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Resilient nations.*



Access to Benefit Sharing Project: Discovering nature-based products and building capacities for the application of the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit Sharing (ABS) in Fiji

**1st Quarter Report for January to March, 2017
(Submitted April 20th, 2017)**

PREPARED BY THE SECRETARIAT

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1.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The executing agency which is Ministry of Local Government, Housing & Environment specifically Department of Environment that housed the ABS does recognize the remarkable financial support and its involvement through the Global Environment Facility (GEF) for the successful implementation of the ABS Project enabling activities. It has made it possible for Fiji to meet and fulfill some of its international obligations under the Nagoya Protocol for this Quarter from September to October 2016.

The implementing agency, United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has been very supportive and consultative who as implementer of the GEF funding has assisted the Ministry to achieve its outputs for this Quarter.

The Ministry would also like to extend its sincere gratitude to the following organizations who also assisted in the fulfilling a few of the Outputs for this Quarter through support, and technical assistance and partnership with a few of the Activities:

- a) Ministry of iTaukei Affairs*
- b) Ministry of Fisheries*
- c) Ministry of Forests*
- d) University of the South Pacific Institute of Applied Sciences*
- e) Fiji National University*
- f) United Nations Development Programme*

The above mentioned agencies, through their generous support and assistance has allowed the Ministry to carry out its role as Executing Agency diligently and perseveringly, in which we know will continue to improve as the Project comes to a close in July.

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2.0 ACRONYMS

ABS	Access and Benefit Sharing
CBD	Convention of Biological Diversity
COP	Conference of the Parties
DOE	Department of Environment
FNU	Fiji National University
FPIC	Free Prior Informed Consent Form
GEF	Global Environment Facility
MAT	Mutually Agreed Terms
MDG's	Millennium Development Goals
MLGH & E	Ministry of Local Government, Housing and Environment
MoE	Ministry of Education
MOFi	Ministry of Fisheries
MOFo	Ministry of Forests
MTA	Ministry of iTaukei Affairs
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Sustainable Action Plan Policy
NPIF	Nagoya Protocol Implementation Fund
SDG's	Sustainable Development Goals
UNCBD	United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
USP IAS	University of the South Pacific Institute of Applied Sciences

3.0 INTRODUCTION

The Access to Benefit Sharing (ABS) Project was signed by the Fiji Government and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2014. As a party to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Fiji was invited to participate in the 10TH COP on CBD at Nagoya, Japan on 2010. From this the Nagoya Protocol was formed in which the ABS Project adheres to the Protocol.

The Protocol establishes rules for sharing benefits from the use of genetic resources by companies, through payments to provider nations and joint research projects. It also require that approval from provider nations must be obtained before a genetic resource is used in a product, and that in each case contracts governing the distribution of benefits should be agreed.

As a part of its obligation to the Nagoya Protocol, the Fiji Government saw the need to implement this project due to its relevance to all Fijians, especially the resource owners. Thus a submission was made to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to be able to access these funds, through the Implementing Agency which is UNDP. Therefore the ABS Project is executed by the Ministry of Local Government, Housing and Environment (MLGH &E), through the Department of Environment.

The responsibilities as the Executing Agency include monitoring and coordination of the Project, its activities and its status; to ensure that it is aligned to the Project Document and that outcomes are Law compliant and contribute greatly to the conservation of Fiji's biodiversity by trying to drafting an ABS Policy that is relevant for Fiji today and for the future years.

Fiji's terrestrial and marine ecosystems contain significant levels of biodiversity and make up a key part of the Polynesia – Micronesia Hotspot (Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund & Conservation International, 2007) which contains a wide range of ecosystems.

A number of ecosystems and habitats within these globally recognized marine areas have been identified as having national significance and have included in protected areas or part of the Fiji Locally Managed Marine Areas (FLMMA) network. Fiji has undertaken considerable measure for environmental protection by adopting or promulgating number of laws, regulations and policies governing the protection and management of the ecosystems. However despite this there continues to be increased pressures on remaining bio diverse systems from socio-economic pressures that include population growth, urbanization, resource extraction and the lack of economic value placed on habitats, species and communities.

