



# Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) Partnership Project

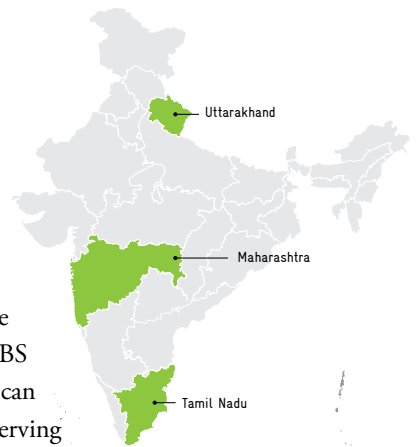
## Situation

India is one of the 17 megadiverse countries in the world. With just 2.4 per cent of the world's land area, India's biological richness is spread across a vast range of habitats and ecosystems. These support 7 per cent of globally recorded species, including over 45,000 plants and 91,000 animal species—out of which many are keystone and charismatic species. India's rich biological heritage coexists with over 1.2 billion people and about one-sixth of the world's livestock population. For millions of Indians, therefore, biodiversity supports their very livelihoods and way of life. Thus, protecting and maintaining India's rich biodiversity and natural resources is essential for achieving inclusive and sustainable development.

India gained prominence as one of the leading countries, which signed the United Nation's Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in 1992 and further adopted the Nagoya Protocol in 2014. This led to an early set-up of a legal framework to ensure fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from utilisation of biological resources. The Indian Parliament enacted the Biological Diversity Act (BDA) in 2002 which is being implemented nationwide by the National Biodiversity Authority as well as through decentralised institutional structures like the State Biodiversity Boards and the Biodiversity Management Committees at local level. The National Biodiversity Authority notified the 'Guidelines on Access to Biological Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge and Benefits Sharing Regulations' in 2014 which prescribe the procedures for access to biological resources and guides the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from use of biological resources with providers of the resources.

However, the potential of legal framework on ABS to secure benefits from use of biological resources has not fully been explored so far. This limits the range of economic and social benefits that are channelled back to the communities.

By tapping the provisions of the Biological Diversity Act, and ABS supporting its implementation can significantly contribute in conserving and promoting sustainable utilisation biological resources. It holds enormous potential for economic development of local communities.



## Objective

The ABS Partnership Project aimed at strengthening the capacities of the National Biodiversity Authority (NBA), selected State Biodiversity Boards (SBBs), Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs), as well as creating awareness amongst commercial users of biological resources and associated traditional knowledge for the effective implementation of ABS mechanisms under the Biological Diversity Act 2002, in keeping with India's commitments under Nagoya Protocol on ABS.

The project has **engaged with over a thousand people** through its workshops and trainings to build **awareness on ABS**



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## WHAT IS ACCESS AND BENEFIT SHARING?

ABS refers to the way genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge may be accessed, and how the benefits that result from their use are shared amongst the people or countries using the resources (Users) and the people or countries that provide them (Providers).

## Approach

The project was implemented at the national level in partnership with the NBA; at the state level with the three SBBs of Maharashtra, Uttarakhand and Tamil Nadu and at the local level with BMCs in all three states. The project employed the following approaches:

- Awareness-raising, communication and stakeholder dialogues across different actors and stakeholder groups on creating a better understanding about the Biological Diversity Act 2002, ABS Guidelines and the Nagoya Protocol on ABS.
- Development of good practices on benefit-sharing among communities based on utilisation of biological resources for commercial or research purposes.
- Development of an IT-enabled ABS monitoring system for the NBA for effective monitoring of the use of biological resources in ABS processes.

## Achievements

- Developed a communication strategy through Knowledge-Attitude-Practice analysis of 10 key stakeholders in the ABS process which includes the BMCs, commercial users of biological resources, forest department, legal professionals etc.
- Methodology for Training of Trainers (ToT) for operationalisation of BMCs was pilot tested and 50 district trainers have been trained on various aspects of BMC functions and documentation of People's Biodiversity Registers.

- Over 70 stakeholder-specific trainings and workshops have been conducted in three states with the participation of more than 2000 people from BMCs, district officials from forest, agriculture, horticulture, businesses and researchers.
- Good practice case studies of ABS from the use of biological resources from forests, agriculture, animal-based derivative (snake venom) have been developed to showcase the ABS process and to serve as models for ABS compliance.
- ABS-MS (monitoring system) for tracking the use of Indian biological resources was established at the NBA. It was launched in 2019 by the Hon'ble Vice-President of India. Pilot test run of the tool identified over 300,000 users (research and patent) of Indian biological resources.
- Developed sector-specific guidance documents for ABS compliance which cover 5 sectors namely: academic research, AYUSH, biotechnology, cosmetics and seeds.



## Contribution to 2030 Agenda

The ABS project contributes to Sustainable Development Goal or SDG 15: Life on Land, by aiming to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity by securing fair and equitable access and benefit-sharing of biological resources. It also contributes to SDG 1: No Poverty, SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities and SDG 14: Life Below Water.

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