

The **Project** is part of the Global ABS UNDP-GEF Project “Strengthening of human resources, legal frameworks and institutional capacities to implement the Nagoya Protocol” with participation of 24 countries, including the Republic of Belarus, a Party to the Protocol since its entry into force on October 12, 2014. The Global Project is going to build on the initiatives and investments of participating countries to implement the basic measures of the Nagoya Protocol over the years following the end of the project. In November 2011, Belarus adopted the 2011-2020 Strategy for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity.

The project aims to assist the countries in developing and strengthening of their national frameworks for access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing, human resources and administrative capabilities.

It is expected that as a result of the project implementation, an administrative legal mechanism to implement the Nagoya Protocol in the Republic of Belarus and a system for the genetic resources’ inventory based on modern scientific techniques and control over their use by means of information technology tools (database) will be developed.

The Project includes three Components:

Component 1: Strengthening of legal, policy and institutional capacities to develop the National ABS framework (access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing).

This component aims to develop a system for access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing by the providers and users of genetic resources and traditional knowledge associated with them.

Targets:

- Prepare concrete proposals for amendments and/or additions to existing normative legal acts, as well as for the development and adoption of new normative legal acts to ensure effective implementation of the Nagoya Protocol;
- Submit the proposals to relevant State bodies for the development and adoption of normative legal acts;
- Establish an institutional framework in support of traditional knowledge holders associated with genetic resources, innovations and practices;
- Develop a package of standard documents that provide legal access to genetic resources and traditional knowledge associated with them.

Planned activities under Component 1:

- Hold an inception workshop to familiarize with the project, its objectives and targets and determine the timeframe for their implementation;
- Hold workshops to discuss national legal framework options developed by experts to regulate access and benefit-sharing issues;
- Discuss analysis results related to the legislative regulation of access to genetic resources and traditional knowledge in the country-Parties to the Nagoya Protocol that have introduced corresponding amendments to the national legislation; generation of concrete proposals to improve the national legislation;
- Hold awareness-raising workshops to discuss the proposals under development so as to improve the National ABS legislation for specialists of the involved ministries, institutions, potential providers (users) of genetic resources and traditional knowledge holders;
- Hold meetings and online discussion forums organized by ABS NCC (the National Coordination Centre on Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit-Sharing).

Component 2: Building trust between users and providers of genetic resources to facilitate the identification of biodiscovery efforts

This component aims to study existing and emerging partnerships between the users and providers of genetic resources and provide for “transparency” in benefit-sharing between them.

Targets:

- Perform an inventory of genetic resources (the start-up stage) using a DNA barcoding technique;
- Use the National Clearing-House for the Nagoya Protocol for information exchange and sharing of experience with the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol in biodiversity research and developments in various sectors, including best practices, training programs and modules on biological research, investigation methods, intellectual property and business models of key industries (pharmaceutical, botanical, biotechnological, agricultural, biotechnology for food/beverages and cosmetics sector) developed and provided to relevant stakeholders;
- Develop a draft Code of Ethics for the providers and users of genetic resources;
- Raise awareness of the importance of genetic resources as a source of innovation in the national economy at the level of the interested state bodies and organizations.

Planned activities under Component 2:

- Perform DNA barcoding of genetic resources (wild plants of rare and endangered species);
- Replenish the Republican DNA Bank of a human, animals, plants and microorganisms with DNA samples and the biological material of species under study;
- Develop a DNA Barcodes Database of the studied species;
- Hold an awareness-raising workshop on the exchange and interaction between various scientific and production disciplines to understand business models of key industries;
- Hold awareness-raising workshops on the DNA-barcoding technique results used for species identification for specialists involved in the conservation and sustainable use of biological (genetic) diversity;
- Hold workshops on the legal and administrative regulation of access to genetic resources under the Nagoya Protocol for holders of genetic resources;
- Hold a Round Table with participation of legal persons, government officials and other specialists (biologists, geneticists, foresters, game wardens, and folklorists) to discuss liability measures for violation of legislation on access to the country's genetic resources and sharing of benefits between the providers and users of genetic resources and traditional knowledge associated with them;
- Hold a Round Table with participation of experts, a MinPrirody representative, project partner organizations, including the participants involved in activities under other Conventions on the protection and use of natural resources to discuss cooperation in the area of access to genetic resources and traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources;
- Draft proposals on the improvement of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy taking into account the results obtained in the course of the project implementation.

Component 3. Strengthening the capacity of indigenous and local communities to ensure the Nagoya Protocol implementation

This component aims to carry out research so as to identify holders of traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources.

