

## Appendix 4: SWOT analysis of the National Biodiversity Unit

26<sup>th</sup> April, 2005

We conducted a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) with the NBU staff of their independent perceptions of their unit. They were enthusiastic about the process, which gave them a chance to air their views on a number of issues.

The participants were:

- Dr Francis Gilbert (reporteur)
- Dr Samy Zalat
- Dr Taher Issa
- Heitham Fattah
- Yasser Hassan
- Mohamed El Helw
- Ehsan El Hady
- Mohammed Hafez
- Adel Suleiman

The following were raised (numbers in brackets refer to the number of staff making the point), to which we have added a few (in blue):-

### Strengths

- Well-trained staff in a variety of specialities (5)
- The NBU is a cohesive unit that operates well together (4)
- Database has a lot of good information (3)
- Good library of reports/books (2)
- Good relationship between the Director and the staff of the unit, resulting in smooth operation (2)
- Good communication on a personal level with the staff of the PAs
- NBU facilities are good
- Being an official nationally well-recognised body makes it easy to access outside bodies (but perhaps the contact is not good enough to be practically useful)
- External recognition very high
- Staff are capable of working under stress
- Staff are willing to learn and to cooperate

### Weaknesses

- Some speciality skills are lacking (data analysis, indicators, botany, etc) (6)
- No defined TORs, which allows our work to be disrupted by other demands (eg IT help) (5)
- Difficulties in communication: there is no telephone, and email and the Internet are very slow (4)
- Lack of staff training in very specific areas (4)
- Some deficiencies in equipment (some computers, field equipment) and resources (maps, photos, stationary, etc) (3)
- Information flow to the NBU is not automatic, even from NCS projects; we have to ask/beg for the reports and the data (3)
- No filing system for reports or other paper information, which makes accessing them very difficult (2)
- No secretary
- There is too free access to the unit from outside; effective working requires some quiet areas. We need a reception area and facilities for refreshments (including out of hours), especially for visitors
- Lack of career development opportunities (to advance, we need to leave the unit)
- Lack of official communication and information transfer with the PAs
- We would benefit from some field experience of the PAs
- Staff have departmental titles without meaning
- There is no regular reporting system on achievements

### Opportunities

- The NCS is well recognised by funding agencies, providing opportunities for funding
- Environmental education is a hot topic, with which we can be involved (5)
- There are lots of opportunities to communicate with researchers, other authorities, NGOs, etc (3)
- The existence of the PAs and visitors to them could allow our work to be better known (2)
- Volunteering is a major phenomenon in Egyptian PAs (esp. Ras Muhammed), and the NBU would be much more involved (2)
- Modern technology can improve and extend the work
- There are lots of international projects on the biodiversity-related conventions
- Visiting researchers are a resource with whom we could link better
- There are many opportunities of working with the media in Egypt
- We have knowledge about cross-cutting issues that is valuable for outsiders
- There are lots of capacity-building projects (BioMAP, Medicinal Plants, etc) that could help enhance the NBU

### Threats

- Overlap of responsibilities within the EEAA and with other agencies outside, especially of databases (4)
- Information security: our data can be used without permission or even acknowledgement, the requirement for permission is not enforced (3)
- Extra EEAA work is imposed on us, making time management impossible; often the timescale involved is impossible without committing time out of hours or in vacations (4)
- There is no mission for the NBU, no long-term strategy
- No incentive for working overtime (2)
- Visitors could pose a threat, because there is no system for managing them; they leave with data, and return nothing
- Consultants sell and resell information, which is treated as personal property; what they do is furthermore not linked in with NBU needs
- Career development necessitates leaving the NBU, creating instability
- The structure of the units of the EEAA: e.g. IT comes under a lot of units, but there is no link to the IT unit
- Information flow is inadequate, eg about other projects, so that planning is difficult