

Evaluation of the Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) Capacity Development Initiative

denkmodell-Project 13-229

Report

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Abbreviations

ABS	Access and Benefit Sharing
ABS Initiative	Access and Benefit Sharing Capacity Development Initiative
ACP	African, Caribbean, and Pacific Group of States
aTK	Traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources
AU	African Union
BCP	Biocultural Community Protocol
BCS	Background Conclusion Sheet
CARICOM	Caribbean Community and Common Market
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CD	Capacity Development
CEPA	Communication, Education and Public Awareness for ABS
COP	Conference of the Parties
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
EC	European Commission
GR	Genetic resources
ICNP	Intergovernmental Committee for the Nagoya Protocol on ABS
IFDD	Institut de la Francophonie pour le développement durable
ILC	Indigenous Local Community
IPR	Intellectual Property Rights
ISESCO	Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
ITPGRFA	International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MoV	Means of Verification
NFP	National Focal Points
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NP	Nagoya Protocol
OECD DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for
PPP	Public Private Partnership
UNCBD	United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity
RoM	Results-oriented Monitoring
SC	Steering Committee
SCBD	Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity
SPREP	The Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development

1 Executive summary

The evaluation of the ABS Initiative's programme phase 2012-2015 was carried out between November 2013 and February 2014 by the consulting company "denkmodell GmbH". It aimed at measuring the performance of the Initiative and at drawing lessons for programme management and the conceptualization of a next programme phase beyond 2015. Following the principles of participation and triangulation, the initial analysis of secondary data was complemented by the collection and analysis of primary data through a web-based stakeholder survey and further semi-structured stakeholder interviews. In order to increase the comparability of results to other monitoring and evaluation efforts, the terminology of the present evaluation follows the concept of the European Commission and the grading of the evaluation criteria on a scale from A to D.¹

The ABS Initiative's **intervention logic** is overall comprehensible, though it shows some deficiencies regarding the consistent use of terminology and the formulation of objectives at different levels, which appear to be partially too ambitious and unrealistic. The intervention logic should be revised in a way that it is possible to attribute the programme purpose to what the ABS Initiative is actually doing and that ensures the development of a common understanding of results for which the Initiative can be held accountable at the end of the programme phase.

The analysis of the Initiative's **monitoring approach** revealed several shortcomings regarding the monitoring process, the formulation and measurement of indicators and the format of presentation. Monitoring should become a continuous exercise with clear tasks and responsibilities within the Secretariat. Data should be compiled in a monitoring table that provides a condensed

overview of the status of the programme. At the same time, activity monitoring should to be improved, too. Finally, indicators should be complemented by baseline data so that it is possible to measure actual change. In order to enable attribution of change to the ABS Initiative's interventions, it is recommended to supplement the existing set of indicators by qualitative assessments.

Both the ABS mechanism itself as well as the ABS Capacity Development Initiative are considered **highly relevant**. The mechanism is a potentially powerful instrument to leverage tangible impacts in provider countries. Once aware of the mechanism, a strong desire is expressed by stakeholders to become active players in it. Yet, successful implementation of ABS compliant value chains is still to be proven. The Initiative is highly appreciated by stakeholders for its integrative approach of facilitation, dialogue and capacity development on a subject that is highly complex and only accessible to a relatively small number of people. The ABS Initiative clearly meets the demand of a high number of countries in this regard.

Overall, the stakeholder survey and interviews reveal high appreciation for the **effectiveness** of the ABS Initiative. So far, 17 countries within the regional scope of the ABS Initiative have ratified the Nagoya Protocol while another 25 have initiated ratification related consultation processes. Despite this notable advancement, the ABS Initiative needs to answer the question whether and how to intensify the support for national translation of the NP in the coming years into national strategies, regulatory / institutional frameworks. Equally, the development of ABS compliant value chains requires further support, especially with regard to the perceived and growing need to prove that the ABS mechanism can deliver in time, i.e. before enthusiasm for and trust in it ceases, and the "window of opportunity for ABS" closes. A growing number of (sub)regional organisations consider ABS as an important topic and contribute to the

¹ See European Commission, EuropeAid Co-operation Office, 2012: ROM Handbook – Results-oriented Monitoring. A=very good; B=good; C=problems; D=serious deficiencies.

coordinated development of ABS implementation concepts. Overall, the Initiative's effectiveness is considered satisfactory, but there is room for improvement.

The evaluators see potential for increasing the ABS Initiative's **efficiency** in the facilitation of learning and exchange amongst practitioners. Training courses could be complemented by, blended with, or in some cases even substituted through webinars and virtual knowledge events hosted by the ABS initiative. Given the financial implications of face-to-face trainings, their partial substitution by distance-learning events could free resources available for other purposes or the extension of training activities to a greater learning community. Nevertheless, the efficiency is considered satisfactory.

Generally, the assessment of the ABS Initiative's **impact** in the ongoing programme phase is premature. The NP has not entered into force yet, which would be a precondition for most of the Initiative's overall objectives. From the evaluators' perspective, it is unlikely that substantial impact will be achieved until the end of the ongoing programme phase. The realization of impact will therefore require investment and planning beyond 2015.

It is still too early to assess whether the effects caused by the Initiative's interventions are sustainable. However, **sustainability** prospects are currently strongly at stake due to its capacity development approach. This approach is mainly based on the provision of trainings for individuals by international / German trainers and so far neglecting the institutionalisation of knowledge and the development of national and/or regional (training) capacities. In the recent past, the Initiative has started building up capacities across categories of stakeholders. The evaluators strongly support this orientation and advocate for the Initiative to support the formation of interdisciplinary multi-stakeholder groups on ABS at national level. This will eventually lead to a broader consolidation of ABS knowledge and its dissemination in targeted countries. The stronger implication of research and

education institutions is an important element.

Gender equality plays a rather marginal role in the Initiative so far. It could be given a more prominent one particularly in the implementation of ABS compliant value chains, e.g. argan oil or shea butter.

Stake- and rightsholder participation is the core constituting element in the approach of the Initiative of which various forms are applied and practiced. Generally, the evaluators and consulted stakeholders recognise and appreciate the strongly stakeholder-based consultation processes and the highly participatory nature of the Initiative with regard to decision-making. Yet, the evaluators wish to stimulate discussion within the Secretariat to consider taking into account more strongly private sector and ILC stakeholders in workshops and trainings; further exchange with these actors is much desired and appreciated by interviewees. Also, as explained in the sustainability section, a broader involvement of stakeholders of different professional provenances is desirable.

Among the nine **modes of delivery** employed by the Initiative, workshops, training courses, CEPA, and best practices with the private sector are considered most appropriate by the stakeholders. Results from the interviews and the online survey do not provide clear evidence whether and which activities would be less important or even dispensable. Nevertheless, they do point out high demand for support and advice at national level. So far, such support is provided by the Initiative only to a limited extent, amongst others due to the insufficient availability of appropriate human resources. However, in combination with process manuals ("how to go about it at national level") national support could increase the Initiative's effectiveness and the consolidation of its achievements at national level.

On the one hand, evaluators see a need for the ABS Initiative to **focus** more strongly on support at national level. On the other hand, the implementation of ABS compliant value chains will be critical for the Initiative's overall success and the

continued active participation and enthusiasm of stakeholders. As ABS compliant value chains are the ultimate goal of all interventions, the Initiative should put their development and implementation more strongly in the focus of activities.

The **governance structure** of the ABS Initiative is perceived as appropriate by stakeholders. So far, decisions in the Steering Committees were taken in consensus indicating that the governance structure allows for effective management. Respondents of the online survey suggested a stronger involvement of private sector as well as civil society representatives. At a different level, the Initiative's possibility to financially involve further donor organisations, to increase the budget, and to scale it up is jeopardized under the present conditions. This issue should be addressed at the level of the Joint Steering Committees.

With regard to the issue of **learning** examples for and learning from the Initiative the evaluators suggest to compile and systemise in a consistent way the Initiative's lessons learnt and best practices ("Why did we do it the way we did and what are our experiences with this?").

2 Background and purpose of the evaluation

Programme background

The “fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources” is the third objective of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) that was opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992 and entered into force in December 1993. The CBD’s third objective, referred to as “access and benefit sharing” (ABS), aims at giving incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity by adding (economic) value to genetic resources used by businesses and research institutes.

At the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD, Johannesburg 2002), political leaders requested an international regime that would ensure and safeguard the implementation of ABS. In 2010 in Japan the Nagoya Protocol on ABS (NP) was adopted at the 10th Conference of Parties of the CBD. It will enter into force 90 days after the date of deposit of the 50th ratification. The NP enhances legal certainty and transparency for users and providers by creating more predictable conditions for accessing genetic resources (GR) and traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources (aTK), promoting adequate benefit sharing where GR and aTK leave the jurisdiction of the provider country; and promoting measures to monitor compliance and mutually agreed terms.

Brief programme description

The Access and Benefit Sharing Capacity Development Initiative (ABS Initiative) aims at supporting relevant stakeholders on the African continent and in the ACP countries (African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States) in developing and implementing national ABS regulations, in particular to ratify and implement the Nagoya Protocol on ABS, as well as supporting the establishment of ABS compliant value chains.

The ABS Initiative is a multi-donor initiative that was established in 2006. It is managed by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH through a pool funding mechanism with financial contributions from

- the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany/Institut de la Francophonie pour le développement durable
- the Danish Ministry of the Environment
- the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- the European Commission under the 10th European Development Fund.

Purpose and users of the evaluation

The external and independent evaluation of the ABS Initiative’s ongoing programme phase 2012-2015 was carried out by the Berlin-based consulting company “denkmodell GmbH” with team members Fabian Busch and Ralf Arning.

The evaluation is supposed to support donors in decision-making about the need for further support to the ABS Initiative. Furthermore, process and results of the evaluation shall help the Secretariat of the ABS Initiative at GIZ to draw lessons from the first two years of implementation of the current phase (2012-2015), to discuss the necessity of readjustments, and to prepare the conceptualization of a next programme phase beyond 2015. Finally, the evaluation enables a wider circle of stakeholders to learn about the initiative and to better understand the benefits and the challenges of capacity development for ABS.

Objectives of the Evaluation

Subject to the evaluation was the ongoing phase of the ABS Initiative as summarized in the “Programme Document 2012-2015”.² The evaluation aimed at rating the success of the ABS Initiative on the basis of the five OECD-DAC criteria for evaluating development assistance: relevance, effectiveness, impact, efficiency and sustainability. This also included an assessment of the ABS Initiative’s contribution to cross-cutting issues such as the promotion of gender equality, and stake-/rightsholder participation and involvement as well as to the achievement of overarching objectives such as poverty reduction and the Millennium Development Goals.

