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## **ACE-NC Paper 4/2018**

*For discussion on 16 July 2018*

# **Baseline Survey on the Level of Knowledge and Attitude towards Biodiversity in Hong Kong**

## **PURPOSE**

This paper briefs members on the results of the “Baseline Survey on the Level of Knowledge and Attitude of the General Public and Stakeholder Groups towards Biodiversity in Hong Kong”, under the Hong Kong Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (BSAP) 2016-2021.

## **BACKGROUND**

2. Under Action 20d of the BSAP, the Government would develop and implement a survey that collects baseline information on the knowledge and attitude of the general public and stakeholder groups towards biodiversity in Hong Kong. To take forward this initiative, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department has commissioned the Centre for Communication and Public Opinion Survey, the Chinese University of Hong Kong (the Consultant) to conduct a survey. The objectives of the survey are:

- (i) To develop a baseline picture on the attitude and level of knowledge of the general public and various stakeholder groups towards biodiversity in Hong Kong.
- (ii) To establish an in-depth understanding on the perceptions, opinions, attitudes and beliefs of the general public and various stakeholder groups towards biodiversity in Hong Kong.
- (iii) To develop a survey evaluation tool that can be used to track the progress in achieving one of the key objectives of BSAP to raise awareness and knowledge of the general public and relevant

stakeholders towards biodiversity in Hong Kong.

- (iv) To provide information for the planning of public awareness enhancement and educational programmes in the future.

## **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

3. The study comprises a telephone survey targeting the general public (i.e. Hong Kong residents aged between 15 and 64), and online surveys targeting two stakeholder groups closely related to the BSAP, namely teachers (primary and secondary schools), and planning and development professionals (i.e. architects, engineers, landscape architects, surveyors, urban designers, urban planners and other related professionals). A total of 1016 members of public and 626 stakeholders (including 414 teachers and 212 planning/development professionals) participated in the telephone and online survey respectively. Response rate of the telephone survey was 38%.

4. The questions for the telephone survey covered four aspects: (1) knowledge of biodiversity; (2) importance of conserving biodiversity; (3) closeness of biodiversity to society, and (4) willingness to conserve biodiversity. For the online survey, questions included those used in the telephone surveys as well as specific questions for the two stakeholder groups.

5. Based on the four aspects of questions covered in the surveys, four indices (the “Knowledge Index”, “Importance Index”, “Closeness Index” and “Willingness Index”) were constructed to quantify the knowledge level and attitude of the respondents towards biodiversity. The “Knowledge Index” was constructed based on respondents’ answers to two subjective knowledge questions. The other three indices were constructed by coding and averaging respondents’ answers to relevant five-point Likert scale questions.

6. As a follow-up to the surveys, five focus group discussions (three for general public and one for each stakeholder group) were carried out to gain an in-depth understanding of the views of the target groups on biodiversity. Participants were selected from the pool of respondents who indicated their interests in joining the focus group discussions in the telephone or online surveys.

## KEY FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

7. The value of the “Knowledge Index” was 2.4% for the general public, 25.6% for teachers and 20.3% for planning and development professionals. This means that the said percentages of respondents have heard of the term “biodiversity” and knew what it meant, and that they perceived themselves as moderately/very well-informed about biodiversity.

8. In addition, the survey contained three knowledge-based questions to test the knowledge of respondents on local biodiversity. Teachers and professionals performed better than the general public in this respect (**Table 1**). However, it should be noted that respondents who chose to answer the online surveys were also likely to be more knowledgeable and concerned about biodiversity.

**Table 1 Percentage of respondents scoring correct answers in three knowledge-based questions**

	Public	Teachers	Professionals
All 3 answers correct (%)	7.3	26.1	27.8
>=1 correct answer (%)	78.9	88.4	90.6
No correct answer (%)	21.1	11.6	9.4

9. All three groups of respondents demonstrated an overall positive orientation towards various aspects of biodiversity, as indicated in values of the “Importance Index”, “Closeness Index” and “Willingness Index” (**Table 2**). However, while respondents valued the importance of conserving biodiversity and acknowledged the closeness of biodiversity to society, they appeared to attribute less importance to personal efforts to conserve biodiversity.

**Table 2 Values of the three indexes on attitude to different aspects of biodiversity**

	Public	Teachers	Professionals
Importance Index	3.84	4.04	4.17
Closeness Index	3.70	3.89	3.94
Willingness Index	3.28	3.64	3.72

Note: Values from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree).

10. In summary, the study has shown a limited understanding of biodiversity and a general lack of community concern about the subject matter. Moreover, the study has identified a gap between the attitude and behavior of Hong Kong citizens in biodiversity conservation. The participants considered that Hong Kong citizens were generally reluctant to make efforts to conserve biodiversity, as they valued convenience and efficiency more than environmental protection.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

11. Given the current lack of understanding of and concern about biodiversity, the Consultant suggested education and promotion as the necessary first steps to conserving biodiversity. They advised that public education programme on biodiversity should be conducted in a comprehensive manner that can arouse people's interest, to help citizens understand the relevance and urgency of biodiversity, and more importantly, to inform them on how to conserve biodiversity in their daily lives. In addition, the Consultant recommended that the Government implement appropriate policies and supportive measures, to facilitate different sectors of the community to implement biodiversity conservation measures. The Government may also take the lead by adopting higher standards of biodiversity conservation in public infrastructure projects in a more visible manner, as well as mobilising and coordinating different sectors to join hands together to conserve biodiversity.

12. The Government will take account of the findings and recommendations of this study, in implementing the mainstreaming and public awareness programmes under the BSAP. The results of this baseline survey will also be used in tracking the progress of BSAP on raising awareness and knowledge about biodiversity.

## **ADVICE SOUGHT**

13. Members are invited to comment on the results and recommendations of the survey.

**Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department**  
**July 2018**