Targets:

- Conduct scientific assessment of traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources as the National Heritage with innovative potential;
- Study legal protection-related issues of traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources;
- Raise key groups’ awareness of importance of traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources.

Planned activities under Component 3:

- Prepare and hold an inception workshop for legal persons, ethnographers, folklorists and linguists to discuss objectives and targets of theoretical and practical research in traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources;
- Analyze the current country's situation in terms of traditional knowledge holders' protection at different levels;
- Clarify the terminology framework for the study of traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources applied to the humanities;
- Determine methods for the detection of persons identified as traditional knowledge holders and work with them;
- Participation in the development of the database for the genetic resources' inventory to include data on traditional knowledge of Belarusians associated with genetic resources;
- Monitoring of genetic resources' use in ethnomedicine of Belarusians;
- Conduct field study;
- Detect persons identified as traditional knowledge holders associated with genetic resources, work with them using the developed methods;
- Collect and analyze toponyms and microtoponyms motivated by lexemes related to traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources;
- Identify dialectisms reflecting traditional knowledge;
- Compile a glossary of lexemes related to traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources;
- Complex fieldwork (interview, included observation) followed by decoding, processing and classification of the obtained data.

Desk study:

In linguistics:

- Determine the place and role of terminology related to traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources in the lexical system of language.

In ethnography and folklore studies:

- Study of traditional knowledge in the Belarusian ethnology;
- Clarify existing ethical positions in working with traditional knowledge holders and, first of all, with folk healers;
- Draft proposals on the protection of traditional knowledge and possible legalization of individual folk recipes;
- Prepare final manuscripts on desk studies in linguistics and folklore studies;
- Participate in the popularization of the obtained results (media spots);
- Prepare and hold workshops for legal persons, ethnographers, folklorists and linguists studying traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources with participation of persons identified as holders of traditional knowledge and subject-matter specialists (biology, genetics, and etc.).

KEY PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS:

Proposals for supplements and amendments to the legislation in force to ensure the Nagoya Protocol implementation in the Republic of Belarus have been included in the 2020 Plan for the Development of Regulatory Legal Acts by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus.

Proposals for and amendments to the Code of Culture have been submitted to the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Belarus to include the term "traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources" and mechanisms regulating access to such knowledge and protecting the rights of TK holders in the Code.

An Interactive Database has been developed to monitor the utilization of genetic resources pursuant to the requirements of Article 17 of the Nagoya Protocol.

Component 1

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Component 2

▶ DNA Barcode Reference Library of rare and endangered wild plant species created on the basis of the Republican DNA Bank of a Human, Animals, Plants and Microorganisms of the Institute of Genetics and Cytology, NAS of Belarus (more than 60 species out of 100 collected samples of biological material analyzed)

▶ A training event for 40 specialists from 7 countries of Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Moldova, and Ukraine) on the use of a DNA barcoding technique to screen the species diversity in the territories under study held

▶ An Interactive Database to monitor the utilization of genetic resources pursuant to the requirements of Article 17 of the Nagoya Protocol developed

▶ A new website of the National Coordination Centre on Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit-Sharing (ABS NCC), which operates as the National Clearing-House for regulating access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing (National ABS CH), developed and launched.

Component 3

▶ A group of experts in the field of folklore, ethnography, cultural studies and linguistics to study and collect information on national traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources formed

▶ Conceptual Provisions of the National Code of Conduct developed as a pillar for building trust between providers and users of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge based on analysis findings with regard to international practices in the field of their development and utilization

▶ A project proposal to establish local communities (herbalists, wild-hive beekeepers) and associations (Belarusian Traditional Horse Breeding Association) and to build capacity (capacity-building) with a view of preserving traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources and restoring local agricultural breeds (red breed of cattle, black-and-white breed of pigs) and horse-drawn (Polesskaya and Belarusskaya light draft breeds) animals on the verge of extinction

▶ A database developed to store information and records on traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources collected during 2018-2019 field expeditions, their systematization and further replenishment.

Overall project outcomes.

17 activities held: 2 international and 15 national workshops and training events

422 participants: 66,35% – female, 33,65% – male

Publications:

4 books and 16 Articles in periodicals

100 leaflets with the text of the Nagoya Protocol

1000 leaflets with the description of the Nagoya Protocol, its objectives and targets; with the description of medicinal herbs traditionally used by Belarusians to maintain health and as foodways.

Internationally Recognized Certificate of Compliance (IRCC):

7 ABSCH Internationally Recognized Certificates of Compliance with the Nagoya Protocol during the transfer of genetic resources of the Republic of Belarus to foreign GenBanks (USA) and Scientific Research Institutions (Canada, Russia) issued.

