ABS: Three letters for development 1. The ABS Capacity Development Initiative

"The fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources is one of the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and intends to close the equity gap resulting from centuries of transfer of genetic resources between the South and the North without appropriate compensation. Its overall purpose is to:

- Generate benefits for poverty alleviation and nature conservation;
- Support capacity development by transferring technologies, knowledge and skills;
- Enhance social development;
- Ensure accountability and good governance at all levels.

The Nagoya Protocol on ABS

The Nagoya Protocol, adopted in October 2010 under the auspices of the CBD, is a milestone representing for its Parties an internationally agreed and binding framework for access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from their utilisation. It enhances legal transparency and certainty for users and providers, by:

- Creating predictable conditions for accessing genetic resources and traditional knowledge associated with them;
- Promoting adequate benefit-sharing where genetic resources leave the territory of the provider country and associated traditional knowledge is being utilized;
- Supporting mechanisms to monitor and ensure stakeholders’ compliance with mutually agreed terms and national ABS regulatory frameworks.

The Nagoya Protocol can be regarded as a key element in designing a global framework for sustainable development. By valuing biodiversity in a market economic approach it further represents a building block for a global green economy.

Facts & Figures

Care funding for previous phases: 8.7 Mio Euro
Care funding for current phase: (1.2 Mio Euro (as of March 2012)

The ABS Capacity Development Initiative’s overall goal is to contribute – based on business partnerships between South and North at a “level playing field” – to poverty reduction, food security, technology transfer, social development and biodiversity conservation through implementing the Nagoya Protocol and the third objective of the CBD in its entirety.

With the adoption of the Nagoya Protocol the ABS Initiative focuses now on supporting the ratification and implementation process of the Nagoya Protocol in Africa and since 2012 also in the Caribbean and Pacific countries by attaining the following objectives:

- African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries ratify the Nagoya Protocol and benefit after its entry into force from its compliance mechanisms at the international as well as national levels.
- Enabling transparent and accountable national ABS policies and regulatory frameworks are developed and implemented which allow stakeholders of Africa and ACP countries to enter into equitable ABS partnerships with the research community and the private sector.
- Valuation of genetic resources in provider countries is improved and functioning ABS agreements contribute to biodiversity conservation and livelihoods of rural populations.
- National, bilateral and international partners are supporting ABS implementation at national and sub-regional level.
- Approaches for implementing the Nagoya Protocol are regionally coordinated and harmonized with other processes and fora relevant to ABS in order to increase transboundary cooperation and to address legal gaps.

2. Results / Milestones

- By consensus of all stakeholders – local communites, academia, administration, NGO and the private sector – a common “Vision for ABS in Africa” and a road map were created.
- Effective coordination of Francophone and Anglophone African countries towards a common position contributed to improved preparedness of the African Group in the international negotiations (Multi-stakeholder WS; concerted African submissions and delegation briefings prior to ABS WG6, CDP 9 and 10; African Ministers Meetings on ABS prior to CDP 9 and 10).
- African tackles emerging issues in the new phase, such as communication and cross-sectoral aspects of ABS: CEPA, forest governance, ABS and ILCs, sectoral approaches, ABS Business Dialogue, user countries in Africa, IPRs etc.
- Several studies on relevant issues informed related processes: for example, a study on relevant legislaton in the COMIFAC countries provided the basis for a regional strategy for ABS implementation
- Increased international awareness about the need for capacity development towards national ABS implementation has been created.

3. Challenges ahead

Supporting partner countries in the ACP regions in timely ratification and implementation as well as participatory domestication of the Nagoya Protocol, including creating ABS value chains in cooperation with the private sector, will be the main challenge for the next years. In balancing conservation and market facilitation, new partnerships and appropriate ABS implementation concepts that are nationally and internationally coordinated need to be developed.