Beyond the OECD-DAC principles, cross-cutting issues and overarching objectives, the evaluation’s reference group³ and the donors of the ABS Initiative formulated following set of specific areas of interest that were scrutinized by the evaluation team:

- appropriateness of the modes of delivery of the ABS Initiative
- internal and external risks and opportunities
- need to focussing / setting priorities
- appropriateness of the governance structure of the ABS Initiative
- learning opportunities from/for other comparable initiatives

The consultant team translated these objectives into guiding questions for the evaluation that were discussed and harmonised with the reference group i.e. the Initiative’s Secretariat. They are presented in annex 1. For the complete ToR of the evaluation, please see annex 2.

Timing

The evaluation was carried out between November 2013 and February 2014. At that time, the ongoing programme phase had been running for about 2 years. Therefore, the consultants started out with the hypothesis that the initiative’s objectives for the 4-year programme phase would not be fully achieved yet. They assumed, however, that a critical – and therefore measurable – mass of results would already have materialised.

Moreover, a Results-oriented Monitoring (RoM) exercise was carried out from November to December 2013 by a different consultant team on behalf of the European Commission. The evaluation team did not encounter any interference with this parallel exercise. As RoM was implemented with a strong focus on three selected countries (Guyana, Cook Islands, and Cameroon) the results should be seen as valuable and complementary information to the evaluation.

In order to increase the comparability of results of the RoM and the evaluation, the denkmodell team decided to utilize the evaluation terminology and concepts as applied by the European Commission.⁴ This is in particular relevant for the grading of the evaluation criteria and the overall programme performance on a scale from A to D as well as the terminology of the hierarchy of objectives – both concepts vary among different aid agencies, donors, and implementers which sometimes creates confusion. Therefore, they will be clarified in the following chapters.

² The Programme Document is available on the initiative’s website at <http://www.abs-initiative.info>. It specifies target groups, beneficiaries, objectives and main activities of the ABS Initiative.

³ In the following, the ABS Initiative’s Secretariat is referred to as the evaluation’s reference group that supported the evaluation team in identifying data sources, validated the evaluation questions, discussed the conclusions and recommendations, and accepted the deliverables of the assignment (inception and final evaluation report).

⁴ See European Commission, EuropeAid Co-operation Office, 2012: ROM Handbook – Results-oriented Monitoring.

3 Evaluation methodology

For a better understanding of how the findings and recommendations were concluded, this part in brief outlines the guiding principles for the evaluation (3.1), explains the specific methods used (3.2), traces the evaluation process (3.4), and reflects upon limitations of the evaluation (3.5).⁵

3.1 Guiding principles

For a meaningful evaluation of the ABS Initiative's ongoing programme phase, following three principles were considered as crucial:

- 1) **Participation:** Oftentimes, stakeholders perceive external evaluators as controllers or auditors checking proper accounting and use of resources. Participation of stakeholders, however, places special emphasis on learning, refined decision-making and improved management – which is particularly relevant when evaluating an ongoing programme. In this regard, the evaluators aimed at facilitating a setting in which stakeholders could switch from “implementation” into a “reflective” mode in order to allow an honest and constructive assessment of programme performance.
- 2) **Triangulation:** denkmodell's understanding of an “objective” evaluation is one that succeeds in integrating different perspectives on the issue through a multitude of solid qualitative and quantitative methods of social research. Triangulation, the combination of different sources and data collection tools, helps to eliminate the weaknesses and blind spots of each method by complementing it with methods with a different focus, target group or perspective.
- 3) **Clarity about the internal evaluation framework:** At the outset of the assignment, the consultants analysed and clarified the existing results and monitoring framework with the reference group. As the precise, logical and consistent formulation of objectives and indicators were the basis for the evaluation, the evaluation team proposed several readjustments that are presented in chapter 4.

3.2 Methods of data collection

The foundation and start of the investigation was an in depth analysis of **secondary data** such as relevant programme documentation provided by the Secretariat of the ABS Initiative. Moreover, the evaluation team explored additional written sources where appropriate and available. Sources of secondary data are listed in chapter 10.

Primary data was collected using both **quantitative as well as qualitative methods**.

A web-based **stakeholder survey** was implemented in the initial phase using the online platform surveymonkey.com. This method was chosen in order to a) ensure the ab initio involvement of a broad range of stakeholders from different partner countries of the initiative, b) increase coverage, and c) achieve some level of representative sample – though it is not supported by statistical theory.

72 stakeholders were invited to participate in the online survey that was offered in English and French. The consultants drafted the questions and brought them into agreement with the reference group. A **high response rate of 65% (equivalent to 47 respondents)** resulted in a rich data basis for the evaluation.⁶ A summary of the survey results can be found in annex 3.

⁵ The methodological approach is described in further detail in the inception report of the evaluation that can be found in annex 4.

⁶ 36 participants processed the English online questionnaire (29 completed forms), 11 participants processed the French questionnaire (10 completed forms).

In this exploratory phase, the survey was complemented by **semi-structured individual and group interviews** with key stake- and knowledge-holders. At the following explanatory stage, the consultant's hypotheses and specific issues were further explored by a second round of stakeholder interviews.

With regard to the **determination of the sample size**, the evaluation team had to balance the desired active stakeholder participation and involvement on the one hand with the resources available for doing so on the other. This was particularly important with regard to the application of time-intensive qualitative approaches in which a single interview or a group discussion took a considerable amount of time.

For the selection of interview partners, the consultant team followed the approach of **non-probability sampling**. As the objective was not to draw statistical inferences, no sample size calculation formula was followed. Hence, participants of the online survey as well as all further interview partners were selected in a **combined approach of following criteria**:

- choosing respondents based on the fact that they are likely to have a good overview of or insights into the ABS Initiative (purposive sampling)
- using a random method to select respondents (random sampling)
- simply choosing respondents based on their availability to participate/contribute (opportunistic sampling).⁷

In order to **avoid biases in the selection of interview partners**, the reference group provided the consultants with an extensive list of candidates including information about their role in/for the ABS Initiative as well as their contact data. The evaluation team then **independently selected** and contacted the interviewees. A detailed schedule of interview partners can be found in annex 5.

3.3 Evaluation process

From perspective of the consultant team, the process as such was of particular importance since evaluations represent an important vehicle to the wider goal of making learning and change processes in programmes and organisations more effective and sustainable. The evaluation process can thus be divided in four fundamental stages:

- 1) **Inception phase**: The assignment was clarified in a telephone conference between the consultants and the manager and co-manager of the ABS Initiative. Based on this kick-off, the consultants reviewed programme documents and drafted an inception report that was suggesting readjustments in the intervention logic and outlining the intended evaluation approach. The **inception report was discussed with the reference group on 11th of November 2013** in a meeting in Eschborn and signed off afterwards.
- 2) **Exploratory phase**: The objective of the exploratory phase ("*broadening*") was to get a comprehensive overview of the ABS Initiative as reflected by its stakeholders ("coverage"). Accordingly, this phase was marked by rather broad stakeholder involvement: an online survey was implemented between 6th and 14th of December 2014 and complementary semi-structured interviews were held. The exploratory phase resulted in a compilation of issues/hypotheses to be scrutinized in further detail that was **discussed in an intermediate meeting with the evaluation's reference group on the 13th of January 2014** in Eschborn.

⁷ In November 2013 and January 2014, two training courses of the ABS Initiative were implemented in Bonn and Frankfurt. As they provided a good opportunity for the consultant team to interview national ABS Focal Points from different African countries, they can be seen as one example of opportunistic sampling.

- 3) **Explanatory phase:** The hypotheses guided data collection and analysis in the following explanatory phase (“*narrowing*”). In this phase of the evaluation, the team also strived to **confirm data collected** and analysed so far by sound and credible controls. This analysis aims at ensuring that the findings are (a) sound, (b) unbiased, (c) able to withstand any criticism when the report is published, and (d) credible from the intended users' viewpoint.
- 4) **Concluding phase:** The final step consisted of the discussion and analysis of the data, the verification of hypotheses, the drawing of conclusions, and the writing up of the evaluation report.

Lastly, the **evaluation criteria of the ABS Initiative were graded**. While grades allow for a quick overview of the performance, they strongly reduce the complexity of the issues at hand bearing the risk of overshadowing the actual findings. Therefore, the evaluators would like to point out that grades should be understood as a summary of an assessment, rather than the assessment being a justification for the grade.⁸ The following scale was used for the grading that is in line with the terminology of the EU RoM reports:

Grading	Numerical	Qualitative	
A	4	Very good	The situation is considered highly satisfactory, largely above average and potentially a reference for good practice. Recommendations focus on the need to adopt these good practices in other operations.
B	3	Good	The situation is considered satisfactory, but there is room for improvements. Recommendations are useful, but not vital for the operation.
C	2	Problems	There are issues which need to be addressed; otherwise the global performance of the operation may be negatively affected. Necessary improvements however do not require major revisions of the operations' strategy.
D	1	Serious deficiencies	There are deficiencies which are so serious that, if not addressed, they can lead to failure of the operation. Major adjustments and revision of the strategy are necessary.

The table on the following page provides an overview of the evaluation process, its stages and the stakeholders involved.

⁸ N.B.: In the case of the two DAC criteria effectiveness and impact of the Initiative, the assessment and grading has been done on the basis of the intervention logic and the respective (process) indicators. Consequently, a grading attributed to a targeted objective e.g. a “C” given to programme purpose 2 (p. 20), does not mean that strategically or methodologically the Initiative is on the wrong track (or, necessarily has major problems) but rather that it is still a relatively longer way to achieve the targeted objective compared to a grade “B”.

Table 1: The evaluation process

Phase	No.	Activity	Stakeholders involved	Timeline																									
				Okt 13			Nov 13			December 2013			January 2014			February 2014			March 2014										
				21.10	27.10	3.11	10.11	17.11	24.11	1.12	8.12	15.12	22.12	29.12	5.1	12.1	19.1	26.1	2.2	9.2	16.2	23.2	2.3	9.3	16.3	23.3	30.3		
Inception Phase	1.1.	Kick-off: Telephone conference	ABS Initiative Secretariat																										
	1.2.	Document analysis																											
	1.3.	Drafting of inception report																											
	1.4.	Discussion of inception report: Inception workshop in Eschborn	ABS Initiative Secretariat			8.11																							
	1.5.	Finalization of inception report				15.11																							
Exploratory phase	2.1.	Group interview in Bonn	National ABS Focal Points				13.11																						
	2.2.	Preparation of questions for online survey	ABS Initiative Secretariat																										
	2.3.	Technical preparation of survey																											
	2.4.	Implementation of online survey																											
	2.5.	Survey data compilation and analysis																											
	2.6.	Semi-structured individual interviews	Interview partners according non-probability sampling																										
	2.7.	Data analysis and development of hypotheses																											
	2.8.	Discussion of results of exploratory phase: Intermediate workshop in Eschborn	ABS Initiative Secretariat														13.01												
Explanatory phase	3.2.	Group interview in Frankfurt	National ABS Focal Points														14.01												
	3.1.	Semi-structure individual interviews	Interview partners according non-probability sampling																										
	3.3.	Analysis of data																											
Concluding phase	4.1.	Synthesis of main findings, conclusions and recommendations																											
	4.3.	Finalization of evaluation report																											
	4.2.	Discussion of main findings with reference group: workshop in Bonn	ABS Initiative Secretariat																						5.3.				
	4.4.	Presentation of findings at Steering Committee meeting in Cotonou, Benin	ABS CDI Secretariat, Regional Steering Committee Members, Observers																						15.3.				

