![IABIN logo — Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network]

TO: IABIN Executive Committee

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From: General Secretariat of the Organization of American States
Unit for Sustainable Development and Environment
IABIN GEF PDF B - Executing Agency

Re: Progress Report – July 2003 to February 2004

IABIN Milestones

- Reports from five of the seven subregional specialists and the regional coordinator were completed. Co-financing of $31.5 million has been identified from 78 regional or national institutions. These reports may be viewed on www.iabin.net
- A draft IABIN Project Implementation Plan (PIP) entitled *Building The Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network* was circulated to IABIN Council and IABINfriends.
- World Bank Quality Enhancement Review process was completed. World Bank submitted the Project Executive Summary to the GEF Secretariat in January, 2004. World Bank Board Submission is slotted for May 2004.
- www.iabin.net fully operational in Spanish and English and is receiving an average of over 15,000 hits/month.
- Thirty-four out of 34 countries have designated IABIN Focal Points. Twelve of 32 recipient countries have endorsed the full project.
- The Joint Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network-Clearing-house Mechanism Meeting on Building Partnerships through Effective Networking was held August 12-14, 2003, in Cancun, Mexico.
- The International Bioinformatics Foundation (IBF), an existing, bioinformatics fund-raising focused, not-for-profit organization, has been selected as the institution that will serve as the IABIN Foundation.
- Fundraising proposals were developed for submission to: (i) OAS FEMCIDI for a total of 1.2 million over 4 years; this proposal requires at least one Country to endorse

the project and submit to the OAS; (ii) Development Grant Facility of the World Bank on "Developing Connectivity between Biological and Geospatial Data in Latin America and the Caribbean" for $1.8 million over 3 years.

  ➢ After analysis, the IEC decides that the Secretariat will be hosted in Panama at the City of Knowledge.

  ➢ PDF B disbursements: 92% of the funds are committed, leaving a balance equivalent to 8% of the total funds.

Draft PIP. The Project Implementation Plan outlines a proposed $6 million Global Environment Facility (GEF) project proposal. Agreements with biodiversity informatics institutions throughout the Americas were forged based on biodiversity data sharing priorities of these institutions and mandates established at the two previous Council Meetings. Co-financing of $31.5 million has been identified from 78 regional or national institutions. The overall project will:

(i)   develop an Internet-based, managed decentralized network to provide access to scientifically credible biodiversity information currently existing in individual institutions and agencies in the Americas,

(ii)   provide the tools necessary to draw knowledge from that wealth of resources, which in turn will support sound decision-making concerning the conservation of biodiversity, and

(iii)   provide a mechanism in the Americas to exchange information relevant to conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, thus promoting and facilitating technical and scientific cooperation to help fulfill the mandate of the Clearing-House Mechanism of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Day-to-day activities of IABIN will be managed by the IABIN Secretariat. The preliminary Secretariat structure includes up to three individuals: a director, a data content expert, and a thematic network specialist, with part time support being provided by the Host Organization.

The IABIN Portal, found at www.iabin.net, is becoming a gateway to biodiversity information in the Americas as well as a mechanism for facilitating interconnection of different institutions and agencies concerned with biodiversity conservation. The Portal provides simple user interfaces for sharing knowledge. IABIN is partnering with BioBot to expand a catalog of biodiversity data and information resources that allows users to identify and locate content available through the network: biodiversity datasets, publications, museum collections, value-added information (such as hotspots, ecoregions, invasive species), and other biodiversity related databases. Additional value-added tools are expected from Secretariat and network activities.

Throughout 2003, during the PDF phase of the GEF project, subregional specialists worked with potential CIs (Coordinating Institutions) to plan the implementation of TNs (Thematic Networks) in various thematic areas. This work includes documenting implementation requirements and activities, developing memoranda of understanding between IABIN and the institutions leading the development of the network (cost sharing agreements), and obtaining letters of intent from the data-providing institutions. Documentation for each TN will contain justification, objectives, products, participants, overall costs, and duration. The TNs currently being proposed are:

  • Basic biodiversity infrastructure projects: Specimens, Species, Ecosystems
  • Cross-cutting projects: Invasive Species, Pollinators, Protected Areas, and Migratory Birds.

