisheries from December till March (no fishing authorities, no trade of fish or fish-based products). The closure was well respected by the communities. The work around the second component was greater than expected, and the activities were adapted in consequence.

The project was carried out in cooperation with the University of Lubumbashi and the Free University of Brussels / ULB (Professors Ngongo from UNILU, Lejoly and Meerts from ULB). The following activities were carried out:

- Setting up in the Mikembo game reserve (5000 ha, fenced) of an experimental plot of 4ha to monitor the productivity of the miombo forest. Another 6ha were added contiguously, where experimental tree cuttings will be undertaken and monitored.
- Launch of a survey of 1000 households in Lubumbashi to study what was the average use of charcoal and wood of a family, and what was the availability of improved stoves in the city.
- Distribution of 65 improved stoves to 'test families' so that they could provide a feedback on their utilisation. It appears that a household can reduce its charcoal use up to one third thanks to the use of the improved stoves.
- Start of a tree nursery with the main miombo tree species and with trees of economic interest (fruit or wood production).
- Initiation of the work on a popularisation brochure on the impacts of charcoal use and of deforestation on biodiversity.

### **Special projects on pollinators**

*Benin: Raise awareness of the national actors on the importance of pollinators for food security and biological diversity in Benin*

A study was undertaken on the type of pollinators that exist in Benin, on the threats they face and on their importance for food security. Based on the results, a workshop was organized on how to ensure the conservation of pollinators, monitoring and policy priorities. Posters and information material was prepared and disseminated.

*Burundi: Raise awareness on the importance of wild pollinators for agro-ecosystems*

The project undertook studies in the field on the type of forest-dwelling pollinators that pollinate agro-ecosystems. After an inventory of the pollinators found in the farmers' fields a second inventory was made in the surrounding forest reserves. It became clear that agricultural systems that were near forest reserves had a higher diversity in pollinators than the systems without forests reserves. This result was then used for a public awareness campaign on the importance to preserve forests and pollinators for agricultural ecosystems. A reference collection on pollinators was established for future use.

*Cameroon: Raise awareness and teach local actors involved in development on the importance of pollinators in the conservation of biodiversity in Cameroon.*

A study was undertaken on the available knowledge on pollinators in Cameroon, and more specifically in the Mfou area. Based on the results, an awareness campaign was organized for school children. They discovered through courses, fieldtrips and cartoons the importance of pollinators and what they could do to preserve them. A separate campaign targeting local policy makers and village heads was also initiated and still ongoing.



## The Bee Party: valorisation of the results of the CHM projects on pollinators

The interim results of the three projects were presented at the Bee Party, in Brussels, on 7 July 2010, a 2010 International Year of Biodiversity Event. The Bee Party was a festive event that had for objective to enable the discovery of flavours, food and products that depend on pollination: honey, fruit, vegetables, vegetable oils, spices, coffee, chocolate, wine, beer, cotton, linen, etc. The relaxed atmosphere was used to inform and raise awareness on the importance of pollination for human beings (many common products depend directly or indirectly on pollination) as well as on the decline of pollinators both in the North and the South. RBINS also used the occasion to address the importance of biodiversity and ecosystem services for everyday life (food, fuel, fabrics, medications, etc.).

Figure 6. The Bee Party: some of the stands and materials on the importance of pollinators for development



## Conclusions

Since 1999, The Belgian Clearing-House Mechanism acts as an information sharing and public awareness mechanism. The inter-sessional period between the two COPs 9 and 10 has been particularly fruitful. Eight national training sessions for webmasters took place, a record since the beginning of the partnership programme. This enabled the participation of 91 people in the training, quite an impressive number given the limited resources.

This success is partly due to the use of the 'portal toolkit' (PTK) content management system, which makes it easy to contribute content to a website: no need to be a web specialist to put information on the web. Thanks to the increased national participation, the CHM websites of the partners are being increasingly visited, the webstatistics showing that the number of visitors is far from anecdotal.

Next to the CHM training sessions, the Belgian CHM financed nine projects for the reinforcement of CHM websites, and five public awareness projects. A good and polyvalent network of CHM focal points is now operating nationally and internationally in Africa.

At COP 9, in UNEP/CBD/COP/9/INF/21, a vision was presented for the Belgian partnership initiative beyond 2008. The recommendations in this information document contained several well-defined actions to be undertaken by the partnership. Two years after, now that COP 10 is at hand, it can be estimated that 90% of the recommendations have already been implemented.

Only one recommendation, on providing training on how to make and use databases, has not been covered by the programme. the Belgian CHM has made a survey of databases that are commonly used by the CHM community worldwide, and came to the conclusion that there is not yet a clear direction towards a specific database system. In addition, there are such a number of database initiatives worldwide that careful strategic thinking is required before proceeding further. However, the Belgian CHM will continue working on the issue, especially now that some CHMs have gained experience in the area: e.g. the special geo-referencing database developed for the Dutch CHM and the contacts database developed by the Romanian CHM. Discussions on possible options have also been initiated with the CBD Secretariat.

The other recommendations have been treated, with varying degrees of advancement. The very crucial recommendation on the development of national CHM strategies or on the inclusion of the CHM in national biodiversity strategies has been implemented in three of the partner countries. Further work is needed in this area, as the example of the Moroccan CHM shows ample evidence that having a national CHM strategy greatly benefits CHM implementation. A 'standard' national CHM strategy has been developed. It has been used by Romania as a basis for the development of their own national strategy. Last but not least, Belgium is also in the process of developing its CHM strategy for adoption by the upcoming Government.