- Ongoing activity
- Face-2-face meeting / workshop
- Deadline for deliverable

3.4 Limitations

During the planning and implementation of the evaluation the following significant limitations were identified which may affect the quality of the evaluation:

- 1) **Lack of baseline data:** In order to measure performance of a programme, indicators need to include baselines and targets. The performance measurement information available did not include any baseline data. This compromises the validity and explanatory power of the ABS Initiative's monitoring approach. One way to handle such limitation is to collect missing data and to follow the approach of counterfactual reasoning⁹ (discussing the question "would a particular change also have occurred in the absence of a particular intervention?" with stakeholders). This could be followed only to a limited extent due to the vast scope of the ABS Initiative and its potential activities in the ACP Group of States and further countries on the African continent on the one hand and the given constraints in time and resources for the evaluation on the other hand.
- 2) **Sample biases:** In the context of this evaluation, interviews were held with ABS practitioners. Asking them about issues such as the relevance of the ABS mechanism implies the probability of a certain bias in answers. There was only limited possibility for the evaluators to mirror "internal" assessments and perceptions with external views, thus slightly negatively impacting the overall quality of the review.

4 Analysis and assessment of intervention logic and monitoring system

4.1 Quality of intervention logic

The intervention logic (also referred to as strategy of intervention) explains how programme activities are intended to lead to desired effects. As a simplification of complex reality it includes a hierarchy of objectives as well as indicators that specify what to measure in order to evaluate performance in a quantitative or qualitative way. The analysis of the ABS Initiative's intervention logic was carried out in 3 steps with the following results:

1. Reconstruction of the intervention logic

The ABS Initiative's strategy of intervention is illustrated in the "Programme Document 2012-2015" and summarized in form of a process chart ("objectives and core processes for ABS capacity development" p. 4) and a monitoring framework (p. 10/11).

With regard to the formulation of objectives, terminology is used inconsistently and cause-and-effect relations initially remained unclear to the evaluators. Therefore, the intervention logic had to be reconstructed by establishing a **hierarchy of objectives** and by preparing an **objectives diagram**¹⁰, which became the starting point for further discussions with the reference group.

2. Assessment of the quality of the intervention logic

In a second step, plausibility, internal coherence, and appropriateness of the ABS Initiative's intervention logic were reviewed. The underlying causality assumptions are

⁹ The consultants understanding of counterfactual reasoning is the process of evaluating conditional claims about alternate possibilities and their consequences ("What if analysis").

¹⁰ This technique consists in the identification of officially stated objectives and a graphical presentation of the logical relations between objectives, from the most operational to the most global.

altogether comprehensible, though cause-and-effect relationships in particular on a lower level between activities and outputs are not depicted in detail.

The strategy of intervention illustrated in the process chart defines 3 “core processes” and 2 “supporting processes”. This chart provides a good overview of the Initiative’s strategic approach. It does, however, not entirely correspond with the wording of targets and indicators stated elsewhere in the document and in the monitoring framework, which causes confusion. The EC RoM comes to similar assessment:

“Even though, strictly speaking, a logical framework does not exist and in practice it is presented in different versions in the project documents, which creates some confusion between the levels of results, strategic objectives and overall objectives, the aim of the initiative and the foreseen steps to achieve it remain relevant and coherent.” (Overall BCS, p. 3)

As indicated above, a source of frequent confusion is the terminology of the hierarchy of objectives that varies among different donors and implementers. In order to develop a common understanding of these concepts, the evaluators suggest the following working definition that is in line with the terminology of the RoM exercise¹¹:

- *Input*: resources used
- *Activities*: the steps undertaken to transform inputs into outputs
- *Output*: the goods and services produced
- *Use of Output*: the utilization of goods / services produced by the target group
- *Outcome*: the intermediate results generated
- *Purpose*: the specific objective of a programme that can be attributed primarily to its activities, outputs, and outcomes
- *Overall objective / impacts*: longer-term results or changes that lie outside the direct reach of a programme and depend on the coming true of a set of assumptions. The purpose of an intervention should, however, represent a relevant contribution to it.

According to this terminology, the purpose of the ABS Initiative is stated on the first page of the Programme Document 2012-2015 (where it is named “objective”):

“Supporting partner countries in Africa and the ACP regions in timely ratification and participatory national translation of the Nagoya Protocol including creating ABS value chains in cooperation with the private sector – while expanding a partnership of supporters and developing appropriate ABS implementation concepts that are nationally and internationally co-ordinated.”

This formulation of the programme purpose corresponds with the definition of the Initiative’s 5 main processes (supporting ratification, national translation, value chain development, amplifying, regional coordination).

In the **monitoring framework**, however, the previous wording is not maintained. Rather, the formulation of the Initiative’s 5 “specific objectives” is broadened so that it contains higher ranking objectives on impact level. Furthermore, 9 desired “outcomes” are specified. From the perspective of external consultants these “specific objectives” and “outcomes” range from the level of *output* (e.g. “outcome” 1.1: *Concepts regarding the implementation of the NP are developed*) to the level of *overall objectives / impact* (e.g. “objective” 3: *Valuation of genetic resources in provider countries is improved and functioning ABS agreements contribute to biodiversity conservation and livelihoods of rural populations*).

The clarification of these logical inconsistencies was crucial for the evaluators as it directly affected the assessment of the ABS Initiative’s effectiveness and impact.

¹¹ See European Commission, EuropeAid Co-operation Office, 2012: ROM Handbook – Results-oriented Monitoring.

3. Readjustment of the intervention logic

The purpose of the third step was not to improve the existing intervention strategy. Rather, it aimed at establishing a clear framework for the evaluation by proposing specific readjustments, following the guiding principle “as little as possible, but as many as necessary for the evaluation”.

Following readjustments were discussed and validated by the reference group during a workshop on 8th of November 2013 in Eschborn. The results are summarized in table 2 “Evaluation framework / adjusted intervention logic” on page 14.

- Formerly objectives (1) and (2) as well as objective (3) and outcomes (5.2) and (5.3) **cannot be attributed primarily to the ABS Initiative**. Therefore, they are classified as desired overall objectives at different levels beyond the “attribution gap”. The ABS Initiative may **contribute** to their achievement. There are, however, many other factors influencing their realization so that it cannot be attributed directly to the ABS Initiative.
- Formerly outcome (2.1) is subdivided into output (2.1) and outcome (2.1).
- Formerly outcomes (1), (3.1), (3.2), (4), and (5.1), are classified as outputs/ use of outputs (lower ranking objectives).
- Formerly objectives (4) and (5) are classified as outcomes on a level below the programme purpose.
- Indicators are attributed to outputs, outcomes, and overall objectives as shown in table 2.

Grading of the quality of intervention logic	B
Recommendations	
1. The formulation of objectives and outcomes as depicted in the official Programme Document 2012-2015 appears to be partially too ambitious and unrealistic. It should be revised in a way that it is possible to attribute the programme purpose to what the ABS Initiative is actually doing. The revision should be done as a collaborative exercise involving the Initiative’s stakeholders (e.g. in a SC or Joint SC meeting) in order to ensure a common understanding of results that can be expected from the Initiative.	

4.2 Quality and use of monitoring system

The need for an elaborated approach to monitoring has been discussed during the annual meeting of the Steering Committee in February 2012 in Cameroon. In response to this request, the Secretariat structured its annual progress reports 2012 and 2013 (draft version) along the monitoring framework presented in the Programme Document 2012-2015. Both reports provide a comprehensive overview of activities implemented and, with three exceptions, an assessment of the status of each indicator. The analysis of the monitoring approach, however, revealed several shortcomings:

- 1) **Monitoring process:** Within the Secretariat no clear responsibility for monitoring has been assigned yet. Data is collected and compiled in a collaborative effort of the Secretariat staff for the annual progress report at the end of each year. In order to tap the full potential of monitoring for programme management, it should however be understood as a continuous exercise with follow-ups in shorter intervals.
- 2) **Indicators:** While indicators and means of verification are formulated for the 9 “outcomes”, there are no indicators for the 5 “specific objectives” – even though these objectives are particularly relevant as they aim at defining the purpose of the ABS Initiative.

Unfortunately, none of the “outcome indicators” includes a baseline. In consequence, the validity and explanatory power of monitoring results has to be called into question. To give an example: the indicator “At least 8 African and 2 CP countries are implementing ABS regulations” does neither provide information if and how many countries were implementing regulation before the ABS Initiative realized its activities; nor does it measure the extent to which the ABS Initiative contributed to the development and implementation of ABS regulation in a particular country (argumentation for attribution of cause and effect).

- 3) **Format of presentation:** While the progress reports provide much information on activities implemented by the Initiative, it is not always clear what has been achieved on the level of output, outcome, purpose, and impact. The amount of activities and the large number of countries involved result in a lot of text that hinders a quick orientation on the status quo of the programme.

Grading of the quality and use of monitoring system	C
Recommendations	
2. Monitoring should become a continuous exercise with clear responsibilities within the Secretariat. Data should be compiled in a monitoring table that provides a condensed overview of the status of the programme. 3. At the same time, activity monitoring should to be improved, too. For instance, the training courses and workshops implemented by the ABS Initiative are not evaluated regularly in a comparable way (see also chapter 5.3 “Efficiency”). 4. Finally, indicators should be complemented by baseline data so that it is possible to measure actual change. In order to enable attribution of change to the ABS Initiative’s interventions, it is recommended to supplement the existing set of indicators by qualitative assessments. Such assessments again require a more pro-active approach to monitoring that builds on continuous, target-oriented and structured collection of data (e.g. questionnaire after workshops and training courses). At the level of programme purpose, indicators are reviewed in further detail in chapter 5.2 “Effectiveness”.	