GEF and World Bank Project Processing. The World Bank has completed a draft Project Appraisal Document (PAD) and completed the QER (Quality Enhancement Review). The World Bank submitted the Project Executive Summary to the GEF Secretariat in January, 2004. Date for World Bank Board Submission is slotted for May 2004.

IABIN.net The IABIN website www.iabin.net is now available in English and Spanish. The total number of hits during the month of November was 20,228.   The total number of hits for the month of December was 14,321.

BioBot Tool added to IABIN.net. The National Biological Information Infrastructure (NBII) has offered the BioBot tool to www.iabin.net. BioBot assists biodiversity informatics users who want to learn more about species and broader environmental issues. BioBot's main search screen offers a wide variety of options for finding information. Users can indicate which of the Internet's leading biological information sources they want to search (such as Biodiversity Web Sites, Publications and Citations, Biodiversity Metadata). Search types include a simple search, Boolean search, and phrase searches. IABIN users can use BioBot to:

     (i)   Search NBII and IABIN information as well as other biological information available on the Internet. These sources are currently indexing and harvesting information from a number of biological sites. BioBot builds upon this information, allowing users easy access to the biological information they want.

     (ii)   Combine BioBot with other biological information systems (in the near future), such as the Integrated Taxonomic Information System (ITIS), to retrieve species and taxonomic information. (ITIS is the first comprehensive, standardized reference for the scientific names of the flora and fauna of North America and surrounding oceans).

     (iii)   Include additional IABIN relevant content in native language (i.e., Spanish).

Development Gateway.   Development of the "Biodiversity of the Americas" content on the http://www.developmentgateway.org/node/436649/? has expanded with over 70 documents and web pages being shared by dozens of contributors. It is particularly useful for unpublished literature where authors want to get feedback from a multi-disciplinary audience. This portal provides simple user interfaces for sharing knowledge, discussing issues, accessing projects and statistical databases, and registering and profiling users.

34 IABIN Focal Points and Full GEF Project Endorsements. As of July, 2003 all 34 member States of the OAS have established official IABIN Focal Points through the proper diplomatic channels. This entails that the National Liaison Agency to the OAS through the Permanent OAS Mission nominate an appropriate position within a Government agency or NGO. Twelve of 32 recipient countries have endorsed the full GEF project. Canada and the U.S., which are not recipient countries but are active participants in the network, have supported the project during the review and negotiation process. To be eligible to receive funds from the project, a country's GEF Focal Point must have endorsed it. A model endorsement letter has been sent to IABINfriends and the OAS Permanent Missions.

Joint CHM IABIN Meeting. The Joint Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network-Clearing-house Mechanism Meeting on Building Partnerships through Effective Networking was held August 12-14, 2003, in Cancun, Mexico. The meeting represented the Third IABIN Council Meeting. The meeting was jointly sponsored by IABIN and the Convention on Biological Diversity, Clearinghouse Mechanism (CBD/CHM).   The final "Report of the joint Latin America and Caribbean regional meeting on the Clearing-House Mechanism and the Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network" is available on the Convention on Biological Diversity's website at:
http://www.biodiv.org/doc/meetings/cop/cop-07/information/cop-07-inf-04-en.doc (in MS Word format). Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in the Latin America and Caribbean region, participants in the Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network, and those countries in the Americas that are members of the Global Biodiversity Information Facility attended, along with several NGOs and academic institutions. The more than 70 participants comprised experts in the fields of management of clearing-house mechanism issues, information-sharing systems, biodiversity information networks and database management.

IABIN Foundation. The fund development initiative for IABIN sustainability will be administered by an established, experienced, biological-informatics focused, fund-raising, private non-profit organization on behalf of IABIN. IABIN specific funds would be placed in a separate and dedicated account in the fund development organization. IABIN related sustainability activities/expenditures of the fund development organization would require coordination with and approval of the IABIN Executive Committee. The International Bioinformatics Foundation (IBF), which is an existing, bioinformatics fund-raising focused, not-for-profit organization, has been selected to serve this function for IABIN. An IABIN representative will be selected by the IEC and become a formal IBF Board member. IABIN Focal Points are asked to recommend candidates for the position of IABIN representative on the IBF Board.

