



Report from workshop:

'Economics in and around Biosphere Reserves'

Chair: Colin Campbell, Executive Director, Assist Social Capital Community Interest Company
Rapporteur: Ms Johanna MacTaggart, Coordinator MAB Sweden and Lake Vänern Archipelago BR

Workshop objectives and relevance to Lima Action Plan

The workshop overarching objective was to explore the potential of social entrepreneurship and collaboration with private sector, public sector and civil society, to enhance the role of biosphere reserves as model regions for sustainable development. To strengthen biosphere reserves in their role to find local solutions to global challenges by using green and blue economy, social entrepreneurship, social enterprise, social investment and venture philanthropy as vehicles for sustainable development in and around biosphere reserves.

The on-line platform **OASIIS** was introduced as a new tool developed to visualise the impact of sustainable economies in and around biosphere reserves and its progress over time. **OASIIS** collects socio-economic data to evidence the economic opportunities that UNESCO biosphere reserves provide for long-term economic development, jobs and stronger communities. (OASIIS = Open Access Sustainable Independent Income Streams)

The workshop was relevant for 11 actions in Lima Action Plan in strategic action areas A, B, C, and D. Specifically targeting actions with regards to promoting green/sustainable/social economy initiatives, entrepreneurs and social enterprises contribution to BRs, identification and dissemination of good practices for sustainable development, development and implementation of business plans for BRs, capacity building on generation of revenue, and branding.

Workshop report

In Colin Campbell's introductory speech he explained relevant terms and contexts. He described the background, history and outcomes of the Social Enterprise in Biosphere Reserves working group which has been supported by the Scottish Government and the Swedish MAB, and the relevance of this work to Lima Action Plan. Three key note presentations followed after the introduction.

Mrs Sheila Nana Akua Ashong from Accra Ghana, talked about blue and green economy, which she exemplified with projects in BRs. Mrs Ashong stated that both blue and green economy clearly gives economic empowerment to communities and helps protect ecosystems, and that social entrepreneurship is a driver for local sustainable development.

Mrs Ashong was followed by Mrs Martha 'Pati' Ruiz Corzo from Sierra Gorda BR in Mexico. Mrs Corzo emphasised other values of economics in BRs, such as clean air, forests and sense



of belonging and that the sustainable future of a region is dependent on strong leadership, increased governance, and capacity building.

Finally, Mr Shaun Paul delivered a pre-recorded presentation, about venture philanthropy and social investment. Mr Paul is the founder of Reinventure Capital, based in Boston USA, and he highlighted that place-based strategies are key for investments, which is delivered by BRs. He also talked about what matters most for investors as well as what attracts investors.

After the three keynote speeches, four pitch presentations of 5 minutes followed from the BR Networks of Ethiopia, Germany, Spain, and Democratic Republic of Korea, that further exemplified product development and labelling and entrepreneurial sustainable development.

Before the final group discussions, the on-line platform **OASIIS** (www.oasiis-br.org) was officially launched with an introductory message by Mr John Swinney, Minister : **OASIIS** is a tool that will help show the socio-economic value of enterprises (private businesses and social enterprises) that align with the values of BRs, making this information available for a wide range of stakeholders to better understand this impact and to encourage prospective investors to invest in sustainable development in a local context. An example of the benefits that social enterprises can deliver was demonstrated by a short video of **ACE** (Adventure Centre for Education), based in Galloway & Southern Ayrshire Biosphere, which highlighted the respectful use of local natural resources to bring jobs and new opportunities for collaboration.

The workshop participants were given time for dialogue around the topic "**How can an entrepreneurial approach support BRs & MAB Networks to deliver on their aims and objectives?**"



Here is the group feed-back:

- a) People are an integral part of the BR: Strengthening entrepreneurship can lead to residents staying in the BR, which could have an effect on the ecosystem, i.e. maintaining ecosystem values, since the grounds are managed by the local people. Higher quality of life.
- b) All BRs can diversify ways to create business opportunities. There are two ways to look at social entrepreneurship in BRs: To earn money within your BR, and to generate income to sustain the management of the BR organisation where the BR becomes a social enterprise in itself.
- c) There is a need to provide support and training for projects that develops in the BR where the BR can have a nourishing role. That the BRs are facilitators to create arenas. There is a need to develop an ethical code for enterprises within BR, like social distribution.
- d) There needs to be a feeling of entitlement of the communities, associated to the BR. There has to be an underwriting of businesses in BR to, for example, regulate activities in core zones so that the profit generated benefits conservation in the BR.
- e) Diversify marketing and branding approaches to specific targeted audiences. The focus needs to be on technical entrepreneurship, like development of a mobile application for awareness raising.

Continued focus for the coming years and relevance to Lima Action Plan

The case studies presented in the workshop clearly indicated that social entrepreneurship and social enterprise empowers local communities, increases identity to a region and creates new income streams within the BR. There was an outspoken potential for biosphere reserve themselves to operate as social enterprises, generating income to the management of the BR, thus making it less grant dependent. (LAP **A1.5, A5.1, C3.1**)

It was further concluded that branding of products sustainably produced in BRs, helps increase the awareness of the BR, the understanding of the core values of the BR as well as promoting the BR. With a Certificate of Origin (a BR), the value of the product duplicates but there is a need for diversification of products. (LAP **A7.2, C6.1, C6.2**)

Recommendations:

- 1) Develop a thematic social enterprise network within WNBR: There is a need to communicate more broadly the value of social enterprise as well as a need for support and training.
- 2) Continued development of OASIIS: There is a need to create models and show good examples.
- 3) Put an emphasis on Social Entrepreneurship as a driving mechanism that will drive the shift towards a sustainable future in local regions, a tool for biosphere reserves to find Local Solutions to Global Challenges.
- 4) Produce regular OASIIS Report on socio-economic indicators of the impact of social entrepreneurship in and around BRs