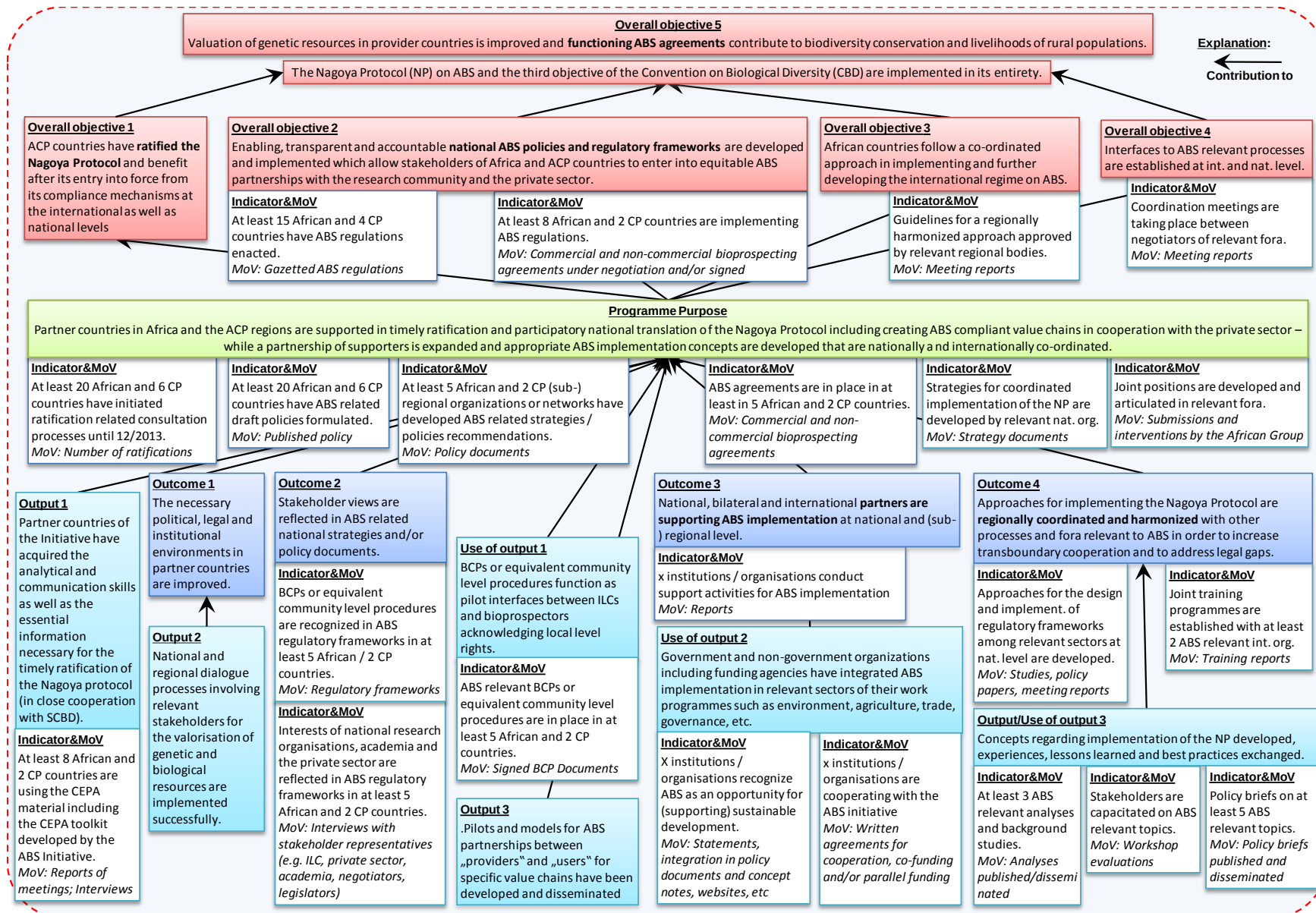


Table 2: Evaluation framework / adjusted intervention logic

5 Analysis and assessment of OECD-DAC principles

5.1 Relevance

Relevance of the ABS Mechanism

Relevance of the ABS mechanism is defined as the extent to which the ABS mechanism is suited to the demands, priorities, and policies of the target group.

The topic of ABS has been in the scope of international attention since the Earth Summit in 1992. Yet ABS is a complex approach that in its entirety still remains accessible and transparent only to a restricted number of stakeholders in user and provider countries.

The negotiation process of the Nagoya Protocol backed up by the efforts of the ABS Initiative raised the awareness of stakeholders in partnering provider countries. These **stakeholders generally perceive the ABS mechanism's potential to contribute to overall development goals as high**: In the online survey, respondents confirmed the high relevance of ABS for biodiversity conservation, food security, social development, and poverty reduction. However, the given opinions were those of National ABS Focal Points and further relevant stakeholders involved in the process, but not those of decision-makers in relevant ministries in partner countries. Nevertheless, in one-on-one interviews the following general tendency was confirmed by interviewees: decision-makers are increasingly aware of the subject and support it in their respective countries. While some of them remain rather receptive by wanting to be kept updated on the topic, only few decision-makers in responsible authorities neglect ABS.

Respondents also pointed out that the Nagoya process raised the **expectation that tangible monetary and non-monetary benefits from business and research arrangements will materialize** in the foreseeable future. As stakeholders in provider countries are enthused about the potential of ABS, the Initiative runs the risk of losing momentum in case there is no demonstration that ABS can live up to the promises made and that stakeholders project into it. This assessment is supported by the following finding of the EC RoM:

"Risk exists within public sector authorities regarding the project activities on the national level which could generate excessive enthusiasm as to what the initiative can achieve in practice. (...) It will be crucial to fine tune the messages [about what the Initiative can achieve in practice] toward the national political level and the communities."¹²

Furthermore, the **complexity of the topic is seen as a risk** – not necessarily for its relevance "on paper", but certainly for keeping it on the political agendas and for putting it into practice. This is illustrated by the following statement from the interviews:

"I see the possibility that the topic becomes less important as it is possibly too complex. Can a topic that is understood by just a handful of experts worldwide really fly? The transaction costs might simply be too high."

Hence, while a **"window of opportunity"** for ABS opens in the wake of the adoption of the Nagoya Protocol, there is also a perceived and growing **need to prove that the ABS mechanism can deliver in time**, i.e. before enthusiasm for and trust in it ceases and the window closes. In this regard, the high relevance of the ABS mechanism might become increasingly jeopardized the longer the demonstration of successful access and benefit-sharing cases is pending.

¹² RoM BCS, p. 4 and Monitoring Report Draft Ongoing, Evaluator J. Schlubach, 2013, p. 8

Relevance of the ABS Initiative

Relevance of the ABS Initiative is defined as the extent to which the Initiative is suited to the demands, priorities and policies of the target group.

The Initiative's progress reports (2012 and 2013) quote a number of **testimonials** from various international, transnational and regional organisations and networks as well as a business community that **confirm the importance of the initiative and its interventions**. Importance does not equal relevance, however, it can be considered as a strong indicator for the Initiative's relevance.

The **online survey as well as interviews with stakeholders confirmed the perceived overall high relevance of the Initiative**. Stakeholders particularly in the South have a need for awareness-raising, sensitisation, assistance, capacity development, learning, mutual exchange, dialogue (with the private sector), etc. The ABS Initiative's approach corresponds with these needs.

Furthermore, the authors of the report "Norad's assessment of project documents for the ABS initiative program for 2012-2015" state *"the evaluation of the initiative conducted in 2011 concludes that the relevance of the initiative is high"* (p.2). The EC RoM¹³ equally reason that *"the project is therefore highly relevant to the needs of the communities in charge of the diverse genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge, in ACP countries"*.

To the evaluators, the questions remains open to what extent the demand (that is met by the Initiative) is genuine or rather donor-driven. Interest in a topic and demand for assistance can be strongly propelled by associated funds that come in various forms with the interventions of the ABS Initiative. Would interest in and relevance of the Initiative be equally high and strong if it came along with less notable funds? The question remains hypothetical but draws attention to more general phenomenon in development cooperation that might also play a certain role in the case of the ABS Initiative.

Grading of the relevance of the ABS mechanism	A
Grading of the relevance of the ABS Initiative	A
Recommendations	
5. Clear communication of realistic prospects, and re-positioning of some stakeholders' expectations in an appropriate time frame in order to 'keep it real' and keep stakeholders from heavy disappointments.	

5.2 Effectiveness

Effectiveness is a measure of the extent to which the ABS Initiative's purpose has been accomplished or the extent to which progress towards it has been achieved. The following assessment of effectiveness refers to the programme purpose as defined and summarized in the adjusted intervention logic (see p. 14).

It differs from the ABS Initiative's own monitoring framework due to the existing deficiencies previously analysed. However, the programme purposes assessed below correspond with the initiative's 5 "core-processes" that are described in a chart in the Programme Document 2012-2015 (see p. 4). Thus, they do reflect the initiative's strategic approach:

- 1) Support for ratification
- 2) National implementation
- 3) Value chain establishment

¹³ Monitoring Report Draft Ongoing, Evaluator J. Schlubach, 2013, p. 2

4) Amplifying ABS processes

5) (Sub)regional capacity development and coordination

Programme purpose 1)	Indicator	Means of verification	Status summary
Partner countries of the ABS Initiative are supported in the timely ratification of the Nagoya Protocol.	At least 20 African and 6 CP countries have initiated ratification related consultation processes until 12/2013.	Number of ratifications	B

Assessment of programme purpose 1):

Purpose 1) is appropriate and relevant with regard to the achievement of overall objectives. **The aspect of purpose 1) described by the indicator is almost achieved.** According to the progress reports 2012 and 2013, following 42 countries have initiated ratification related consultation processes (26 African, 9 Caribbean, and 7 Pacific):

- Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Morocco, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zimbabwe
- Antigua & Barbuda, The Bahamas, Cuba, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Lucia, República Dominicana
- Cook Islands, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Vanuatu

The means of verification do not match the indicator as “ratification of the NP” stands at the end of a “ratification related consultation process”. So far, **17 countries within the regional scope of the ABS Initiative concluded the process by ratifying the Nagoya Protocol.**

The **indicator should be revised and/or complemented** for two reasons: 1) it does not measure the extent to which the ABS Initiative really contributes to the purpose (the quality of support that is offered and its utilization by the target groups). It is therefore not possible to answer the question “would the desired changes have occurred without the initiative?”; 2) No baseline data is provided.

Indicator and MoV could be complemented by a qualitative assessment such as: “Representatives from at least 20 African and 6 CP countries confirm that the support of the ABS Initiative had positive and significant effects on the timely ratification of the NP in their respective country.” MoV: Workshop evaluations, interviews.

In this regard, the **results of the online survey support a positive assessment**: 87% of the respondents (corresponding to 41 persons) perceive the initiative’s support in timely ratification of the NP as successful. Furthermore, **this assessment was confirmed in the interviews with National Focal Points (NFP)**. For instance, one NFP stated:

“Before the ABS Initiative, the topic was completely new to us. What we have, we gained from the initiative.”

On the **activity and output level**, the initiative developed communication, education, and public awareness (CEPA) material, including two short films. Feedback from stakeholders illustrates that the **products are used and contribute to awareness raising and potentially the initiation of ratification processes** in some cases:

“ABS simply explained” (movie) is most important for us to present the topic to our politicians and to support ratification of the Nagoya Protocol. 5 minutes and you are done! We will translate it to our languages.”

Furthermore, the initiative re-launched its website with the aim of becoming more demand-oriented. From the perspective of the evaluators, core functions of a capacity

development initiative should comprise awareness raising, facilitation of exchange, and mutual learning. In this regard, the ABS Initiative has not yet managed to tap the full potential of virtual exchange and learning. The introduction of webinar technology, for instance, could increase not only the reach of capacity development measures but also have positive impacts on the efficiency of the initiative (see also chapter 5.3 “Efficiency”).

Overall, the status of programme purpose 1) is considered satisfactory with room for improvement. There is a good chance that the purpose will be achieved until the end of 2015.

