



Report of the Meeting of the African Steering Committee 2014

14-15 March 2014, Hotel Marina, Cotonou, Benin

Participants

Members of the Steering Committee:

Hugues Akpona, MEHU, Benin
Attari Boukar, CNEDD, Niger
Rajae Chafil, IFDD
Gino Cocchiaro, Natural Justice
Samuel Diemé, DPN, Senegal
Christian Glass, BMZ, Germany (chair)
Dimitri Harmegnies, DEVCO, EU
Bente Herstad, Norad, Norway
Søren Mark Jensen, MIM, Denmark
Lazarus Kairabeb, IIN
Pierre du Plessis, CRIAA-SADC
Kauna Schroeder, MET, Namibia
Lacticia Tshitwamulomoni, DEA, South Africa

Secretariat of the Initiative:

Suhel al-Janabi
Andreas Drews
Lena Fey (minutes)
Valerie Normand

Observers:

Fabian Busch, denkmodell GmbH, Germany
Naïg Cozannet, AFD, France
Kent Nnadozie, ITPGRFA Secretariat
Frederic Perron-Welch, CISDL, Canada
Mahlet Teshome, AUC
Morten Walløe Tvedt, FNI, Norway

Welcome and Introduction

Mr Christian Glass chaired the meeting on behalf of Ms Kerstin Fährmann. He opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and conveyed Ms Fährmann's best regards.

After a brief round of introductions, the meeting agenda was adopted.

Update on the International ABS Process

A video message to the Steering Committee by Mr Braulio Ferreira de Souza Diaz, the Executive Secretary of the CBD, was screened. Reaffirming the SCBD's appreciation for the work of the ABS Capacity Development Initiative, Mr Diaz expressed his intention to strengthen and enhance the partnership between the two institutions. He expressed his confidence in the Steering Committee to reaffirm the Initiative's leadership role and enable it to scale up its efforts to support the ratification and successful implementation of the Nagoya Protocol in the African region.

On behalf of Mr Bakary Kante, UNEP Division of Environmental Law and Conventions, a message was read out acknowledging the achievement and contributions of the ABS Initiative in 2013, providing substantive support to stakeholders in the ACP group of countries. In particular, Mr Kante extended an invitation to the Initiative to participate in the UNEP medium-sized project for ratification and Implementation of the Nagoya Protocol for the COMIFAC member countries.

Progress Report 2013

The Secretariat of the Initiative provided an overview of the Initiative's activities in Africa and their outcomes as outlined in the Progress Report 2013. The following issues were discussed:

Amplifying ABS Processes: Strategic Suggestions

Support could be provided to ABS National Focal Points in linking up with focal points in other sectors (e.g. health, commerce, rural development) with a view to benefit from other sources of bilateral funding. Research cooperation, support to private sector cooperation as well as further collaboration with regional organisations (e.g. AUC) are also to be explored.

BMZ Contributions to the ABS Initiative

The different modes of funding provided to the Initiative by BMZ were discussed. They include the following:

- The core contribution is provided by BMZ through the GIZ-implemented Programme "Implementing the Biodiversity Convention".
- GIZ internal payments to the ABS Initiative for the provision of services to other BMZ-funded and GIZ-implemented regional and bilateral projects within and outside of the regional scope of the Initiative, including those to be carried out in Morocco and the COMIFAC in 2014
- Special funding opportunities which the ABS Initiative is able to access for specific activities such as the ABS Dialogue between Brazil, India and South Africa (funds of the BMZ funded Program for Global Partnerships) or the support for the development of the AU Guidelines on ABS (funds of the European Development Fund (EDF) which are returned to the EU member states usually mid-year).

Future Reporting

So far, the annual reports have been descriptive and provided a broad overview of budget and resource allocations. At the request of the Steering Committee, the Secretariat is to adjust its reporting method, with a view to provide the following additional information:

- A brief overview of the main outcomes and their strategic implications.
- Contribution of activities to specific objectives as well as output and added value.
- Budget allocation to specific activities and to partner organisations (e.g. FNI, CISDL, Natural Justice)
- Clarify the criteria used by the Secretariat for the selection of countries and partners.
- Reflect co-financing and in-kind contributions to the Initiative's activities from partner countries and from other sources of funding (e.g. GEF).