Project proposals:

4 project proposals prepared to continue the activities in the area of conservation, including restoration of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge of Belarus; strengthen mechanisms regulating legal access to genetic resources and traditional knowledge; enhance the level of interdisciplinary collaboration of NAS of Belarus, health care and educational institutions to develop the concept of active longevity based on the traditional utilization of genetic resources in ethnomedicine and cuisine.

KEY PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS WITH REGARD TO TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

The state-of-the-art classification of traditional knowledge of Belarusians is based on the fact that their data belong to a particular field of knowledge: they distinguish folk meteorology, astronomy, medicine, botany, zoology, pharmacology, etc. Traditional knowledge of Belarusians is fixed mainly in oral form, as well as in written sources and material culture artifacts. An important project objective was to analyze all sources with a view of clarifying the specifics of the traditional knowledge accumulation by Belarusians over centuries.

- Field studies in a number of Districts of Belarus. The collected materials are stored in the electronic archive of the K. Krapiva Institute of Art, Ethnography and Folklore, NAS of Belarus
 - Methods to detect TK holders improved, including work with them
 - A special questionnaire “Ethnobotany and Ethnozoology of Belarus” drawn up
 - Based on field data, two parts of documentary “Koznaya travinka – lyachinka” (Every grass-blade is a remedy) created
 - Field data collected, archived and are being prepared for publication
 - The utilization of animal world genetic resources in the area of Belarusian ethnomedicine and ethnoveterinary monitored
 - Monograph published. *The book is devoted to the plant world knowledge, vision and rituals in the Belarusian village of 19th – 21st centuries. History of ethnographic data collection about plants is highlighted, including traditional phytotherapy and use of wild plants in foodways.*

Horizons

- Conservation and effective utilization of traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources stipulates their documentation and comprehensive study
 - Field studies in the rural areas of Belarus should be continued to identify TK holders of animal and plant worlds
 - Possibilities of practical use of such knowledge should provide economic benefits to local communities, and thus, contribute to their sustainable development.

Recommendations:

- Ensuring of interagency cooperation, developing a common policy for the traditional knowledge and practices safeguarding, protection of their intellectual rights
- Amendments to the Code of Culture of the Republic of Belarus, Civil and Administrative Codes on the protection of rights of traditional knowledge holders and bearers of practices to be introduced
 - Identification, inventory, digitalization, creation of common databases

- Ensuring of community participation in regional and local politics at the decision-making level, creating management plans and advisory councils under power structures
- Popularization through mass media, publications, TV, social networks, cultural tourism
- The development of various forms of education, including among holders
- Development of Codes of Ethics for the Protection of the Rights of Holders of ICH

If the world is unable to bring about truly sustainable development, ICH will remain at risk; but if ICH is not safeguarded, it will be impossible to make sustainable development a reality.

Key recommendation for Belarus.

Acknowledge traditional knowledge as the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

NATIONAL ABS CLEARING HOUSE WEBSITE AND THE DATABASE TO MONITOR THE USE OF GENETIC RESOURCES. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

The main objective of the Database development is to monitor the utilization of genetic resources that allows tracing and controlling the stages of GRs transfer and coordinating communication and information exchange between the participants of access.

Database use shall provide for:

- Systematization and automation of a system enabling to keep record of communication flow cases between participants of GRs exchange – legal entities and individuals, authorized bodies of the Republic of Belarus and of other countries
- Record and coordination of communication of all GRs transfer participants and exchange of information using software interface, including record of GRs transfer participants
- Possibility to maintain reference books of:

Genetic resources

GRs transfer participants (GRs providers and users)

Documents related to GRs transfer

- Monitor and control every stage of GRs transfer procedure
- Possibility to exchange documents between GRs transfer participants and CNA in the online mode
- Compile reporting documentation on every reference book
- Store images and documents related to the GRs access procedure

Website: abs.igc.by

Main objective of the website development is to improve the National Clearing-House to regulate access to genetic resources and equitable sharing of benefits (ABS NCC website).

By means as follows:

- Providing information on the Nagoya Protocol requirements
- Information exchange with the Global Clearing-House for access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing
- Fulfilling international commitments on the Nagoya Protocol by the Republic of Belarus

New website version:

- New design in corporate range of colors
- Restructured sections, topics and information update

- Possibility to access Interactive Database “On Monitoring GRs Utilization of the Republic of Belarus”
- Possibility of authorized users to have remote connection to the database for access to its stored data using browser
- Integrated news feed of the CBD website (www.cbd.int)
- Possibility to keep record of website users
- Adaptive website design to the screen size of various devices