

TRAINING COURSE TO BUILD AFRICAN CAPACITY IN ACCESS AND BENEFIT SHARING

A Short Course Presented by the Environmental Evaluation Unit,
University of Cape Town, South Africa and the ABS Capacity Development Initiative



Environmental Evaluation
Unit



Gaborone, Botswana
4 – 8 February 2013



www.abs-initiative.info

Photo: Kirsten Scott

WHY IS THERE A NEED FOR A COURSE ABOUT ACCESS AND BENEFIT SHARING?



Photos: Suhel al-Janabi



The use of genetic resources and the sharing of benefits arising from this use have received considerable attention over the past two decades. Not only is there increasing recognition of the interdependencies of countries on the world's genetic resources, but so too is there greater awareness of the potential benefits that arise from the use of these resources for poverty alleviation, biodiversity conservation, technology transfer, and the improvement of research and scientific capacity. The development of the internationally binding Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) has given impetus to this interest, and, combined with a proliferation of related national laws and policies, has highlighted the considerable capacity constraints that exist in ABS implementation. Such constraints are well recognised by parties to the CBD, who in 2004 adopted an Action Plan on Capacity Building for Access and Benefit Sharing, with the key objective "to facilitate and support the development and strengthening of capacities of individuals, institutions and communities for the effective implementation of the provisions of the CBD relating to access to genetic resources and benefit sharing ..." (Decision VII/19F).

Some 92 parties are now signatories to the Protocol, including 31 African countries, and numerous activities have been initiated to respond to the Protocol and to the challenge of implementing ABS, intending to lead to an increase in ABS knowledge and capacity. Nonetheless, a number of constraints remain. Many of these are linked to the fact that ABS – and indeed the CBD – bring together a complex mix of scientific, conservation, trade and legal elements that touch on a wide range of controversial and difficult issues, from the implications of new biotechnologies through to the protection of traditional knowledge, the patenting of life, and broader concerns about globalisation and corporate control over food supply and healthcare. Such complexities present particular challenges for capacity building, and require solutions that are cross-sectoral

in nature, wide-ranging in scope and that bring together a range of diverse understandings and stakeholders.

African countries face particularly acute capacity constraints in implementing ABS at the national and regional level. On the one hand, many have very diverse and unique biological resources and rich repositories of traditional knowledge, which attract high levels of bioprospecting. On the other, most African countries have spiralling levels of poverty, massive development needs and limited technical capacity to deal with these problems. Regulating and managing ABS under such circumstances is clearly a substantial challenge.

THE TRAINING

To help overcome such constraints a **five -day training course** will be held from **Monday 4 February** to **Friday 8 February 2013** in Gaborone, Botswana. The training course was originally designed by the Environmental Evaluation Unit (EEU), based at the University



Photo: Suhel al-Janabi

of Cape Town (UCT), South Africa, where it was also held for the first time in January 2010. A second course was presented in Nairobi in collaboration with Strathmore University in October 2011.

This third course will be tailored for participants from West and Southern Africa, with course contents adapted to accommodate ABS experiences from those regions as case studies and examples.

For those who are actively involved, but new to the ABS field; **a one-day bridging course** will be presented on **Sunday 3 February 2013**. The bridging course will introduce the background to ABS, as well as key concepts. The organisers reserve the right to cancel the bridging course should the number of applicants be insufficient.

The training will comprise a mix of lectures, group and pair work, role-playing exercises, discussion, and practical sessions. A field trip will complement the theoretical part of the programme.

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Leading thinkers and practitioners will present on a variety of topics including:

- Concepts underpinning ABS
- International policy and legal frameworks for ABS
- The Nagoya Protocol
- Developing and implementing national laws and policies for ABS
- Roles of different stakeholders
- Agriculture and ABS
- Negotiating in the ABS process
- ABS tools – e.g. permits, contracts, material transfer agreements, benefit-sharing agreements
- Understanding the bioprospecting process and industry
- Benefit sharing and biotrade
- Traditional knowledge issues
- Intellectual property rights
- Biopiracy and rights

After the training it is expected that participants will:

- Have a good understanding of the concepts and principles underpinning ABS
- Be familiar with key provisions of the Nagoya Protocol
- Have knowledge of the variety of tools available to manage and regulate ABS, and ways in which ABS agreements, policies and laws can be developed, negotiated, and implemented
- Be familiar with the key debates in ABS and the positions adopted by different stakeholders
- Be in a better position to coordinate ABS activities and participate in national, regional, and international networks



Photo: Faith Mamicha



Photo: Kirsten Scott

WHO CAN ATTEND AND WHAT IS THE SELECTION PROCESS?

Forty participants will be selected to participate in the course, drawn from Anglophone countries in the West African and Southern African Development Community (SADC) regions.

We encourage and will prioritise attendance from institutions, organisations and countries that have not yet had an opportunity to participate in the course.

Minimum requirements for participation are:

- Involvement in ABS activities in own country,
- at least three years of experience in a relevant field,
- an ability to take the training outcomes forward in a concrete way, and
- competence in English.

All sectors and professions are welcome to apply. Anticipated participants include policy makers, parliamentarians, legal advisors and legislators, and government officials from environmental, agricultural and trade departments, international and national research institutions, those involved in biodiversity programmes, the private sector, NGOs and CBOs. However, if the course is over-subscribed the organisers will select applicants to ensure an appropriate balance. Junior and mid-career professionals who wish to improve their basic understanding of ABS and the topics indicated are welcome to apply. Those new to ABS issues are required to attend the bridging course as well as the full five-day course.

WHAT WILL THE COURSE COST?

Training fees, travel costs, accommodation, breakfast and lunch will be covered by the ABS Capacity Building Initiative for Africa. However, participants are urged to seek support to cover their costs for additional meals and incidental expenses. Limited support is available for those unable to meet these expenses and participants should write a motivating letter to the organisers in such cases.

HOW DO YOU APPLY?

Simply fill in the online application form at <http://www.eeu.uct.ac.za> or write to jaci.vn@gmail.com to send you the form.

Please indicate on the form whether you are interested in attending the **1-day bridging course** in addition to the **5-day training course**.

The closing date for applications is Friday 10 August 2012. Applicants will be informed about the outcome of their application by Friday 14 September 2012.

FURTHER QUERIES?

Please contact Jaci van Niekerk:
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CORE TEAM

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