Programme purpose 2)	Indicator	Means of verification	Status summary
Partner countries of the ABS Initiative are supported in the participatory national translation of the Nagoya Protocol (development of national strategies, regulatory / institutional frameworks).	At least 20 African and 6 CP countries have ABS related draft policies formulated.	Published policy	C

Assessment of programme purpose 2):

Programme purpose 2) is appropriate and relevant with regard to the achievement of overall objectives.

The aspect of purpose 2) that is described by the indicator is not entirely achieved yet. According to monitoring data provided by the Secretariat, 8 African (Cameroon, Central African Republic, Gabon, Kenya, Madagascar, Morocco, Namibia, Rwanda) and 2 CP states (Cook Islands, Micronesia) have ABS related policies formulated and published.

The indicator does not describe the **quality and significance of support** provided by the initiative. Furthermore, it does not include a baseline. Therefore, its informative value regarding the realization of programme purpose 2) is limited. It could be complemented by a qualitative assessment such as: "Representatives from at least 20 African and 6 CP countries assess the support of the ABS Initiative to the national translation of the NP as positive and significant. MoV: Workshop evaluations, interviews."

Data collected in the **online survey indicates a very positive perception of the support in national translation of the Nagoya Protocol**: 95% of the respondents (corresponding to 45 persons) perceive the initiative's support as successful. Appreciation was also expressed in the interviews: *"2 rounds of workshops were leading to the development of a national ABS interim policy!"* At the same time, the interviews revealed that there is a **strong demand for further support at national level**, which is exemplified by following statements:

"They [the ABS Initiative] are doing the right thing at (sub)regional level. But we were wishing that they get down at the level of national support. In my case it would be so meaningful to support at national level."

Even though notable achievements can be described, the status of programme purpose 2) is considered problematic. The ABS Initiative should **address the question whether and how to intensify the support for national translation of the NP** in the coming years and which consequences this may have for the initiative's overall strategy and the allocation of resources for different activities.

Programme purpose 3)	Indicator	Means of verification	Status summary
Partner countries of the ABS Initiative are supported in the development of ABS compliant value chains with the private sector.	ABS agreements are in place in at least in 5 African and 2 CP countries.	Commercial and non-commercial bioprospecting agreement.	B

Assessment of programme purpose 3):

Programme purpose 3) is appropriate and, from the perspective of the evaluation team, in the current state of the ABS process (window of opportunity) a **critical success factor for the achievement of overall objectives**.

The aspect of purpose 3) that is described by the indicator is not fully achieved yet. According to monitoring data provided by the Secretariat, bioprospecting agreements are in place in Namibia and South Africa. Draft agreements are prepared in Malawi and Cameroon. A Public Private Partnership (PPP) for developing ABS agreements in Morocco, Burkina Faso, Gabon and Madagascar is under preparation. Signing of agreements in Malawi and Cameroon, as well as at least one agreement in the framework of the mentioned PPP would mean achievement of the indicated target as far as African countries are concerned. In CP countries, no agreements are in closer reach so far.

The indicator does, however, a) not describe the quality and relevance of support for the development of ABS value chains provided by the initiative, and b) not include a baseline. Therefore, its informative value regarding the realization of programme purpose 3) is limited.

Given the time horizon of bilateral preparation that these agreements require it seems little probable that two CP countries will sign agreements within the present phase of the Initiative. The preparation and arrangement of a PPP with the French company LVMH, for example, has taken 3 years, in the case of Malawi it has been 2 years (and the agreement has not been signed yet). The cooperation with the private sector is different than working at regional or national level with public sector stakeholders – the issue here is essentially a matter of matchmaking, building trust, developing relationship and confidentiality. Particularly the latter require intensive exchange, sensitivity for the partner's concerns, a great amount of time but also the appropriate partner(s) and sometimes the right opportunity.

In the online survey, 72% of the respondents agreed fully or mostly with the statement *"The initiative successfully supports the development of ABS compliant value chain with the private sector"* which indicates good performance. However, when regarded in comparison with the assessment of the other programme purposes by the stakeholders, the support of value chain development is rated rather critically. Disagreement with the positively formulated statements about the achievement of programme purpose 1), 2), 4), and 5) usually ranged between 0% and 5%. In the case of the support of value chain development, 20% of the respondents (corresponding to 9 persons) disagreed mostly or totally, thereby suggesting room for improvement.

As argued in chapter 5.1 "Relevance", there is a need to proof that the ABS mechanism works in practice. This can only be achieved by developing and implementing ABS compliant value chains with the private sector.¹⁴ **Supporting the development of value**

¹⁴ The EC RoM comes to a similar conclusion: "Successful introduction of ABS legislation and measures on the national level depends on the existence and well documented concrete show cases for ABS." (p. 4, Overall BCS)

chains to provide concrete showcases will therefore be of great importance in the coming years.

Following further activities were implemented the past two years with a view to supporting value chain development:

- The Copenhagen Business Dialogue that was implemented in September 2013 for the 3rd time¹⁵ was perceived a promising approach for facilitating dialogue between providers and users of genetic resources:

“With the Copenhagen Business Dialogue, the Initiative offers room for exchange between very different stakeholders that need to talk if they want to cooperate successfully. Here, worlds still collide. We see, however, growing numbers of participants over the years and businesses increasingly send high level representatives.”

- Research on ABS related business opportunities was carried out in the six countries under the UNEP/GEF-4 Capacity Building project for Africa. Results should be used by the initiative for identification and support of pilot initiatives.

To sum up, the status of programme purpose 3) is rated satisfactory. **Overall, the Initiative seems to be on the right way, however, more efforts might be necessary in the second half of the present phase to achieve the target of ABS agreements in two CP countries.** Also, it will be important to properly communicate to stakeholders the expectable results in this regard and to situate their perception of the implications of this indicator in a realistic time frame.

Programme purpose 4)	Indicator	Means of verification	Status summary
Partnerships with supporters are expanded with a view of (further) integrating ABS in their policies and practices.	At least 5 African and 2 CP (sub-) regional organizations or networks have developed ABS related strategies / policies / recommendations.	Policy documents	B

Assessment of programme purpose 4):

Programme purpose 4) is appropriate regarding the achievement of overall objectives. According to the Programme Document 2012-2015, it is seen as a “support objective” to programme purposes 1), 2), and 3), which reflect the Initiative’s core processes.

The aspect of purpose 4) that is described by the indicator is almost achieved. According to monitoring data provided by the Secretariat, following four African and one Pacific regional organizations / networks have developed ABS related strategies / policies / recommendations:

- COMIFAC (ABS strategy)
- SADC (Biodiversity Strategy)
- PhytoTrade Africa
- SPREP (Pacific Action Strategy 2014-2020)
- AU Guidelines (drafted and currently under development)

Furthermore, in the context of the cooperation between the AU and BMZ, the AU will be supported in coordinating the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol in Africa.

Following outputs achieved in the past 2 years contribute to the achievement of programme purpose 4) and the underlying target of catalysing and amplifying ABS implementation:

¹⁵ Previous dialogues took place in Copenhagen in September 2010 and June 2012.

- According to monitoring data provided by the Secretariat of the Initiative, ABS is recognized as an opportunity for supporting sustainable development by a range of governmental and non-governmental organisations such as the AU, IUCN, Danish Industry Association, and the German Biotech Association.
- The initiative succeeded a) in acquiring support from and b) in cooperating with a broad range of national, regional and international organisations, thereby establishing a network of partners for strengthening ABS implementation (UNDP implemented GEF Small Grants Programme – SGP; ITPGRFA). It is a plausible argumentation to the evaluators that such a **network can create synergies and contribute to increased leverage for ABS capacity building**.
- With a view to promote the agenda setting of ABS in the relevant national policy processes of the Member States, the CARICOM Secretariat is cooperating with the ABS Initiative. A draft Joint Declaration of Intent was submitted to the CARICOM Secretariat and the BMZ and is under consideration.

Overall, the status of programme purpose 4) is considered satisfactory with a good chance that the purpose as described by the indicator will be achieved until the end of 2015.

Programme purpose 5)	Indicator	Means of verification	Status summary
Appropriate ABS implementation concepts are developed and internationally co-ordinated.	Strategies for coordinated implementation of the NP are developed by relevant nat. institutions/organisations.	Strategy documents	B
	Joint positions are developed and articulated in relevant fora.	Submissions and interventions by African Group	

Assessment of programme purpose 5):

Programme purpose 5) is appropriate regarding the achievement of overall objectives. According to the Programme Document 2012-2015, it is seen as a “support objective” to the programme purposes 1), 2), and 3) which reflect the initiative’s core processes.

The aspects of purpose 5) that are described by the indicators are formally achieved. According to monitoring data provided by the Secretariat, Côte d’Ivoire, Morocco, and Rwanda developed strategies for coordinated implementation of the Nagoya Protocol by relevant national institutions/organisations. Joint positions are developed and articulated in Coordination meetings prior to ICNP 2, ICNP 3 and COP 11, and in the ILC Preparatory workshop prior to COP.

The indicators do, however, neither include targets nor baselines. Therefore, their explanatory power regarding the realization of programme purpose 5) is limited. Targets and baselines should be complemented.

The ABS Initiative supported the development of a regionally harmonized approach approved by relevant regional bodies. In this regard, the **AU Policy Framework for the Coherent Implementation of the Nagoya Protocol on ABS** was developed with the prospect of becoming formally verified in mid-2014 and possibly adopted at a Ministers of Justice Meeting in autumn 2015.

Summary

Overall, the status of programme purpose 5) is considered satisfactory.

Grading of overall effectiveness	B
Recommendations	
6. The ABS Initiative should address the questions whether and how to intensify the support for national translation of the NP in the coming years and which consequences this may have for the initiative's overall strategy and the allocation of resources for different activities. 7. Regarding the development of ABS compliant value chains, the ABS Initiative should discuss needs and possibilities with its stakeholders as well as appropriate reallocation of resources to meet these needs. 8. The potential of virtual exchange and learning should be further explored, particularly for regions with appropriate technological infrastructure. A combination of face-2-face and virtual events (for instance through the introduction of webinar technology) could increase not only the reach and effectiveness of capacity development measures but also have positive impacts on the efficiency of the initiative (see also chapter 5.3 "Efficiency").	

5.3 Efficiency

Efficiency is the extent to which desired outputs and outcomes are achieved with the lowest possible use of resources/inputs (financial, human and time).

The ABS Initiative's overall expenditures for the years 2012 and 2013 amounted to 7.276.128 €. Out of the overall budget, 2.983.437 € were allocated for Africa, 113.040 € for the Caribbean, 563.230 € for the Pacific region, and 1.282.479 € for the Secretariat / programme management. Furthermore, GIZ charged overheads of 15% which amounted to 799.248 €. ¹⁶

According to the progress reports, all budget allocations for activities were managed by the Secretariat in accordance with the Work Plans 2012 and 2013 which were endorsed by the Steering Committee.

