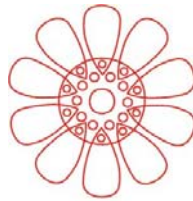


BioNET-INTERNATIONAL **the global network for taxonomy**



bionet

Vision

A world in which taxonomic expertise, resources, tools and information are rapidly and locally accessible in forms appropriate for meeting conservation, agriculture, trade, health and other sustainable development needs.

Mission

To promote capacity building in taxonomy via local partnerships so that developing countries can identify the organisms that constitute and threaten their biodiversity, not for taxonomy's own sake, but rather to support national sustainable development and conservation priorities.

Why was BioNET established?

Taxonomic skills and products are essential for implementing sustainable development, including conservation of biodiversity and food security. Until the early 1990s, many taxonomic services were provided free of charge by expert institutes in Europe and elsewhere. Today, developing countries typically lack the ability to pay for such external taxonomic services and have inadequate and poorly resourced local taxonomic capacity. For many economically and ecologically important organism groups, many regions are totally lacking in trained taxonomists. One way to overcome this problem was to create mechanisms whereby developing countries could pool, share and optimise their taxonomic capacity on a regional basis, an idea that gained support at an international, UK-sponsored workshop at the NHM in 1993. BioNET-INTERNATIONAL was established at the request of this workshop and began a programme of network establishment and capacity building in 1996.

How does BioNET operate?

BioNET has helped developing country governments establish a series of subregional Technical Cooperation Networks known as LOOPs (Locally Owned and Operated Partnerships) comprising institutions and individuals concerned with capacity building in taxonomy. LOOPs are the core of BioNET, providing a cost-effective mechanism for meeting taxonomic needs by building, strengthening and sharing of taxonomic resources regionally. The LOOPs are designed to be permanent, government-owned structures formed by intergovernmental agreement to address national and regional taxonomic priorities identified by their member countries. LOOPs become self-sufficient via a combination of donor-funded activities and member institution support. A LOOP Coordinating Committee, comprising representatives from each country and relevant partners, governs activities and funding. Established LOOPs exist in nine developing country subregions; two more are under consideration by governments.

A small Technical Secretariat supports LOOPs with advocacy support, project development, donor liaison and facilitation of partnerships. The Secretariat is split between a UK office hosted by CABI-Bioscience and US office in Washington DC.

Funding

Both the LOOPs and the Technical Secretariat are not-for-profit, donor-funded programmes. The BioNET-INTERNATIONAL Fund supports the operations of the Technical Secretariat, while CABI-Bioscience provide significant in-kind support. To date, the sole investor in the fund is the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation who have contributed to the Fund since 1996. The Fund Supervisory Board oversees use of the Fund.

BioNET LOOPs have been successful in securing funding for their work programmes from a number of generous funding partners to date, including the Department for International Development (UK), AusAID, CTA, Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN, USAID, UNDP and many others.

Activities

LOOP activities typically fall into five categories of capacity building:

1. Training.
2. Specimen and literature collections.
3. Biodiversity information.
4. New tools and technologies.
5. Communications.

Support for the Global Taxonomy Initiative, the CBD and other conventions

BioNET-INTERNATIONAL is particularly focused on assisting countries implement the various multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) such as the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC: www.ippc.int) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD; www.biodiv.org), especially the latter's taxonomic capacity building component, the Global Taxonomy Initiative (GTI). The subregional LOOPs have been recognised as appropriate structures through which many of the regional components of the GTI Programme of Work, endorsed as CBD CoP Decision VI/8, can be most effectively implemented (www.biodiv.org/programmes/cross-cutting/taxonomy/default.asp).

The Future

An External Review of BioNET's Secretariat, 2004, commissioned by the Swiss Government, concluded that BioNET had been an effective and highly cost-effective programme from 1996-2004. It's critical role in supporting the GTI was particularly noted. The Review recommended that the Secretariat receive further investment so it is better able to respond to developing country demands for assistance with proposal development and fundraising.

Become a member

- Receive the BioNET Bulletin, our monthly e-publication with announcements and events relating to capacity building in taxonomy.
- Participate in the local BioNET partnership for taxonomic capacity building in your region.
- Send your contact details to bionet@bionet-intl.org.