There has been little focus on the value of genetic resources that are accommodated in Fiji's bio diverse areas and the means by which payment for ecosystem services could be used to stimulate conservation at the local level, while providing avenues for improved livelihoods. It is clear that there are gaps and work is needed for instituting relevant legislation, policy and institutional systems to assist with regulating the collection, storage, exchange, development and use of genetic resources to maximize opportunities for alternative livelihoods. There is also a need to improve technological capacity at the national level.

The barriers for maximizing benefits from genetic resources have been identified as:

- (a) Limited scientific research, technological and development capacity prevents national stakeholders from adding value to Fiji's genetic resources;
- (b) limited capacity to implement and operationalized ABS Agreements and Benefits Sharing mechanisms with communities, including insufficient human resource capacity and piecemeal operation of draft bio-prospecting policy and guidelines; and
- (c) Limited national capacity to institutionalize and operationalized the Nagoya Protocol and with this a lack of understanding of ABS and the link to biodiversity conservation.

This project will assist in addressing these gaps and barriers and motivate increased investment in protecting bio diverse areas and the genetic resources they contain.

The 1st Quarter has been very administrative in terms of undertaking the activities. As Fiji's obligations under the Nagoya Protocol, the Ministry has been able to undertake a few key meetings that were needed for the progress of the project.

4.0 SUMMARY OF PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION IN QUARTER 4, 2016

The Project activities implementation was managed by the ABS Project Assistant with the assistance of the Project Management Unit staff. Three key activities were carried out in the first quarter of 2017.

The first activity was the meeting between the Department, USP IAS and FNU. This meeting was held on January 24th, 2017 to discuss the way forward for the establishment of the Dengue Assay.

The second activity was the ABS Working Group meeting held on February 16th, 2017 between MTA, ministry of Forests, DOE, USP IAS and FNU. It was to discuss methods the key activities that needed to be carried out and to find solutions to current issues that the project faces.

The third activity was the meeting between MTA, DOE and USP IAS to discuss key activities to move Component 1 forward especially in regards to the specific sites for sample extractions and the Memorandum of Understanding between MTA, USP IAS and Ministry of Fisheries.

4.1 Meeting between DOE, USP IAS and FNU

The meeting was held on January 24th, 2017 at the DOE Office. Key points that were raised at the meeting were:

- a) Re-appointment of Dr Brad's contract as it had expired on January 20th, 2017
- b) Dr Vasudevan would not be able to assist in the establishment of the Dengue Assay.
- c) Dr Santha to find contacts of interested scientists in the establishment of the Dengue Assay.
- d) DOE to formalize FNU as confirmed establishment once Ministry's Management and UNDP agrees on the extension of the project until 2018.
- e) Dr Brad provided the budget for the establishment of the Dengue Assay.
- f) The disbursement and reimbursement of funds to USP IAS.

The meeting although contained a small group was very productive in addressing methods for the establishment of the Dengue Assay however, it was well noted that this would all depend on the extension of the project.

4.2 ABS Working Group meeting (ABS WG)

The meeting was held on February 16th, 2017 at the DOE Conference Room. The key issues discussed at the meeting are:

- a) Appointment of a National Coordinator
- b) ABS Officer for MTA- it was decided that this will depend on the extension of the project however an officer is necessary due to the extensive scope of work.
- c) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) - between the Ministry of Fisheries, Ministry of iTaukei Affairs and USP IAS. The MOU has not been sighted by USP IAS and MTA and both parties feel that this is necessary as they are also signatories of the MOU. USP IAS and MTA requested to be a part of meetings and discussions between the Ministry of Fisheries and the Solicitor General's Office.
- d) Dengue Assay- will depend on the extension of the project as well as the ability to sustain itself once the project ends. Dr Santha was to communicate with possible experts who could assist in screen testing the samples.
- e) Dr Brad's contract- DOE team to facilitate and send to UNDP as soon as possible.
- f) Disbursement of funds to USP IAS- DOE to facilitate as soon as possible.

