



Work Plan 09/2020-12/2021 – Pacific

September 2020

This work plan is based on the ABS Initiative's [Programme Document 2015-2020](#) and the experiences and outcomes of the activities undertaken under the Initiative's previous work plans (2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2019/20). Responding to [CBD COP Decision XIII/23](#) on Capacity-building, technical and scientific cooperation, technology transfer and the clearing-house mechanism, it aims to contribute to the implementation of the strategic framework for capacity-building for the effective implementation of the Nagoya Protocol in collaboration with a broad range of relevant partners.

This work plan provides an update due to the COVID-19 travel restrictions which have inhibited travel-related in-country activities in 2020 and includes an extension of the planning period until 12/2021. Therefore, many of the 2019/20 Workplan activities have not been completed. Accordingly, this work plan is focused in 2020 on non-travel activities such as webinars, with travel hopefully resuming in 2021 for in-country Nagoya Protocol implementation support in close collaboration with the extended GEF/UNEP Regional ABS Project executed by SPREP.

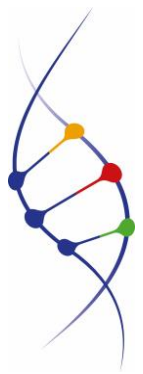
The selection of activities in this work plan is based on the available budget for the Pacific region, covering the period from September 2020 to 31 December 2021 and in collaboration with ABS work in the region with the GEF funded and UN Environment executed Regional Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) Project which is implemented by the Secretariat of Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). It has been agreed with the SPREP steering committee and project staff, that the ABS Initiative will focus primarily on supporting Melanesian sub-regional countries (Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Fiji), with some additional support for Micronesian and Polynesian countries only where it is cost efficient, for regional workshops, by correspondence, or for Cook Islands (as per ARC grant described below).

The work plan is structured along the main processes outlined in the Initiative's Programme Document 2015-2020. Information on the actual contributions of the ABS Initiative is preceding the descriptions of the activities / processes reflected in the work plan.

Implementation of the workplan will be coordinated by the Regional Project Manager, Professor Daniel Robinson of the University of New South Wales (UNSW). The support of the ABS Initiative will be supplemented with mutually supportive Australian Research Council (ARC) funding (DP180100507) assigned to Prof Daniel Robinson and Dr Margaret Raven (AUD \$568,000 for 2018-2022) for the project "Indigenous knowledge futures: protecting and promoting indigenous knowledge." The geographical focus of the project is on Northern Australia, **Vanuatu and Cook Islands**.

1 Core Implementation Processes: National Support

During the first phase of the project, during visits to Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, PNG and Fiji, the competent national authorities (CNAs) and a number of in-country stakeholders requested support for further capacity-building to improve their partial ABS frameworks and in-country activities.



Planned Activities:

Planned activities will continue to contribute to the three core processes in varying degrees, with most travel being postponed until 2021 due to COVID-19 health risks and travel restrictions. In lieu of travel in 2020, support by correspondence will be undertaken and a webinar series is proposed (see 2.1.2 below). IPLC support in general and specifically in Vanuatu and the Cook Islands will benefit from the ARC grant mentioned above.

Vanuatu: An ABS Initiative country visit could occur in 2021 following advice on COVID-19 health alerts and travel restrictions. Proposed activities:

- *ABS framework:* Support for further development of the bioprospecting provisions of the Act and review of the TK Act.
- *IPLC participation:* The Department of Environmental Protection and Conservation has recommended local awareness raising/training workshops in provincial locations including on the islands of Tanna/Eromango and Banks. Some ABS Initiative awareness raising has already occurred in Santo, Malekula, Tanna and Aneityum.
- *ABS agreements:* Analysis of biotrade value chains, including kava (*Piper methysticum*), tamanu (*Calophyllum inophyllum*), nangai (*Canarium indicum*) and noni (*Morinda citrifolia*) for ABS relevance and to support compliance. We are still working to see if there are viable ABS-compliant value chains that can be established with some companies and communities. These discussions have broadened to include Solomon Islands, PNG and Samoa.