A criterion initially discussed between the evaluators and the reference group was *"the extent to which the allocation of resources corresponds with stakeholders' priorities regarding the Initiative's 9 different modes of delivery"*. The modes of delivery were rated in the online survey according to their appropriateness for achieving the Initiative's objectives. Eventually, it was not possible for the evaluators to assign precise expenses to each of the 9 modes of delivery on the basis of the existing programme documents. Hence, it was not possible to assess whether the Initiative's outputs and outcomes were achieved at the lowest possible costs.

The following table provides a general overview of the Initiative's expenditures for the 3 core and 2 supporting processes for each of the three programme regions.

¹⁶ See ABS Initiative Progress Reports 2012 and 2013.

	Africa		Caribbean		Pacific	
	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013
Support to ratification	70.931 €	8.253 €	9.438 €	41.802 €	5.564 €	15.719 €
National / regional	306.208 €	573.006 €	31.460 €	48.934 €	79.255 €	24.492 €
Value chain establishment	35.843 €	285.324 €				
Amplifying ABS processes	95.460 €	35.475 €	- €	- €	- €	- €
(Sub)regional capacity development and coordination for relevant	1.318.449 €	1.664.988 €	7.424 €	105.616 €	318.812 €	244.418 €
Secretariat costs	479.481 €	587.084 €	59.250 €	48.707 €	59.250 €	48.707 €
Total	2.308.384 €	3.154.130 €	107.572 €	245.059 €	462.881 €	333.336 €

Table 3: ABS Initiative expenditure 2012-2013 according to processes and regions

It is noticeable that the item “(sub)regional capacity development and coordination for relevant international processes”, which is classified as a supporting process to the first three items, was given the largest budget. This item includes activities such as a) 2 pan-African Workshops incl. SC meetings as well as Pacific and Caribbean ABS Workshops (820.725 €), b) trainings on ABS and IPR (488.808 €), c) basic ABS training for “young professionals” (155.538 €), and d) training “Management of multi-stakeholder processes” (171.314 €).

Capacity development on a regional level as practiced by the Initiative requires bringing together the stakeholders in face-to-face settings in certain intervals. These training measures are usually cost-intensive due to travel expenses, per diems and other related costs. Beyond doubt, certain objectives (such as building of confidence and trust among stakeholders) require such personal interaction; and for many participants learning is certainly easier with physical contact and interaction. But would it be possible to do this in more cost-efficient and climate-friendly ways? How and to which extent can travelling be replaced by telecommunication or other alternatives? How could national and regional trainers help minimising costs and travelling?

Pursuing these questions, the evaluators see the **potential for increasing efficiency in the facilitation of learning and exchange amongst practitioners**. In this regard, the Initiative should develop its website into a **virtual platform of exchange and learning for practitioners**. Training courses could be complemented by, blended with, or in some cases even substituted through webinars and virtual knowledge events hosted by the ABS initiative. Given the financial implications of face-to-face trainings, their partial substitution by distance-learning events could free resources available for other purposes or the extension of training activities to a greater learning community.

Finally, there is **no standardized monitoring of the quality of activities** such as training courses and workshops which hinders the assessment of efficiency. No information is available on the quality of the provided trainings (as perceived by the trainees) nor on their effectiveness (training evaluation months or years later that capture the outcome of the trainings – how are acquired knowledge and skills used?). With a view on the budget of over 800.000 € spent on (sub)regional training courses in the past 2 years alone, the monitoring of outputs would provide valuable information for programme management regarding the efficient allocation of resources.

Grading of the ABS Initiative's efficiency	B
Recommendations	
9. Explore the potential of blending virtual and face to face knowledge exchange and learning in order to increase cost efficiency (and effectiveness).	
10. Introduce the monitoring of the quality of outputs as a standard procedure.	

5.4 Impact

Impact describes how and to which degree the ABS Initiative has contributed to the solution of the problem and to the achievement of its overall objectives. The following assessment refers to the overall objectives / impact as summarized in the adjusted intervention logic of the ABS Initiative.

Generally, the assessment of the ABS Initiative's impacts in the ongoing programme phase is premature. So far, 17 countries within the regional scope of the ABS Initiative ratified the Nagoya Protocol, which – with 29 ratifications in total – has not entered into force yet.¹⁷ Furthermore, 8 African and 2 CP states have ABS related policies formulated and published.

Since the NP has not entered into force yet, it is not yet possible to assess whether and how partner countries a) benefit from the entry into force of the Nagoya Protocol's compliance mechanisms or b) enter into equitable ABS partnerships with the research community and the private sector, based on enabling, transparent and accountable national ABS policies and regulatory frameworks that were developed and implemented.

As no functioning ABS agreements are in place, it remains open whether and to what extent such agreements would contribute to biodiversity conservation and livelihoods of rural populations and finally to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), specifically to MDGs 1, 3, 7 and 8. So far, the ABS mechanism's impact builds on a theoretically appealing line of argumentation with many unknown variables.

From the evaluators' perspective, it is unlikely that substantial impact will be achieved **until the end of the ongoing programme phase**. Particularly the second part of overall objective 5) (i.e. "functioning ABS agreements contribute to biodiversity conservation and livelihoods of rural populations") is to a certain degree dependent on the achievement of overall objectives 1) and 2) and, thus, located at a time horizon that is even further away than the other four overall objectives. **The realization of overall objectives 1) to 5) (see summarizing table below) will therefore require planning beyond 2015.**

In the online survey, the participants were asked to rate the Initiative's contribution to the following impacts reflecting the first three of the above mentioned impacts:

- Ratification of the Nagoya Protocol in partner countries in Africa and the ACP region (overall objective no. 1)
- Development of enabling, transparent and accountable national ABS policies and regulatory frameworks (overall objective no. 2)
- Development of a coordinated approach of African countries in implementing and further developing the international regime (overall objective no. 3)

Generally, the respondents have an overall positive perception of the Initiative's contribution to these objectives; for all three overall objectives, between 76% and 82% rated the Initiative's contribution as very high or high. Between 8% and 18% considered the contribution as low, and only two persons (5%) responded with "very low" to overall objective no. 1.

The actual contribution to these impacts is certainly difficult to measure and leaves a lot of room for interpretation. However, the results of the survey show that stakeholders' perception of the initiative's contribution to these impacts is generally positive and acknowledging. This does not deprive the initiative from delivering tangible, verifiable impacts according to the intervention logic and in the given time frame but at least it comprises an encouraging momentum for the Secretariat.

¹⁷ For the number of ratifications see <http://www.cbd.int/abs/nagoya-protocol>, accessed on 26th of February 2014.

Overall objectives	Indicator	Means of verification	Status summary
1) ACP countries have ratified the Nagoya Protocol and benefit after its entry into force from its compliance mechanisms at the international as well as national levels.	Nagoya Protocol not entered into force yet		n/a
2) 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.	At least 15 African and 4 CP countries have ABS regulations enacted.	Gazetted ABS regulations	C
	At least 8 African and 2 CP countries are implementing ABS regulations.	Commercial and non-commercial bioprospecting agreements under negotiation / signed	
3) African countries follow a co-ordinated approach in implementing and further developing the international regime on ABS.	Guidelines for a regionally harmonized approach approved by relevant regional bodies.	Meeting reports	B
4) Interfaces to ABS relevant processes are established at international and national level.	Coordination meetings are taking place between negotiators of relevant fora.	Meeting reports	B
5) Valuation of genetic resources in provider countries is improved and functioning ABS agreements contribute to biodiversity conservation and livelihoods of rural populations.			C
Recommendations impact			
11. The realization of the ABS Initiative's overall objectives 1) to 5) requires more time. For their achievement, it will be necessary to plan beyond 2015.			

5.5 Sustainability

Sustainability is concerned with measuring whether the benefits created by the interventions of the Initiative are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn.

The present evaluation is covering the Initiative's implementation period after the adoption of the Nagoya Protocol. Hence, the focus is on the sustainability of benefits of that period. In the opinion of the evaluators the post-Nagoya process is still young and it will take more time to yield results that are self-sustaining. As described in chapter 5.2 "Effectiveness", the ABS Initiative has realized considerable effects, but it is still too early to assess whether these effects are sustainable.

While acknowledging that some important steps towards sustainability have been made, many **stakeholders expressed their concern regarding the sustainability** of the ABS Initiative. The evaluators wish to draw the attention to a number of issues:

- Multiple stakeholders were **concerned that funding might be stopped** too early which would endanger the Initiative's sustainability; horizons of 2 to 5 years were considered as rather early, whereas 5 to 10 years were considered appropriate.
- Time and again interviewees mentioned that learning from case studies and pilot countries that are more advanced was an excellent and sustainable way of learning for them. Additionally, it would reinforce a culture of South-South dialogue making them less dependent on external support.
- With regard to building regional and/or national ABS capacities, the **sustainability prospects of the Initiative are strongly at stake due to its capacity development (CD) approach**. Particularly the approach of implementing training courses with international respectively German trainers was challenged. If the Initiative continued as hitherto, no regional or national training capacities would be built up at the end of the ABS Initiative.

"It is about time that the Initiative develops African trainers. There are one or two experts that we acknowledge. However, they are overstretched. We need more of them. We need from each region an expert pool that can be used for sub-regional training. This would increase not only the sustainability but also the efficiency of the Initiative."

- In the past, **capacity development has mainly taken place at individual level** and in a rather mono-dimensional way i.e. with an emphasis on governmental bodies. In terms of sustainability of CD measures, focussing on individuals and a small number of organisations is a risky concept: fluctuation of Focal Points (e.g. due to political instability) or other collaborators may strongly impact on the Initiative's effectiveness and sustainability. The issue of institutionalisation of knowledge was already raised in NORAD's assessment of programme document (2012) and the evaluators are entirely in line with the analysis brought up regarding this issue:

"Transfer of knowledge and lessons learned as well as capacity building needs to be focused at the institution level rather than on individuals. This is essential in order to ensure sustainability of the initiative."

- In this regard, it was mentioned that so far **education institutions do not play a prominent role in the consolidation and dissemination of ABS knowledge** (with a few exceptions such as the collaboration of the Initiative with the University of Cape Town or the International Development Law Organisation). They could be brought on board more strongly as collaborators as well as knowledge holders and multipliers.
- Rather recently has **the Initiative begun to extend the scope of invited stakeholders and become multi-dimensional** in the selection of collaborators – this was recognized and very much appreciated by the interviewees. This approach is slowly leading to the creation of interdisciplinary multi-stakeholder ABS groups in a number of countries. Knowledge will thus be consolidated in much more breadth and with stakeholders of different organisational provenances.
- As far as the evaluators could see, **no explicit sustainability strategy exists or is at least sketched out**. Such a strategy is best developed and started years before the projected achievement of the targeted objectives. It is a way to ensure transition of the ownership of the benefits of what has been done so far.
- Is the ABS Initiative doing enough to enable partner countries in carrying on ABS activities without external funding? According to the evaluators, it could be beneficial to support partner countries (more strongly) in devising strategies on how to consolidate financial commitments for ABS activities.
- In Africa, the Initiative has begun to transfer responsibilities for meeting and training organisation and implementation to the African Union Commission. This was highly appreciated by participants as well as the AU representative as a measure of responsibility transition and ensuring sustainability.