A first draft of the annual report is to be made available in due time ahead of the SC meeting for prior consultation with relevant colleagues and other SC members.

Evaluation of the ABS Capacity Development Initiative

Fabian Busch of denkmodell GmbH gave a presentation on the approach and findings of the external evaluation of the ABS Initiative which was conducted in 2013/2014.

The following points were discussed:

Intervention Logic and Monitoring System

The evaluators recommended revising the Initiative's intervention logic in the new programme document for 2015-2020 in order to make a clear distinction between outcomes/outputs (directly attributable to the Initiative's activities) and impacts/overall objectives (beyond the "attribution

gap”) in order to avoid formulating an overly ambitious and unrealistic programme purpose. SC members agreed and also recommended revising some of the indicators and making clear how they are to be measured.

Based on the recommendations of the evaluators, the Secretariat will revise and improve its monitoring system. The improved system will be applied as far as possible for the current programme document and will be firmly established for the coming programme document 2015-2020.

In the discussion, donor representatives pointed out that monitoring should provide guidance for adaptive management and strategy modification; however, it was pointed out that the development of a new, more comprehensive monitoring system would be time- and resource-intensive.

Relevance

According to the evaluation, stakeholders perceive the relevance of the ABS mechanism and the ABS Initiative as high. SC members agreed with the evaluators that functioning ABS cases/value chains are needed to keep the current momentum for ABS alive and that realistic expectations should be communicated to stakeholders in order to avoid disappointment in particular with respect to timelines.

Efficiency

With regard to the high expenditures for the workshops and trainings conducted by the Initiative, the evaluators recommended complementing the face-to-face events with virtual learning tools, where feasible. Most SC members were sceptical towards this suggestion, given the poor internet infrastructure in most African countries. The SC agreed that this approach should be explored, but that one should also be clear about the technical limitations within the Initiative’s regional scope.

Impact

Fabian Busch stated that since the current programme phase is still ongoing, the evaluators refrained from assessing its impact. SC members highlighted the considerable impacts of the Initiative’s past programme phases.

Sustainability

In line with the recommendations of the evaluators, the SC members agreed that a stronger focus on training of trainers, the institutionalisation of knowledge and the involvement of educational institutions with a view to the development of an exit strategy were key. The new programme document should also address gender equality.

New Partners and Partnerships

AFD decided to join the ABS Initiative as a donor in 2013. However, due to a recent change in BMZ regulations, the agreement could not be finalised and the contributions of AFD and IFDD, as well as Denmark’s new contribution which would start in mid-2014, are still pending. The donors reiterated their commitment to the Initiative and expressed their desire for these administrative issues to be resolved as soon as possible through consultations of their respective administrations in order not to impede the implementation of the 2014 work plan.

The Initiative’s partnership with the GEF and its implementing agencies is still ongoing at different levels, including through:

- The conclusion of the UNEP/GEF-4 project in five African countries
- The part-time secondment of Natural Justice staff to the GEF SGP headquarters in New York will be continued.
- Matching funds provided by GEF and UNEP/UNDP to the BMZ-funded bilateral projects in Morocco and the COMIFAC States.

- Cooperation in upcoming medium-sized projects in the Pacific and Africa implemented by UNEP and UNDP.
- Support to countries to secure funds for ABS implementation under the GEF-6 replenishment.

The SC members encouraged the Secretariat to explore new partnership options, such as research cooperation in Norway and bilateral EU projects.