Solomon Islands: An ABS Initiative country visit will be postponed until 2021 due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. Proposed 2021 activities:

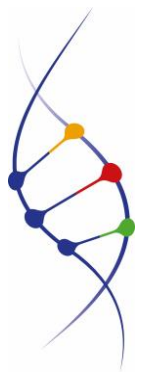
- *ABS framework:* Support for further development of the bioprospecting provisions and permitting procedures of the Act and review of the TK Bill (work in progress).
- *IPLC participation:* The Division of Environmental Protection has recommended provincial/local awareness raising/training workshops or activities in Munda or Gizo – these could be deferred to 2021.
- *ABS agreements:* Biotrade value chains of interest, including tamanu and nangai are being analysed regarding ABS relevance and supported to achieve ABS compliance.

Papua New Guinea: Through an MOU with the ABS Initiative, PNG has been seeking an in-country ABS consultant to work on ABS policy and legislation as well as guidelines. A country visit could occur in 2021 due to COVID-19 delays in 2020:

- *ABS framework:* To help progress ABS procedures and permit systems, and develop and ABS policy so that PNG can ratify the Nagoya Protocol;
- *IPLC participation:* The ABS consultant will do awareness raising, consult with IPLCs about TK protection, and some scoping of BCP interest from communities under the contract, with some support from the Regional Coordinator.

Fiji: A national ABS workshop could occur in 2021. Proposed Activities:

- *ABS framework:* The Ministry of iTaukei Affairs has requested support for the amendment of its administrative ABS procedures that are not Nagoya compliant. The Department of Environment has also sought a national capacity building workshop to develop their ABS policy and to improve the permit issuing processes as well as the issuing of certificates of compliance.
- *ABS agreements and IPLC Participation:* The Institute of Advanced Studies (IAS) at USP and the Medical Research Institute at Fiji National University (FNU) have both requested follow-up support relating to templates for ABS agreements with their foreign partners, and for local prior informed consent (PIC) with communities. A potential Darwin Initiative (UK) grant collaboration including capacity building for USP researchers and the Fiji Government has been discussed and submitted at the EOI stage in September 2020 with follow up stages in late 2020 and early 2021.



Additional country support can be provided by correspondence upon request from the countries. An additional country visit in coordination with the SPREP Regional ABS Project team may be requested to Palau, FSM or Marshall Islands following requests from their NFPs and CNAs – now likely in 2021 due to COVID-19. Additional country support is being provided to Cook Islands primarily through the ARC grant.

1.1 National Institutional and Regulatory ABS Frameworks

Based on the agreed national work packages (see above), tailor-made implementation support and capacity development activities with respect to developing/strengthening national institutional and regulatory ABS frameworks will be conducted in the countries. Apart from the specific support, the following activities will directly contribute to this core process:

Stocktaking of ABS laws, policies and regulations will continue to be undertaken for the broader region in close coordination with the SPREP Regional ABS Project, identifying progress since the ABS Initiative was last in the region (~3 years ago). In addition, support for awareness raising materials will continue to be developed and prepared in relevant local languages of Solomon Islands (Bislama/Pidgin), which is also useful in PNG and Vanuatu where Pidgin/Bislama is widely spoken.

1.2 Effective Participation of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs) based on Biocultural Community Protocols (BCPs) and Comparable Procedures

Specific activities, as agreed in the national work packages (see above), will be supported and implemented in close collaboration with suitable partners in delivery, and supported by fieldwork undertaken within the mutually supportive ARC grant.

1.3 Development of ABS Agreements

Based on the agreed national roadmaps and underpinned by experiences generated during the last years, tailor-made implementation support and capacity development activities with respect to negotiating sound and functioning ABS agreements with users of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge will be conducted in the identified partner countries. Binding, valid and enforceable contracts is the core legal tool for making ABS work on the ground with companies and other users. Opportunities for ABS agreements have been scoped in several of the countries, and discussions are ongoing with several stakeholders.

