

# Project Brief

## The Biodiversity Convention

Since the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro, the conservation of biological diversity has been the subject of a regime which is binding under international law - the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

“Biological diversity” or “biodiversity” comprises genetic diversity, species diversity and ecosystem diversity worldwide. The Biodiversity Convention entered into force in 1993. To date, 187 states and the European Community have signed it. The Convention pursues three objectives of equal standing: the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources.

By ratifying the Convention, industrialized nations not only committed themselves to attaining these goals at home, but also agreed to prioritize support to developing countries in their efforts to implement the CBD. Developing countries are often affected particularly severely by biodiversity loss, and lack the financial and technological resources needed to make the shift to sustainable management practices. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) has been established as a financing mechanism to provide support for these countries. As the third largest contributor to the facility, the Federal Republic of Germany promotes projects that have a global significance and contribute to implementing the Rio conventions.



Photo: G. Ulutunçok

## GTZ project: “Implementing the Biodiversity Convention” (BIODIV)

At the bilateral level, too, Germany helps developing countries to fulfil their commitments arising from the Rio conventions. Acting on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH implements a broad array of bilateral projects for biodiversity conservation (see also 2004 BMZ / GTZ brochure: Biodiversity in German Development Cooperation).

In 1994 a special supra-regional project for “Implementing the Biodiversity Convention” (BIODIV) was set up. Through an integrated approach, the project aims to contribute to accelerating implementation of the Convention. To that end, plans of action for the sustainable use of biological resources are drafted and applied, and measures are taken to foster an enabling policy framework. BIODIV has two pillars:

- 1) In more than 20 pilot projects in Asia, Africa and Latin America, we support governmental and non-governmental organizations in their implementation of concrete measures to conserve biodiversity and use it sustainably. The experience gathered through these projects is taken up in efforts to create or enhance framework conditions (-> project papers).
- 2) BIODIV also contributes to further developing the Convention and its instruments and bodies. This involves supporting BMZ in the international negotiation and consultation process, participating in national and international bodies concerned with biodiversity, organizing public awareness-raising events and elaborating conceptual contributions on the further shaping of the Convention. We prepare studies, hold workshops and provide training on a range of specific themes: access to genetic resources, fair and equitable sharing of benefits-sharing, biosafety, traditional knowledge and sustainable use (-> issue papers).



Photo: S. al-Janabi



Deutsche Gesellschaft für  
Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH

commissioned by:



Federal Ministry  
for Economic Cooperation  
and Development



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## BIODIV - Priorities

In line with the holistic approach taken by the Biodiversity Convention, project activities embrace many different aspects and cross-cutting issues. They concentrate on the following areas with a major bearing on development policy:

BIODIV attaches particular importance to the issue of access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits (known as "Access and Benefit Sharing", ABS). The CBD process has developed the basic outlines of a voluntary international regime governing access and benefit-sharing in relation to genetic resources - the Bonn Guidelines. These aim to give the countries of origin of genetic resources an incentive to conserve their biodiversity by securing them an equitable share in the resulting profits and technologies. This principle relates to the use not only of their genetic resources, but also of their associated traditional knowledge. BIODIV helps partner institutions such as ministries and NGOs in South Africa, Bolivia, Viet Nam and the Philippines to develop and implement their national ABS legislation.

The introduction of genetic engineering techniques and their products can have far-reaching ecological, socio-economic and cultural consequences. In response to this concern, the CBD process developed the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, which entered into force in September 2003. An important contribution made by the Protocol is that it enshrines the precautionary principle, enabling states parties to impose import restrictions on genetically modified organisms (GMOs) even if there is no conclusive evidence of their potential hazards.

BIODIV is responsible for implementing BMZ's German Biosafety Capacity Building initiative. Through comprehensive consultancy inputs and through its pilot projects (e.g. in China, Peru and Algeria), BIODIV contributes to building competence.

Article 8j of the Convention underscores the importance of traditional knowledge for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. The Convention calls upon the states parties to recognize and protect the traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous peoples and local communities, as these perform a key function in the sustainable management of natural resources. In addition to carrying out pilot projects in Panama, Peru and China, BIODIV is participating actively in the international debate on traditional knowledge, e.g. at the regular meetings of the CBD working group on the implementation of Article 8j.

Besides the above three priorities, BIODIV is working on further themes relating to the Convention. For instance, plans for the sustainable use of medicinal plants play an important role. Other major themes are the mainstreaming of gender aspects in CBD implementation, the Clearing-House Mechanism as an information exchange system for the Convention, and biodiversity-related communication, education and public awareness activities. The project can take up new themes in its work in response to ongoing developments or specific demand.

These themes are pursued by performing pilot activities, elaborating plans of action and producing publications.



Photo: S. al-Janabi

## Project data

GTZ 2005

**Project title:** Implementing the Biodiversity Convention

**Project terms:**

1st-3rd phase: from Dec. 1993 to Dec. 2002

4th (current) phase: from Jan. 2003 to Dec. 2005

The supra-regional project "Implementing the Biodiversity Convention" (BIODIV) is being conducted by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

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