

The state of the Botany Department of the University of Namibia, and its potential role in plant genetic resources.

D. Joubert*

At present, the Botany Department at the University has a staff allocation of three lecturers and one technician. This year, 1991, only two permanent staff members were employed at the time of the workshop.

Due to this serious lack of staff, the Botany Department could only offer a rather generalist degree, as there was obviously a serious lack of expertise in many fields, for example in Plant Genetic Resources. The problems caused by staff shortages, have been compounded by a shortage of equipment due to a lack of funds.

The result is that, although students get a reasonable grounding in Botany, there is very little stimulation. Very few outside researchers bother to visit the Department creating a rather insular atmosphere.

I am mainly appealing to you all to seriously consider including the Department in your various activities, in a formal and an informal way. Examples of how this can be achieved are:

- 1) Employment of student in the various research programmes.
- 2) Including students (and staff) in collecting trips.
- 3) Providing post-graduate training for graduates.
- 4) Providing in-service training to students in collection methods. This could be done on collecting trips.
- 5) Giving of seminars on research being done in the field of Plant Genetic Resources.

I also believe that the subject of Plant Genetic Resources should also be included in the Botany syllabus. Assistance could be given by various people attending this workshop in formulating a subject guide.

* Botany Department, University of Namibia, P/Bag 13301, Windhoek, Namibia

The University is at present going through a period of uncertainty. The existing University will be closed down and a new University opened. Very little is known about the plans for the future university, but it is likely that staffing, facilities and equipment will improve, allowing the university to take a more active role in the conservation of germplasm.

Although the above appeal may seem a little one-sided, it is my firm belief that the efforts made by people in the field of Plant Genetic Resources in improving the education of our students, will pay dividends in the future, as better prepared and more motivated students will become committed to the conservation of our valuable resources.