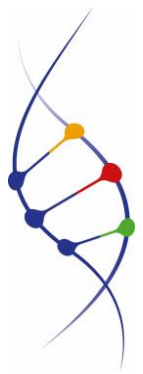
1.3.1 Patent Landscape for Pacific island countries

Lead: UNSW



Financing agreement with UNSW

Research including patent landscaping relating to traditional knowledge of medicinal plant species for species found in Vanuatu and Polynesia have been conducted, with some preliminary results for other countries (Samoa and Fiji). These will continue to be generated to inform CNAs about utilisation of genetic resources accessed in their country, to identify potential gaps in regulatory regimes and highlight benefit-sharing potentials if appropriate regulatory systems would be in place. This work will also contribute to regional and international discussions about potential solutions such as databases or patent disclosure requirements. In 2020-2021 this research is focusing on patent landscaping activities relating to PNG and Solomon Islands, case studies based on the research, and establishing relationships with key stakeholders in countries to see if there are potential ABS value chains.



2 Auxiliary Processes

While activities under the Initiative's core processes focus on the implementation of ABS and the Nagoya Protocol at country level, auxiliary processes are directed at the broader frame in which these national activities are embedded. Auxiliary processes contribute to regional harmonisation and create synergies at the supranational level by

- documenting and disseminating lessons learnt to cooperation countries of the ABS Initiative, and
- developing tools and formats for human capacity development, which will be made available to interested stakeholders worldwide through the ABS Initiative's website and the ABS Clearing-House.

Costs for all auxiliary processes specific to the Pacific region are budgeted in chapter 4 of the workplan. Activities related to auxiliary processes of general relevance are budgeted for in the respective workplan for Africa and therefore listed here without specific detail.

2.1 Regional Harmonisation and Exchange

2.1.1 Participation in relevant regional forums

Input and feedback to relevant regional forums will link the national implementation efforts to ABS-related processes at the regional level. Representatives of the ABS team will participate in relevant physical and/or virtual conferences, meetings, workshops and trade fairs for networking, agenda setting, promoting ABS and the Nagoya Protocol, and gathering relevant information for further capacity development in Pacific Islands States, such as:

- Relevant regional SCBD, FAO, CGIAR, UNCTAD and WIPO workshops
- CBD Regional Consultation Workshop(s) on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework
- Relevant GEF-funded project workshops and steering committee meetings
- Relevant meetings of sub-regional organisations
- Meetings of the EU ABS Stakeholder Forum

2.1.2 6th Regional ABS Workshop for the Pacific, Noumea, New Caledonia, 27-30 April 2020 – cancelled and substituted with a webinar series (see 2.1.4)

Lead: UNSW



Financing agreements with UNSW and SPREP

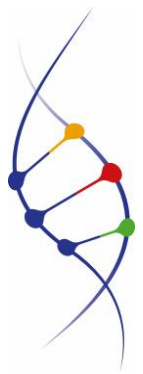
It was planned to organise a regional workshop targeting ABS stakeholders back-to-back with the 10th Pacific Natures Conference in 19-24 April 2020 in Noumea – organised by SPREP, SPC and IUCN – offering a cost-effective opportunity to discuss implementation status of the countries analysing workable approaches for small administrations, identify gaps and discuss the potential role of regional organisations in implementing the compliance obligations of the Nagoya Protocol. Due to COVID-19 the Pacific Natures Conference was postponed at short notice in March 2020. Finally, the organisers announced that the Conference will be held online from 24-27 November 2020.

2.1.3 3rd Oceania Biodiscovery Forum, Brisbane, Australia, 2021 (tbc/tbd)



Financing agreements with UNSW and SPREP, and co-financing from Queensland Government

The regional Oceania Biodiscovery Forum planned for August or November 2020 will now be planned for 2021, with the support of SPREP and the Queensland Government. The forum is intended to bring



together biodiscovery researchers, national focal points, government representatives and stakeholders from the Pacific Islands and Australia. The Queensland Government has agreed to host this and has recently reformed its Biodiscovery Act (2020, as amended) to comply with the Nagoya Protocol. The forum will allow exchange between researchers, government, Indigenous peoples, and other relevant stakeholders about the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol, challenges for conducting fair and equitable research, mechanisms for protecting traditional knowledge, and emerging issues (like digital sequence information).