Grading of the ABS Initiative's sustainability	C
Recommendations	
12. Review the Initiative's CD approach; building-up of national and / or regional expert and trainer capacities (multipliers) will be crucial to capacitating an entire (sub)region; consolidating these capacities in various organisations rather than in individuals; 13. Develop a sustainability strategy in line with the "Strategic Framework for Capacity Building and Capacity Development to support effective implementation of the NP on ABS". Such a strategy should encompass a time horizon that declines how the Initiative will proceed to phase out, transition responsibilities, ensure sustainability of established structures and achieved results. 14. Seek to integrate educational institutions in CD measures, explore possibilities to assist universities in developing a curriculum on a biodiversity and ABS course at university; 15. Reinforce interdisciplinary multi-stakeholder activities; support creation and institutional consolidation of these national interdisciplinary groups. Develop a simple generic check list for these groups that states stakeholders and subject area experts that are appropriate / beneficial to integrate into the circle. 16. Support the development of communities of learning and practice within regions and, like the NORAD evaluators say "...the development of a self-supporting pan-African network of ABS focal points which is important in terms of the sustainability of the initiative." (p.5) 17. Continue to promote learning from study cases and pilot countries through South-South dialogue and exchange. 18. Assess the possibilities to collaborate more strongly with inter- and transnational organisations such as UNDP, UNESCO, ISESCO and to create synergies through information exchange, capacity development, integration into interdisciplinary multi-stakeholder teams and by benefiting from their structures and networks. 19. Discuss with stakeholders the development of didactic sensitisation material for / with Focal Points (apart from the already existing "ABS in 5 minutes" video) that the latter can use in their respective organisation, country, or sector to raise awareness and bring people together around the topic of ABS. 20. It will be beneficial to partner countries to assist and support them in devising strategies on how to consolidate financial commitments for ABS activities.	

6 Analysis and assessment of cross-cutting issues

6.1 Gender equality

With regard to this section the evaluators assessed the question to what extent and how the ABS Initiative contributes to the promotion of gender equality.

Gender equality is not a subject of particular attention to the Initiative; the results chain does not state an objective at any level with regard to gender, the progress reports do not dedicate a paragraph to it nor is any of the Secretariat's staff formally in charge of gender issues. However, as **important cross-cutting issue it should be addressed in this stage of the initiative.**

The ABS Initiative has focusses on the role of women and their associated traditional knowledge in training courses on PIC and MAT, particularly in the context of BCP. Beyond that, there is limited direct contribution of the ABS Initiative to gender equality (e.g. through workshop participation, particular interventions in the direction of social groups, etc.). As far as indirect contributions are concerned the time frame of the present evaluation in combination with its given priorities did not allow a deeper exploration of this

subject. Neither the online survey nor the interviews did provide any further insights into the impacts of the ABS Initiative on gender equality.

Grading of the ABS Initiative's contribution to the promotion of gender equality	C
Recommendations	
The evaluators see some potential to increase the Initiative's impact and documentation practices in this regard: 21. The implementation of ABS compliant value chains can contribute to gender equality as women often manage genetic resources (e.g. argan oil, sheabutter). Interventions directed to the support / implementation of such value chains reinforces the position of the knowledge holders and managers of these resources from a social as well as eventually from a financial perspective. 22. Reflect on conducting studies on gender-related issues in ABS and value chain implementation¹⁸ 23. The Initiative might focus more strongly on working directly with women, youth or students organisations. Particularly the latter groups are the future leaders and decision makers of the countries and therefore should be integrated and slowly initiated in the subject and its implications at all levels. Invitations to workshops and trainings, support to participate in national interdisciplinary multi-stakeholder groups on ABS could be two simple potential measures. 24. In cases and when concrete interventions with a gender focus have been conducted, measure and effects should be analysed in the progress reports.	

6.2 Stake- and rightsholder participation and involvement

This chapter provides an answer to the question to what extent and how the ABS Initiative contributes to stake- and rightsholder participation and involvement.

Stake- and rightsholder participation is the core constituting element in the approach of the Initiative from local to global level. According to the Programme Document 2012-2015, most of the instruments of the ABS Initiative focus on participation of stakeholders (except for the provision of technical papers and studies), i.e.

- Multi-stakeholder workshops
- Thematic and/or stakeholder-focused training courses
- Peer-to-peer knowledge transfer at national and local levels between partner countries as well as on a global level
- ABS best practices with the private sector
- Information exchange and knowledge management within the different stakeholder groups at the national level and on a regional / global level
- Active participation of and/or substantial inputs by partner country representatives to important ABS meetings at UN level
- Technical consultations with relevant stakeholders and gate keepers in ABS relevant decision making processes at national and (sub-)regional levels.

Participants in the online survey as well as interviewees confirmed that the Initiative strongly contributes to the participation of stakeholders. For many it is the key characteristic of the Initiative, the crucial element to alignment, exchange, dialogue and awareness raising in and between different countries.

Moreover, stakeholders expressed their interest in strong exchange with the private sector, with legal experts, with pundits, with local knowledge holders such as traditional

¹⁸ GIZ's value chain development methodology "*Valuelinks*" has included a module on gender, seeking exchange with relevant experts within GIZ could be beneficial.

healers, and so on. This is certainly necessary at regional and international but also at national level, within the respective countries. Not only to bring these various national actors on board, to benefit from their experiences and knowledge but also to create strong national communities of ABS concerned stakeholders promoting self-organisation and self-management (which in turn is a variation of capacity development again).

Results of the online survey point out that **in some meetings and trainings private sector and ILC representatives were potentially not sufficiently taken into account**. Interviews and online survey did not convey a clear, unambiguous picture in this regard, however, the evaluators wish to draw attention to this issue and encourage an exchange within the Secretariat on this matter.

Whatever the outcome of this reflection will be, stakeholders were clear in their message that they appreciate a close and more intensive exchange with the private sector and ILCs in order to understand their visions and realities. What are the options to do so? How can it be best arranged for? Is the national Focal Point sufficiently integrated in the selection and invitation of participants?

Finally, **stakeholders do not have a clear understanding of eligibility and selection criteria that the Initiative applies in selection of a) participants of workshops and trainings and b) countries for further support at national level**. Such criteria should be developed and communicated in order to be most transparent and accountable to stakeholders. Furthermore, with regard to workshops and trainings, it was noticed that in some cases participants were chosen by the Secretariat without prior coordination with governments (respectively the National Focal Point). In this regard, a clear process standard should be established. The evaluators wish to encourage the Secretariat to exchange on that internally and with stakeholders.

Grading of the ABS Initiative's contribution to stake- and rightsholder participation and involvement	B
Recommendations	
25. Support the creation of national interdisciplinary multi-stakeholder groups on ABS (see also chapter 5.5 "Sustainability"). 26. Continue to support the exchange among all kinds of stakeholders at all levels. 27. Reflect on ways to systematically and sufficiently integrate private sector, research, and ILCs in meetings, workshops and trainings. Stakeholders were expressing interest in a closer exchange with these actors - their contributions often are an eye opener for public sector (and other) stakeholders to understanding the very different realities and challenges that these groups are facing. 28. Establish criteria for the selection of a) participants of workshops and trainings, and b) countries for further support at national level	

7 Analysis and assessment of areas of specific interest

7.1 Appropriateness of the modes of delivery of the ABS Initiative

The ABS Initiative has developed nine modes of delivery in order to achieve the targeted objectives:

1. Multi-stakeholder workshops to discuss emerging ABS issues, (e.g. Pan African / Sub-regional ABS Workshops)
2. Thematic and/or stakeholder-focused training courses to provide regionally tailored trainings (e.g. ABS summer school, IPR trainings, training on management of multi-stakeholder Processes)

3. Peer-to-peer knowledge transfer at national and local levels between partner countries as well as on a global level (e.g. through South-South-exchange, regional ILC exchanges, high level dialogues, ABS regulator's exchanges)
4. ABS best practices with the private sector, including lessons learned (ABS business dialogues, case studies at Pan-African and regional workshops)
5. Information exchange and knowledge management within the different stakeholder groups at national level and regional / global level (e.g. Initiative's website, ABS news digest, compendium of ABS regulations)
6. Technical papers and studies to stimulate discussion and give support to decision making processes (e.g. technical briefs at coordination meetings, business potential studies of GR, ABS case study analyses)
7. Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) for ABS (e.g. ABS CEPA training sessions, ABS Video, Communication Guide on ABS, ABS case film)
8. Methodological guidance and thematic input to the international negotiation process through preparatory meetings and delegates' briefings (e.g. delegates coordination meetings, intercessional coordination support)
9. Technical consultations with relevant stakeholders and gate keepers in ABS relevant decision-making processes at national and (sub-)regional levels (e.g. advising national ABS committees)

The results of the online survey indicate a split of the nine modes of delivery into two groups – one consisting of those that participants considered very appropriate and a second group of delivery modes that participants still considered appropriate, but significantly less than the first group.

Workshops, training courses, CEPA, and best practices with the private sector are considered most appropriate by the stakeholders whereas the remaining five approaches (peer-to-peer, information exchange, papers and studies, methodological guidance, consultations) are considered less appropriate. On the one hand, none of these approaches can be said to be not valued. On the other, particularly workshops and trainings are very highly appreciated.

The ABS topic is still relatively new to many and **workshops and trainings provide a good opportunity for orientation and peer to peer learning. Hence, their choice as a major mode of delivery appears to be justified.** As discussed in chapter 5.3 "Efficiency", these modes should, however, be complemented by further virtual opportunities for learning and exchange.

In the survey, stakeholders also expressed **high demand for support and advice at national level.** Learning about the subject of ABS is necessary and very much appreciated. But at the same time, participants seem to be struggling with knowledge transfer and with putting ABS into practice. In the interviews, it was widely accepted among stakeholders that not every country can benefit from the Initiative's individual support but it was time and again suggested that the Initiative should **select (more advanced) pilot countries for further support (e.g. pilot activities) and share experiences and lessons learned with the community.** This holds in particular true for best practices with the private sector.

In less advanced countries, stakeholders ask for assistance in the sensitisation of their leaders; some Focal Points find it hard to get access to their ministers in charge in order to bring the topic of ABS on the agenda and into focus.

The modes of delivery selected by the Initiative are basically appropriate and well-chosen but may need some readjustment in emphasis and application.

