

How can carbon compensation measures of companies contribute to the preservation of Biological Diversity?

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Initiated in 2004, the Indigenous Trees for Life Programme was started to supplement the livelihood of South Africa's rural poor and HIV / AIDS orphans. The programme's vision is captured by the following statement: *IMAGINE if our poor were able to feed, clothe and educate themselves, IMAGINE if they were able to do this by growing and selling indigenous trees, IMAGINE the respect and care they would have for our biodiversity, our green heritage.*

The programme has grown significantly and enjoys substantial Corporate Social Investment support, from a wide range of South African and Global corporates, including UNILEVER, TOYOTA SA, ENGEN Petroleum, Tongaat Hullett Developments, BHP Billiton, Rio Tinto, Richards Bay Coal Terminal and INVESTEC Bank. During the 2006 / 2007 season, over 2000 "treepreneurs" grew 250 000 trees, the majority of which were planted back into the local communities in greening projects.

In 2007, the programme was expanded to include South Africa's first certifiable Forest Restoration based Carbon Sequestration initiatives. These initiatives harness the Indigenous Trees for Life pro-poor tree propagation, planting and care methodologies, to support the formal restoration of the regions degraded forest. Two sinks have been formally initiated, a 450 ha sink restoring degraded Riverine forest and a 1000 ha sink restoring degraded Scarp forest. The development of the formal carbon sequestration methodology and science is supported by the Rand Merchant Bank's Corporate Responsibility fund, whilst BHP Billiton have committed to support the actual restoration process in exchange for Carbon Credits generated through the process. A number of other companies have expressed interest in supporting the roll out of other sinks, both in South Africa, and globally through the Living Lakes Climate Change Programme.