2.1.4 Webinar series supporting national implementation

Lead: UNSW



Financing agreement with UNSW

Building on the experience of the ABS Initiative organising webinars for African stakeholders including government, civil society and private sector representatives etc., a series of webinars focussing on national implementation options and challenges will be organised in close cooperation with SPREP. Topics to be covered will include, but are not limited to, choice of legal instruments in ABS implementation, possible options for developing and designing ABS institutional arrangements, issues to consider in negotiating and concluding MAT, benefit-sharing for conservation and sustainable use and issues related to digital sequence information.

Webinars could be scheduled monthly starting by end of September 2020.

2.2 Interfaces to International Processes

The national implementation of ABS is framed and informed by processes and institutions at the international level. The ABS Initiative will therefore maintain an interface between national activities in its partner countries and relevant international forums and processes, ensuring the exchange of input and feedback through participation in meetings and joint activities with international partners.

2.2.1 Participation in relevant international forums

Representatives of the ABS team will participate in relevant international conferences, meetings, workshops and trade fairs for networking, agenda setting, promoting ABS and the Nagoya Protocol, and gathering relevant information for further capacity development in ACP countries. So far, the following meetings and events have been identified as relevant for the ABS community:

- Nagoya Protocol-related meetings
- Other relevant CBD meetings
- WIPO IGC Meetings, Geneva, Switzerland
- FAO-, CGRFA- and ITPGRFA-related meetings
- Meetings related to WHO-PIP
- UEBT 12th “Beauty of Sourcing with Respect” Conference – Paris, France, June 2021 (tbd.)

2.3 Knowledge Management and Transfer:

Lead: ABS Initiative



Further development of the website for documenting processes and experiences in partner countries, highlighting best practices; integrating ABS case documentation

The ABS Initiative will continue to act as a knowledge broker, reviewing and disseminating lessons learnt at the national, regional and international level and fostering communication and learning



among all its stakeholders. As in the past, the Initiative will initiate studies and use its knowledge management tools (such as the website) to compile and disseminate information and knowledge.

2.4 Knowledge Generation for Human Capacity Development (HCD) Tools

Lead: ABS Initiative

Further development of the website for documenting processes and experiences in partner countries, highlighting best practices; integrating ABS case documentation

In close collaboration with the mentioned partners the ABS Initiative is conceptualising, developing and producing the listed tools. For details refer to the ABS Initiative's workplan for Africa:

- Concept for blended learning tool on ABS agreements (Lead: ABS Initiative)
- ABS CEPA materials for IPLCs (Lead: ABS Initiative and Natural Justice)
- ABS Contract Templates (Lead: ABS Initiative)
- Up-scaling a tool on IT-based application and monitoring system (Lead: ABS Initiative)
- Nagoya Protocol implementation options (Lead: ABS Initiative)
- ABS process simulation (Lead: ABS Initiative and SCBD)

3 Steering and Guiding Processes

3.1 Steering Committee

3.1.1 Joint Regional Steering Committee for the Pacific: tbd.

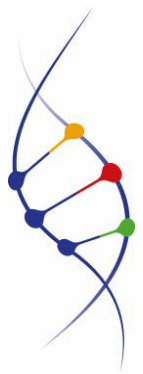
Lead: SPREP

The Joint Regional Steering Committee will provide guidance to the ABS Initiative and other implementing partners on further implementation-oriented support to the relevant stakeholders in the region and agree upon the work plan and budget for 2020-2021.

4 Budget 10/2020 – 12/2021

The budget for implementing the work plan 10/2020 - 12/2021 (see table 1) is structured according to the process landscape of the ABS Initiative.

Co-funding contributions are listed where information is available at this stage of planning. The column 'Costs' indicates the expected costs including co-funding contributions for the planning period.