Grading of the ABS Initiative's appropriateness of the modes of delivery	B
Recommendations	
29. The effectiveness and efficiency of the approaches considered less appropriate should be reviewed. Is the perception of stakeholders in line with the Secretariat's analysis and vice versa? Does the perceived appropriateness of the approaches reflect the invested financial resources? How can the less appropriate modes be made more effective, efficient and appropriate for the target group? 30. Countries need effective hands-on support in the implementation at national level. Reflect on mechanisms to provide stronger support at national level to some pilot countries and make available to everybody else the experiences and lessons learnt. The fact that not every country can be supported individually is widely accepted in the community but nonetheless also countries 'in the second and third row' want to be given orientation through the experiences acquired in pilot countries. 31. Reflect on additional or supplementary options of learning and exchange (moderated discussions on specific issues on the internet via a restricted area on the website, self-organised or moderated peer-to-peer online learning sessions of advanced with less advanced countries, webinars, possibly combined with face-to-face events such as study tours, exchange visits in a meaningful way) to further structure and systemise learning. Such approaches may include input from experts but they ought to stimulate the development of a self-sustaining community of ABS practitioners in the long run. 32. Interviewed stakeholders considered counselling and coaching at national level by national or international experts an important support. How can that be systematically be provided by the Initiative? Are coaching and counselling tours by experts (in pilot countries) a viable solution? 33. Develop step-by-step how-to best practice examples with the private sector in the near future that can help stakeholders understand and implement cases in their own countries themselves. 34. Keep in mind that almost every support material needs to be produced at least in English and French.	

7.2 Need to focussing / setting priorities

The issue of focussing the Initiative's activities is touching at least on two aspects – the geographical focus and the thematic focus.¹⁹ On both issues, the overall stakeholder perception was clear: ABS is seen as complex system with interdependent elements that would not work if the development of one of its parts is neglected. In this regard, stakeholder interviews and the survey did not provide clear evidence which activities are less important or even dispensable. Nevertheless, as one interview partner summarized:

"It is not so much that the focus is too broad - ABS itself is very broad, cross-cutting and diverse - but that the broad range of activities is not sufficiently focused on actual value chains."

The core element of the ABS mechanism – the implementation of ABS compliant value chains – should be the central reference point, and as such be reflected in CD measures and intertwined with the different learning topics.

The geographical focus has already been touched on in the previous chapter ("Modes of delivery"). Stakeholders agree to a great extent that it is impossible for the Initiative to

¹⁹ The explanations from the previous chapter on the demand for national support will not be repeated at this stage.

support each of the over 80 targeted countries at national level. Even countries that are not among the vanguards of ABS implementation agree that the more advanced countries should be supported at national level under the condition that lessons learned on the issue and on the process are made available to all countries.

Apart from the national level, stakeholders are aware that harmonisation and coordination in ABS matters within the region as well as across borders of neighbouring countries is indispensable.

In discussions with the Secretariat, the team repeatedly emphasised the need and the advantages to follow a strategy of taking opportunities as they come along. The evaluators enquired about the perception of the stakeholders in this regard. Is this strategy perceived as arbitrary or random and non-transparent? The answers were twofold: on the one hand, there are stakeholders for whom it was not clearly discernable that a 'strategy of opportunity-taking' is applied and, thus, did not consider it a problem for the Initiative; on the other hand, stakeholders rather praised the Initiative for its flexibility and openness to react to whatever promising opportunity comes along. Thus, **the 'opportunity-taking' strategy is not in any way negatively perceived.**

For this chapter no grading was attributed since the issue here was rather to reflect stakeholders' views and provide orientation to the Secretariat on this matter but not to rate the degree of focussing and setting priorities by the Initiative.

Need to focussing / setting priorities	No grading
Recommendations	
35. The Initiative should put the development and implementation of ABS compliant value chains more strongly in the focus of activities. 36. Support on national level should be provided to front-runners initially in order to propel the development of concrete cases of translation of the NP and the development of ABS compliant value chains. 37. The 'how' to do things is a major concern of stakeholders. Further best practice examples should be developed on how to go about ABS relevant issues in countries (from ABS sensitisation to relevant legal frameworks and effective implementation of ABS compliant value chains). Eventually, in the long run, these can be compiled in a compendium. 38. Interviewed stakeholders considered counselling and coaching by (national or international) experts on individual country-specific issues an important support. The Initiative should take such approaches into consideration.	

7.3 Appropriateness of the ABS Initiative's governance structure

The extension of regional scope of the ABS Initiative in 2011 gave reason for a discussion about the future governance structure and the question how to ensure relevant decision making.²⁰ In consequence, it was decided to establish three regional steering committees and a biannual General Assembly back-to-back with CBD COPs. The governance structure is described in detail in the document "Governance Structure and Functions" (2013) published on the initiative's website.

Results from the interviews and the online survey show that **overall, the governance structure of the ABS Initiative is perceived as appropriate by stakeholders.** So far, decisions in the Steering Committees (SC) were taken in consensus, which indicates that the governance structure is working effectively.

²⁰ See ABS Initiative Progress Report 2012, p. 4, and documentation of the meeting in Wendake, Canada, in June 2011.

Furthermore, **SC members expressed their appreciation** for being frequently involved (at least once a year) and for being given the opportunity to interact directly with their partners.

As stated in the document “Governance structure and functions”, the composition of the SC consists of representatives of donors and stakeholders. The latter are appointed “*in their personal capacities based on their function, experience, and ability to represent the interests of stakeholders*”. This is relatively weak in its meaningfulness and may be criticised as open to anybody considered appropriate on subjective basis; on the other hand, this openness may exactly be a major strength as it allows for flexibility and putting the focus rather on personal capacities and involvement instead of rigid application of ‘objective’ rules and criteria.

Respondents of the online survey suggested **a stronger involvement of private sector as well as civil society representatives**. However, some interviewees observed that participants from the private sector and ILC’s should generally only be given observer status as they usually do not have the mandate to speak for a wider constituency but rather represent individual opinions. In opposition, donors and government officials are representatives with the mandate to speak on behalf of their respective governments.

Furthermore, some National Focal Points expressed their wish for **more transparency and clear criteria regarding the selection of countries for intensified support at national level**.

At a different level, the Initiative is encountering a financial management issue connected to the amount of funding received from non BMZ sources: All funding allocations of the ABS Initiative are managed by the Secretariat at GIZ. Interviews with **representatives at GIZ indicate a risk regarding the acquisition of further co-funding / the overall financial growth of the ABS Initiative**. For every Euro provided by international donors, up to 15% overhead costs have to be provided by the donors of the ABS Initiative. In addition, value-added tax (VAT) in Germany of up to 7% has been covered by BMZ so far. In the past years, the budget of the ABS Initiative has constantly grown. With a yearly funding of over 4 million Euros in 2014, it has reached a financial ceiling and has to be determined whether and in how far BMZ/GIZ will be able to account for further overheads and VAT expenses in the future. **Therefore, the potential to financially involve further donor organisations, to increase the budget, and to scale up the ABS Initiative has reached its limits under the present conditions.**

Appropriateness of the Initiative’s governance structure	B
Recommendations	
39. Changes in the composition of the steering committees should be discussed, i.e. (stronger) involvement of private sector and civil society representatives and their potential mandate. 40. Clear criteria regarding the selection of countries for intensified support at national level should be developed and articulated by the ABS Secretariat. 41. The risk of limited possibility of further co-funding should be addressed and clarified.	

7.4 Learning opportunities from/for comparable initiatives

A first assessment revealed that multi-donor initiatives are very different with regard to their financing mechanisms, their governance structure, or their program management. As comparability is not given initially, a deeper analysis of learning opportunities from/for other initiatives was not possible within the context of the evaluation. For a comparative analysis the evaluators recommend

- a) to formulate a specific assignment (including resources needed and more specific guiding questions about the specific topics of interest)
- b) participation in the GIZ working group of multi-donor secretariats for further exchange of experiences.

In order to ensure sustainability of and learning from the experiences of the ABS Initiative, the evaluators suggest to compile and systemise in a consistent way lessons learnt and best practices (“Why did we do it the way we did and what are our experiences with this?”). These are already, to a certain degree, part of the annual progress reports. However, similar initiatives – may they be in the field of ABS or not – might benefit from a systematic and structured compilation of the Initiative’s experiences and lessons learnt.

8 Conclusions

The Access and Benefit Sharing Capacity Development Initiative is a highly relevant and necessary development measure, which enjoys high regard among all stakeholder groups. This is expressed not only in the results of the online survey and stakeholder interviews that were carried out for the evaluation, but also through dedicated financial contributions of donors. On the same plane, it is appropriate to note that stakeholders much appreciated the flexibility and personal investment of Secretariat staff for the cause of the Initiative.

Its contribution to the development and adoption of the Nagoya Protocol in general and to the harmonisation of the “African voice” in particular; the fact that the Initiative is bringing together stakeholders, enabling dialogue, facilitating regional harmonisation, raising awareness and building capacities on ABS across the globe – all this is unique and of utmost importance for the advancement and successful implementation of ABS.

The overall strategy of the Initiative as reflected in the five processes 1) support for ratification, 2) national implementation, 3) value chain establishment, 4) amplifying ABS processes, and 5) (Sub)regional capacity development and coordination is convincing and well directed at the achievement of outcome and impact. While rather formal aspects in the documentation of the intervention logic (consistent use of terminology and distinction of outputs, outcome, and purpose) can be corrected easily, the monitoring system needs to be considerably improved for programme management.

After 2 years, it is clearly too early to aim at measuring impact of the Initiative at higher level (such as conservation of biodiversity, contribution to poverty reduction etc.). At a lower level, numerous encouraging outputs and outcomes were achieved. With regard to the programme purpose (the ratification and national translation of the Nagoya Protocol in provider countries, and the development of ABS compliant value chains), the Initiative will have to continue its efforts in order to achieve the desired objectives until the end of the current programme phase and probably beyond 2015.

As a repercussion of their involvement in the process (and in a way of the Initiative’s successful support in awareness raising), stakeholders have great hopes in tangible results, i.e. signed contracts and sharing of benefits. The “window of opportunity” for ABS that unlocked in the wake of the adoption of the Nagoya Protocol is still open. At the same time, there is a perceived and growing need to prove that the ABS mechanism can deliver in time, i.e. before enthusiasm for and trust in it (and maybe international funding, too) ceases and the window closes.

In consequence, a stronger focus on national level support and on supporting value chain development and implementation is strongly recommended in order to develop concrete show cases for ABS. Effectiveness of the Initiative could be improved by further adjusting its capacity development approach: the systematic qualification of regional multipliers (trainers and consultants) as well as the consequent exploration of the potential of virtual formats of learning and exchange will increase the Initiative’s effects.

The ABS CDI presently enjoys overall favourable conditions – inter alia, extensive donor support, active stakeholder involvement, a number of already achieved goals and accomplished activities of significant scope and various external feedbacks on its performance – effective combination and continued extensive use of these conditions will enhance the probability of further increasing positive results in the future.

Summary of grading

Quality of intervention logic	B
Quality and use of monitoring system	C
Relevance	A
Effectiveness	B
Efficiency	B
Impact	C
Sustainability	C
Gender Equality	C
Stake- and rightsholder participation	B
Modes of delivery	B
Governance structure	B

9 Reference list

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Annexes

- 1) Guiding questions of the evaluation**
- 2) ToR of the evaluation**
- 3) Summary of survey results**
- 4) Inception report**
- 5) List of interview partners**



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