

Access and benefit-sharing (ABS) in Central America and the Dominican Republic (ABS/CCAD-GIZ)

Making fair and sustainable use of biodiversity

Context

Central America represents only about 0.5% of the planet's surface area, yet the region is home to more than 7% of the world's biodiversity. These natural resources are however, severely threatened by climate change and the high rate of population growth. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), signed in 1992, aims, among other things, to secure access to genetic resources, as well as to ensure equitable and fair sharing of any benefits derived from the sustainable use of these genetic resources and/or traditional knowledge associated with them (third objective of the CBD). In order to push for concrete actions that promote the implementation of the third objective of the CBD, in 2010 the majority of the parties to the CBD approved a new international agreement: the Nagoya Protocol. The Protocol came into force in October 2014, following its 50th ratification. In the meantime, about 100 countries have ratified the protocol, as for example Germany who ratified in April 2016.

Genetic resources provide the basis for a large number of commercial and scientific products, such as applications in biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, horticulture, seeds, fertilizers, plant protection, food and drinks. Access and use of these resources is a controversial topic in Central America. Governments are under pressure to stop illegal access and misappropriation ("biopiracy") of these resources and traditional knowledge that may be associated with them. Women often play a key knowledge holder role. There is generalized misinformation and lack of clarity regarding the opportunities, risks and challenges associated with the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol. This situation is also a reality among the relevant environment ministries and affiliated authorities, trade institutions, patent offices, enterprises and the civil society. Therefore, the countries in the Central American region have so far accrued little benefits.

For instance, to date when benefits are shared, they are mostly directly attached to the access and use of the genetic resources.

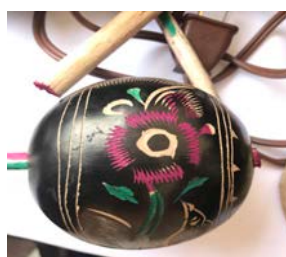
However, given the economic value of these resources, benefits could and should favor conservation actions of these resources in the region. The Nagoya Protocol seeks to balance the interest and expectations of provider i.e. countries of origin of the genetic resources, which are usually developing countries or emerging economies, and those of the user countries, mostly industrialized and technologically stronger countries.

Objective of ABS/CCAD-GIZ Program

The objective was to ensure that the member states of the Central American Integration System (SICA) - Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama and Dominican Republic - to implement initial measures that promote the fair and equitable sharing of benefits that may result from the sustainable use of genetic resources and traditional knowledge associated with them.

Operational Framework

Between 2014 and 2019, at regional and national level, the program did set up spaces to enable policy relevant actors, experts, representatives of the civil society and the private sector exchanged knowledge and information about the opportunities and risks involved in accessing and using biodiversity and its components (which include genetic resources and its derivatives). Moreover, the program offered member states of SICA guidance in developing and/or improving their current strategies to achieve greater benefits from their genetic resources. In some countries, the program supported with greater incidence the processes aimed at improving the national policy and legal frameworks for implementing the Nagoya Protocol. This encourages countries, through sharing international best practices and successful experiences, to establish a national dialogue on the issue.



At the local level, the program worked with communities, to establish practical examples of how countries can use biodiversity, or products derived from its components, to achieve greater economic and social benefits. This was a learning process where feedback was given back to locals, national governments and private sector. The Program worked with all relevant actors to build best practices, which promote incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of the biological resources.

The Central American Commission for Environment and Development (CCAD) was the political strategic partner of the program. CCAD has developed the regional Environmental Strategy (ERAM) and is responsible for promoting environmental integration in the region. The program worked with the following partners at national level: the Ministry of Agriculture, Fishery, Forestry, Environment and Sustainable Development in Belize; the National Council for Protected Areas (CONAP) in Guatemala; the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources in El Salvador; the Secretariat of Energy, Natural Resources, Environment and Mining in Honduras; the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources in Nicaragua; the National Commission for Biodiversity Management in Costa Rica; the Ministry of Environment in Panamá and the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources in the Dominican Republic.

Impacts achieved between 2014-2019

Until March 2019, the program has trained 2147 people, out of which 974 are women, from different ministries and institutions. A successful example was the Regional Workshop on "Biocultural Protocols", organized in collaboration with the Executive Secretariat of the CBD, the Government of Panama and the Network of Indigenous Women of Latin America and the Caribbean for Biodiversity (RMIB-ALC). At the country level, the legal framework conditions and certainty for ABS improved, as is the case in Costa Rica where the Government adopted through Executive Decree No. 39341 the application of administrative sanctions for unauthorized access to genetic and biochemical resources and their associated components which contemplates some gaps not foreseen in the Biodiversity Law No. 7788 and through the cooperation with a farmaceutic enterprise in Costa Rica, this is the first country to grant a "ABS Biobenefits Costa Rica" badge to users, which

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Programme Equitable and sustainable promotion of the economic potential of biodiversity to implement the Nagoya Protocol in Central America – Access and (Benefit Sharing ABS)

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was launched on 9.11.2018 in San José. In Guatemala, the Competent National Authority approved the National Policy on ABS and Biocultural Heritage and in the Dominican Republic the Regulation and Policy on Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit Sharing (ABS) No. 0002/2018 was approved. In April 2018 Guatemala incorporated ABS into the criteria for granting financing from the National Fund for the Conservation of Nature (FONACON).

At the regional level, the Central American and Dominican Republic Regional ABS Committee (CR-ABS/CA-RD), which has representatives from each of the 8 countries, began its work and, among other things, presented the Region's potential at the 13th Conference of the Parties to the CBD (COP-13) in Mexico 2016.

The program supported the value chains of Morro in Guatemala, Brontox syrup in Costa Rica, coconut oil and cedron in Panama and with this nearly 250 people have increased their income in the value chains in Guatemala and Panama. Likewise, the role of indigenous women was fundamental for the development of the Morro chain to value traditional knowledge and preserve local flora in Rabinal/Guatemala. Finally, a British company obtained an Internationally Recognized Certificate of Compliance (ABSCH-IRCC-PA-240638-1) from Panama.

From its start in december of 2014 until its end in march of 2019 the ABS/CCAD-GIZ Program contributed to the implementation of the international strategic plan "Aichi Targets" (Target 16 "Implementation Nagoya Protocol") and Agenda 2030/ Sustainable Development Goals (sub-target 2.5, 15.6 and 16.3).

Name of program	Promoting the economic potential of biodiversity and the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol through Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) in Central America and the Dominican Republic
Commissioning parties	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) – Energy and Climate Fund (EKF) of the German Government
Program region	Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama and Dominican Republic (member states of the Central American Integration System SICA) with focus on El Salvador, Costa Rica and Guatemala
Implementing organisation	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
Overall term	December 2014 to March 2019

In cooperation with CCAD:



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