4.3 Meeting with Ministry of iTaukei Affairs, USP IAS and DOE

The meeting was held on March 22nd at the DOE Office. The meeting was held to discuss the way forward for Component 1 of the project. The key issues that were discussed:

- a) Using the current documents as a guideline for establishing proper ABS policies and framework as the ABS Project is a pilot one
- b) Establishing a template for a generic permitting system for researchers instead of using an MOU for all cases.
- c) DOE to officially formalize MTA as National Competent Authority.
- d) MOU- status of the MOU and all parties to be involved in the meetings and discussions, especially with SG's Office.
- e) Site Selection Criteria Sites- USP IAS is still awaiting MTA's approval in which if approved, USP IAS will communicate with USP IAS to carry out the research through the FPIC and MAT.

5.0 1st Quarter 2017 Expenses

<u>Date</u>	<u>Particulars</u>	<u>GL ACCOUNTS/ UNDP CODES</u>	<u>Outcomes</u>	<u>Amount(\$)</u>
11/01/2017	Salary	71400	4	\$366.67
18/01/2017	Salary	71400	4	\$733.34
25/01/2017	Salary	71400	4	\$366.67
1/02/2017	Salary	71400	4	\$365.88
8/02/2017	Salary	71400	4	\$366.67
15/02/2017	Salary	71400	4	\$364.19
22/02/2017	Salary	71400	4	\$355.90
1/03/2017	Salary	71400	4	\$359.24
8/03/2017	Salary	71400	4	\$366.67
15/03/2017	Salary	71400	4	\$366.67
22/03/2017	Salary	71400	4	\$366.67
29/03/2017	Salary	71400	4	\$351.81
5/04/2017	Salary	71400	4	\$354.28
12/04/2017	Salary	71400	4	\$355.97
16/02/2017	Catering for ABS Working Group meeting	75700	3	\$196.20
	TOTAL Utilisation as at 12/04/2017			\$5,636.83

6.0 CONCLUSION

Throughout this Quarter, the key objective of the project was to resolve key issues that were hindering the progress of the project, especially for Component 1 and to effectively implement key activities to try and improve the progress of the project in comparison to last Quarter's progress. Unfortunately many of the same issues that were raised last year are yet to be resolved, especially since the project is expected to end in July this year. Within this quarter, there has been a lot of discussion via emails, phone calls and meetings in which the drive to move forward with the project is there however many issues still hinder the progress of the project and the full implementation of the activities.

In addition, although the project faces many obstacles; the fact remains that this is a pilot project with many learning curves that the country will truly need to adhere to if we are to eventually formulate a policy or guideline that is ABS related and protects the rights of the iTaukei people as well as their resources and at the same time considering the vital need for the progress of pharmaceutical and academic research for the future generations.

In the last Quarter, the ABS project has been quite slow in its progress but nonetheless is still able to move forward as all partners work together to ensure that there is some form of progress.

7.0 CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

During this Quarter a few key challenges that were encountered were:

- a) The expiry of Dr Brad Carte's contract as this has hindered the progress of Component 1.
- b) Slow facilitation of payment for ABS activities.
- c) Stakeholders' schedules would clash with ABS meetings thus these were postponed a few times.
- d) Facilitation process of recruiting a Project Coordinator
- e) Facilitation of the signing of the revised ProDoc

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS/ WAY FORWARD

As a pathway to moving the Project forward, the following are highly recommended:

- a) That the Department of Environment in cooperation with the Project Stakeholders to have consistent discussions via email and meetings to resolve a few of the outstanding issues that need Project Board approval.
- b) Project Board meeting to be called as soon as possible.
- c) Work on terminal evaluation
- d) Establish an ABS Steering Committee for development of national ABS Policy
- e) Develop FPIC & MAT for ABS Project

9.0 ANNEXES

a) Registration list of ABS Working Group meeting on Feb 16th, 2017



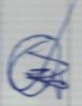


Date: 16th February, 2017

Venue: DOE Conference Room

PROJECT ON DISCOVERING NATURE-BASED PRODUCTS AND BUILDING CAPACITIES FOR THE APPLICATION OF THE NAGOYA PROTOCOL ON ACCESS TO GENETIC RESOURCES AND BENEFIT SHARING (ABS) IN FIJI

ABS WORKING GROUP MEETING- REGISTRATION LIST

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