***In situ* Conservation and Use of Crop Wild Relatives in three ACP countries of SADC Region**

**Project leader meeting**

**Meeting results**

**Date:** 8 May 2015

**Venue:** Bioversity HQ, BlueJeans

**Participants:**

* Ehsan Dulloo (Bioversity)
* Imke Thormann (Bioversity)
* Nigel Maxted (University of Birmingham)
* Joana Magos Brehm (University of Birmingham)
* Navin Boodia (Mauritius)
* Thabo Tjikana (South Africa)
* Jermina Moeaha (South Africa)

**Apologies:**

* Dickson Ng’uni (Zambia)
* Yasmina Jauferaully-Fakim (Mauritius)

**Agenda items:**

1. Report back on workshop
2. Audit report and budget revision
3. Economic study
4. Final conference
5. Mid-term review and steering committee
6. **Report back on workshop**

The South African team found the workshop very useful and comprehensive. Regarding the CAPFITOGEN sessions there were participants really interested in getting all the details of the tools and analyses because they were planning to use them soon afterwards. The pre-breeding was quite comprehensive and the main idea was that the partner countries get their priority taxa and then perform predictive characterization in order to get those populations that may potentially have important traits. These results should then be included in the NSAP. The inclusion of the predictive characterization results would also help raise the profile of the NSAP and improve the value of this project.

The partner countries need to identify the best person to carry the predictive characterization out:

1. South Africa has already identified that Percy Moila will be responsible for the predictive characterization work.
2. In Mauritius pre-breeding in sugarcane has been undertaken for a while now. Goolam Badaloo is probably the best person to take the lead in this task. Since Mauritius is not quite rich in CWR, two alternative approaches to undertake the predictive characterization can be taken: (i) the focus can be on priority Mauritius CWR, or (ii) the focus can be on those crops that are nationally important and then look for CWR with potential traits even if they do occur outside Mauritius. For the latter approach, the GCDT dataset (with occurrence data for many CWR of globally important crops) will be available by the end of June which will facilitate enormously this analysis. For the NSAP, conservation actions should be recommended for priority CWR (that have resulted from the prioritization criteria and methodology) and for predictive characterization the alternative approach (mentioned above) can be undertaken.(iii) Bioversity will follow up with Zambia on how they will take forward predictive characterisation task in Zambia (Note: Dickson)

The overall idea of predictive characterization is to use the tools learned in the workshop in South Africa last April, identify traits that are relevant to improve identified crops and then use the CAPFITOGEN tools to identify those populations that are likely to harbour those traits. The pre-breeding itself won’t be possible during the life span of this project. Nevertheless, pre-breeding activities can (and should) be proposed and included in the NSAP by using the results obtained with the predictive characterization.

Ehsan asked about the progress of activities in the 2 countries. In South Africa, there has not been further development in the CWR prioritization but there will be a meeting next week to complete it. Joana mentioned that the prioritization document has been the basis for discussion with Livhu and Nkat at the SANBI meeting that took place after the workshop and it has been agreed that they update that document after addressing Joana’s comments and rethink about the prioritization. A meeting with Livhu, Nkat, Willem, Joana and Imke should take place next week. Ehsan emphasised that it is important that deadlines are met as one activity leads in to another. In the case of South Africa, SANBi is very engaged now and we need to ensure that they continue to be since they are key in providing the data and information for developing the NSAP.

In Mauritius Navin reported that progress is being made finalising the checklist. They have organised a national committee in a couple of week time.

**ACTIONS:**

* Mauritius to identify the person who will undertake predictive characterization of priority taxa.
* Mauritius to decide on the approach to be undertaken for the predictive characterization.
* Imke to set up a meeting with Livhu, Nkat, Willem, Joana next week to discuss progress on prioritisation.
1. **Audit report and budget revision**

The auditing report has been submitted and two issues were raised by the auditor; these have been resolved and the report has now been submitted to the donor.

Budget revision has been undertaken based on the discussions Ehsan had individually with the partners; it has been submitted and the EC secretariat replied that some of the justifications provided were not strong enough; Ehsan revisited the justifications and at the moment the budget officer is revising it to be submitted to the donor. EC may take up to 6-8 weeks to answer back. Until the new budget is approved, by July 2015, we will not be able to raise the second year LoA for the partners according to revised budget.

1. **Economic study**

Adam Drucker has shared few references with the project partners regarding the economic study that he’s leading. This study takes 1 year and should be undertaken within the duration of the project.

Ehsan has already discussed this issue with Thabo and Jermina as well as with National committee in Mauritius. South Africa has still not decided whether they will be involved in this study but will decide by the second week of June. Willem (ARC) was quite interested in this study, namely in the breeding value of CWR. Therefore, Thabo could start searching someone from ARC to undertake that work.

Mauritius plan to have an MSc student to carry that work out but it is still to be agreed in the next committee meeting in 2 or 3 weeks time. It was suggested that Mauritius could already identify the student and then present that option to the steering meeting. Navin asked if part of the funds allocated to the NSAP development could be used to pay a consultant to do this work. Ehsan clarified that the cost for the economic study is a separate budget line under Bioversity.

**ACTIONS:**

* South Africa to decide whether will be involved in the economic study by the second week of June (Thabo to find someone interested in undertaking this study in ARC?).
* Mauritius to identify the student that will undertake the economy study and then approve it in the steering committee.
* Ehsan to send Adam’s contact details to Navin.
1. **Final conference**

The final conference will be international and has replaced the final dissemination workshop that was initially proposed in the grant agreement. It was discussed if there will be a published proceedings for the conference. A publisher would need to be approached on whether the conference proceedings can be published.

ARC is willing to host the final conference; they have a good auditorium and plenty of space to hold lunches and a poster session. ARC is located in Hatfield, Pretoria, which is well served with hotels close to the venue. SANBI does not want to be active in the organization but is willing to participate in the scientific committee.

The question of how will the funds be transferred from DAFF to ARC to organize the project has been raised. Bioversity will approach ARC directly. Some of the funds that DAFF is transferring to ARC for the predictive characterization can also be used for the conference organization as they won’t use it all for the predictive characterization. Bioversity and UoB will handle all the organization and fund-raising that is needed. Each project partner has their funding to attend the conference. The funds for the visibility actions are to be used in the production of communication materials, but specifically for the conference.

A registration system will be developed by Bioversity for the conference and scientists world-wide will be invited to register and pay a registration fees which will be used to cover the cost of the conference. In addition, private companies will be contacted that are likely to sponsor the event.

It has been suggested that the conference could be organized jointly with the GCDT that has been working on CWR in South Africa. (Ehsan to follow up).

**ACTIONS:**

* DAFF to confirm with ARC that they will host the conference.
* Set an organizing committee with ARC, DAFF, Bioversity and UoB.
* Ehsan to contact Hannes Dempewolf at the GCDT.
1. **Mid-term review and steering committee**

The mid-term review and the 2nd steering committee meeting will jointly take place in Rome between 30 Sept – 2 October 2015 and will be organized by Bioversity. The invitation letters to project partners will be sent soon. Ehsan indicated that the partner countries will be expected to give presentations on the progress of their activities. A detailed agenda will be prepared and sent to all.

ACTIONS:

* Imke to send the invitation letters soon.
* Preparation of detailed agenda for mid- term review and steering committee (Ehsan)