Overall Pacific Budget: 10/2020 - 12/2021

No.	Activity	Country	Costs	Co-funding	ABS Initiative core budget
1	Supporting Partner Countries				
1.1	National Institutional and Regulatory ABS Frameworks				
1.0.1	Flexible budget for country support		10,900		10,900
1.0.2	Ongoing processes, roadmap & implement.	Cook Islands	9,016	8,000	1,016
1.0.3	Ongoing processes, roadmap & implement.	Fiji	12,480		12,480
1.0.4	Ongoing processes, roadmap & implement.	Vanuatu	74,432	28,000	46,432
1.0.5	Ongoing processes, roadmap & implement.	Solomon Islands	18,705	1,500	17,205
1.0.6	Ongoing processes, roadmap & implement.	PNG	83,907	25,000	58,907
1.2	Effective Participation of IPLCs				
1.2.1	Development of CEPA materials		9,625		9,625
1.3	Development of ABS Agreements				
1.3.1	Patent landscape analysis		11,450	10,000	1,450
1.3.2	Scoping ABS compliant value chains		12,175	10,000	2,175
1	Sub-Total		242,690	82,500	160,190
2	Auxiliary Processes				
2.1	Regional Harmonisation and Exchange				
2.1.1	Participation and inputs to regional fora		9,223		9,223
2.1.2	ABS Regional Webinars		31,980		31,980
2.1.3	Pacific Natures Conference	New Caledonia	0		0
2.1.4	Oceania Biodiscovery Forum 2021	Australia	88,560	30,000	58,560
2	Sub-Total		129,763	30,000	99,763
	Total Costs - Implementation		372,453	112,500	259,953
3	Steering and Guiding Processes				
3.1	Steering Committee				
3.1.1	Joint Regional SC Pacific		1,233		1,233
3.2	Project Management				
0	UNSW: Regional Coordination		13,050		13,050
3	Sub-Total		14,283	0	14,283
Sum			386,736	112,500	274,236
	Total overhead costs*				35,651
	Project costs				309,887

* overhead costs will be covered by donors as stated in the respective financing agreements



Annex 1: Update on ABS status in Melanesia and the Region:

Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Fiji have ratified the Nagoya Protocol, and are receiving support from the ABS Initiative and SPREP. Samoa, Marshall Islands, Tuvalu, Tonga and Palau have also ratified the Nagoya Protocol and have benefited from SPREP and ABS Initiative support in regional workshops and through capacity building support by correspondence.

Vanuatu has a functioning permit system in place and needs some minor legal revisions to the bioprospecting provisions of their law to be Nagoya Protocol compliant. A TK Bill has now reportedly been passed by parliament and ABS Initiative have commented on early drafts of that Bill. It is anticipated that community protocols developed under the ARC grant will support the implementation of the new TK Act and the Bioprospecting section of the Environmental Management Act. IPLC focused country visits occurred in November 2019 under the ARC Discovery Grant.

Fiji has some ABS draft policies and procedures, but these do not appear to be well coordinated with other agencies or effective to date. The Fiji Government attended regional ABS contracts training in Nadi in August 2018 and a regional ABS capacity-building workshop in October 2019. A mission to meet with the Fiji government was planned to occur in February 2020, but this could not occur and is postponed until 2021 due to COVID-19.

Solomon Islands have been supported by 2 ABS Initiative/SPREP national workshops in Honiara to date. In October 2019 they ratified the Nagoya Protocol. In 2019 they employed a research officer in the Division of Environmental Protection and have been working on expanding collaboration with provincial government offices on ABS and permit granting processes. Following a successful national workshop and consultation in May 2019, there is ongoing interest in provincial and national support for improvement of ABS processes and awareness raising.

PNG has developed a roadmap for Nagoya Protocol ratification and implementation with the ABS Initiative and are seeking support through an MOU with ABS Initiative, to hire an in-country consultant to help develop the ABS policy, guidelines and to draft ABS legislation. This has been delayed due to local issues with finance reporting requirements.

The **Cook Islands** have also completed an ABS draft policy under a UNDP-GEF project and begun working on ABS legislation to support their ratification process. They were supported by the ABS Initiative with national workshops in Rarotonga in December 2018 and meetings in September 2019. ARC grant trips for further BCP development are likely in 2021, and ongoing support is occurring by correspondence in 2020.

In addition, there have been some discussions with regional organisations including the University of South Pacific (USP), Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), SPREP and other stakeholders, about regional ABS issues, such as the coordination of regional genebanks and research activities.