Fundraising.   (i) A fund-raising proposal will be submitted to OAS FEMCIDI for a total of $1.2 million over 4 years, but the proposal must be presented by at least one OAS Member State. (ii) In January 2004, the World Bank submitted a proposal to the DGF entitled "Developing Connectivity between Biological and Geospatial Data in Latin America and the Caribbean." This proposal requests $1.8 million over 3 years. The proposal would help promote interoperability between biological information in the Americas (being achieved under IABIN) and different sets of non-biological information in order to promote the emergence of cross-thematic value-added applications in the areas of agriculture, disaster reduction, forestry, and rural development.

IABIN Secretariat. Two days of negotiations at the World Bank concluded February 5th, 2004 on the location of the Secretariat for the hemispheric Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network (IABIN). The negotiations were led by Francisco Gonzales Salas, Costa Rica, representing the IABIN Executive Committee (IEC). Mr. Salas communicated frequently by telephone with Ms. Elaine Fisher in Jamaica, Vice Chair of the IEC.

The two main offers on the table were from the National Biological Information infrastructure (NBII) of the US Geological Service (USGS) in Reston, VA and from the City of Knowledge,

Panama (a NGO). A third offer had also been received from OAS-Uruguay. All three offers were considered high quality and met the necessary criteria for consideration. After analysis, the IEC decided that the Secretariat will be hosted in Panama at the City of Knowledge. USGS will remain an important partner of IABIN and will play a leading role in the technical implementation of IABIN.

The City of Knowledge in this offer was partnered with ANAM (National Environmental Administration, Panama) and SENACYT (Secretaria Nacional de Ciencia, Tecnologia, y Innovacion) and various other organizations such as the Smithsonian, Iowa State University, and Purdue University. They will offer to IABIN, at no cost, for the five years of the IABIN project, office space for 3 Secretariat staff, computer equipment, phone and internet connectivity, access to servers, a full time secretary, and many other important benefits from participating in this emerging nexus of information and development initiatives, both national and international.

PDF B Disbursements. In relation to the execution of the US$650,000 granted by GEF, to date IABIN has spent or committed 92% of the funds, leaving a balance equivalent to 8% of the total funds. Following is an expenditure report by activity detailing budget, commitments, actual expenditures, and funds available.

Building the Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network
GEF PDF Block B Grant
August 2002 - February 2004

PHASE I Consultancies

	Budget	Commitments Possible	Real	Actuals	Funds Available
Regional	$24,000		$0	$24,000	$0
Subregion 1	$24,000		$0	$24,000	$0
Subregion 2	$24,000		$0	$24,000	$0
Subregion 3	$24,000		$0	$24,000	$0
Subregion 4	$24,000		$0	$24,000	$0
Subregion 5	$24,000		$0	$24,000	$0
Subregion 6	$24,000		$0	$24,000	$0
Subregion 7	$24,000		$0	$24,000	$0

PHASE II Consultancies

	Budget	Commitments Possible	Real	Actuals	Funds Available
Regional	$24,000		$0	$24,000	$0
Subregion 1	$24,000		$0	$18,000	$6,000
Subregion 2	$24,000		$0	$8,000	$16,000
Subregion 3	$24,000		$0	$24,000	$0
Subregion 4	$24,000		$0	$24,000	$0
Subregion 5	$24,000		$0	$24,000	$0
Subregion 6	$24,000		$0	$24,000	$0
Subregion 7	$24,000		$0	$24,000	$0

Other Components

	Budget	Commitments Possible	Real	Actuals	Funds Available
Website/Brochure	$75,317		$36,100	$28,859	$10,358
Third Council Meeting	$54,683			$54,683	$0
PIP/PAD Development	$71,000		$26,400	$24,775	$19,825
Project Management	$65,000		$2,547	$62,453	$0
Total Project	$650,000	$0	$65,047	$532,770	$52,183
Funds Execution		0.0%	10.0%	82.0%	8.0%