Reshaping the Modes of Delivery for National Support

Based on the feedback of participants in the Pan-African workshop the following future modes of delivery were discussed:

- **Capacity development for capacity development:** SC members highlighted the necessity of building regional capacity for training and legal and technical support. In this context, African SC members called for a more active role of the African countries in order to ensure the sustainability of the Initiative's activities; they highlighted the need for regional trainings of trainers based on practical cases, building regional pools of lawyers and researchers who can provide in-depth support to the national agencies in charge of ABS as well as stakeholders in contract negotiations.
- **Support to valorisation strategies:** It was pointed out that the modes of delivery for support to valorisation strategies needs to be addressed on a case-to-case basis; generally, there seems to be a need for stakeholders to better understand the market for ABS products and its potentials as well as limitations.
- In a holistic approach, the legal framework has to be developed involving the right actors and applying the right tools based on a sound strategy; researchers and exporters were mentioned as new actors who have not been sufficiently involved so far.
- In value chain development, it was recommended to consider products designed for the African markets as well as stronger support for the development of research capacity in African countries.
- **National support/trainings:** With a view to respond to requests for national support, the Initiative is to establish criteria in order to decide when, how and to what extent the Initiative can engage. Similarly, transparent criteria are to be established for the selection of countries receiving national support. It was suggested that the selection of countries and cases should take into account "gaps" in existing national ABS frameworks and value chains in order to support the development of ABS compliant value chains as best practice examples.

With regard to legal and technical support, the SC members agreed that the Initiative should provide general advice/comments on the development of national legal frameworks and the drafting of contracts, but should not engage in drafting and contract negotiation itself.

SC members stated that regional support should still be continued as the issue of transboundary GR and aTK becomes increasingly important. Furthermore, African SC members voiced the need for continued support to strategy development at the regional and national level in relation to the AU Guidelines.

- In a more general perspective, SC members reminded the Initiative not to forget the link between value chains, nature conservation and the development of sustainable livelihoods for communities. This should still form the basis of the Initiative's activities.

An initial draft of the new programme document is to be made available to Steering Committee members ahead of COP-12 for an initial discussion at the General Assembly of the ABS Initiative back to back with the COP. The final draft will be discussed at the next SC meeting in 2015 and forwarded to the Joint Steering Committee for decision.

Work Plan and Budget for 2014

The SC agreed to align the time frame of the Work Plan with the Southern African fiscal year, i.e. from April to March in order to accommodate the fact that the regional SC for Africa always meets in February/March.

In light of the discussions of the Steering Committee, the Secretariat of the Initiative is to revise the current work plan and adjust it to the new time frame before circulation to the SC members by the end of March, for adoption by mid-April.

The revised work plan should address the following aspects:

- Provide more detailed information on the budget allocated to each activity.
- Clarify which budget line (“secured”/“open”/“pending”¹) activities are attributed to.
- Clarify which activities are parts of which ongoing processes; also indicating the current status of these processes and their objectives/rationale.
- Outline the rationale behind the selection of venues and partners, indicating which lessons from past activities are included in the work plan.
- Include some initial reactions to the evaluators’ recommendations, as far as feasible.

An overview of the current work plan and respective budget allocations was presented by the Secretariat. Due to this year’s financial situation, the “secured” budget was largely attributed to activities and processes that had already started or been agreed upon in 2013 or before; hence, only activities attributed to the “pending” and “open” budget lines were open for discussion by the SC. The following issues were discussed:

- Possibilities for reducing costs.
- A transparent process for the selection of private sector partners for the development of ABS partnerships, recognising the role of the Initiative as an “honest broker” while acting for the benefit of African developing countries. The need for the Initiative to avoid any potential conflict of interest with the private sector was also highlighted.
- Selection of participants for trainings/workshops: The role of National Focal Points in disseminating the information at national level was highlighted. Reference was made to the selection of participants based on criteria related to the objectives and purpose of the particular training. Donor’s support in disseminating information through their respective networks was welcomed.
- The Initiative only covers travel costs for participants from developing countries, including representatives from small and medium sized enterprises, as appropriate.

In order to improve the information flow between the Secretariat and the SC and to facilitate new collaborations, the Secretariat is to regularly inform the SC members about its activities in advance so that they can inform their counterparts in the partner countries.

¹ **secured budget:** existing agreements with donors;

pending budget: available as soon as the new financing agreements with AFD, IFDD and Denmark are finalized;

open budget: activities without secured or pending budget, but with a chance for unpredictable funds (e.g. EDF or service requests from bilateral GIZ-implemented projects)