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CORES PROJECT - CONSERVATION OF ENDANGERED ORCHIDS: AN ACTION PLAN FOR CONSERVATION OF BRAZILIAN ORCHIDS

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The Cores Project, intent to collect biological and antropic informations on nine species of orchids that are included on the official list of threatened species of Brazil (*Cattleya schilleriana*, *Laelia fidelensis*, *L. lobata*, *L. grandis*, *L. jongheana*, *L. virens*, *L. perrini*, *L. tenebrosa* and *L. xanthina*) aiming to reevaluate its conservation status and elaborate an action plan to each one in particular.

This project is being executed at the Rio the Janeiro Botanical Garden Research Institute (JBRJ) and the Leopoldo Américo M. de Mello Development and Research Institute (CENPES/PETROBRAS), counting with two teams, one in Rio de Janeiro and the other in Espírito Santo, of 15 researchers altogether. It has three years length, starting from January 2006.

Due to the fact that the distribution of these species concentrates on the Atlantic Forest, specially on the southeast region, a Hotspot with less then 10% of its original ranging, it becomes essential to study the natural populations as well as *ex situ* conservation techniques. Some of the species present a distribution restrict to some regions of Espírito Santo (*C. schilleriana*, *L. tenebrosa*, *L. xanthina*), Minas Gerais (*L. jongheana*) and Rio de Janeiro (*L. lobata*,

L. fidelensis), while *L. grandis* can be found in areas of two states, south Bahia and north Espírito Santo, but not less restrict then the others mentioned before. *L. perrini*, *L. virens* present wider distribution in Espírito Santo, Minas Gerais, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo states.

To elaborate the action plan for these species, reevaluating its conservation status, qualitative and quantitative data of the natural populations are being studied, identifying the geographic distribution patterns, investigating the reproductive biology characteristics and elaborating semi-structured interviews, that takes place on orchids exhibitions, intending to get in contact with a part of the population that takes part directly on the conservation of threatned species (as orchid lovers, cultivators and collectors). As part of the *ex situ* conservation plan, DNA samples are being stored at the JBRJ germoplasm bank and at the CENPES Orchidarium. Mesoamerica, Caribbean and Mexico. Twenty two main areas were identified using complementarity analysis and considered as prioritaire for the conservation of total diversity of *Bulbophyllum* in the Neotropics. Some of this areas are located in previously proposed Hotspots for other plant and animal groups in the American continent.