



African BioGenome Project
Genomics for the future of biological diversity across Africa

Ethics, Legal, and Social Issues (ELSI) Committee

[Guideline & Roadmap]

CORE VALUES

- ★ Fairness
- ★ Inclusivity
- ★ Accountability
- ★ Appropriateness

PRINCIPLES

- ★ Ensuring the interests of AfricaBP research participants are protected
- ★ Fostering ethical collaboration between AfricaBP partners and its researchers
- ★ Ensuring all AfricaBP activities are conducted and applied responsibly

ABSTRACT

The African BioGenome Project (AfricaBP) project intends to gain access to about 105,000 eukaryotic species within Africa. It is important to note that the regions where these samples will be obtained from have different variables in their setting, which presents a different order of challenges for us as the ELSI committee. To find solutions to these issues, there is a need to create a sketch that allows us to have a reference point as we also unearth the various situations of these countries.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1. AfricaBP - African Biogenome Project
2. ABS - Access and Benefit Sharing
3. ELSI - Ethics, Legal and Social Issues Subcommittee of the African Biogenome Project
4. IPLCs - Indigenous People and Local Communities
5. MAT - Mutually Agreed Terms
6. MTA - Material Transfer Agreement

LEGAL ISSUES

- Governance issues (Material Transfer legislation differs from country to country)
- Consent, sample, access, storage, and exportation permits will be governed by these laws
- What is the scope of valid consent? (Local Legislation vis-a-vis ABS PIC & MAT and MTA implementation)
- Archived samples (Consent, Re-consent issues, Reuse, sample return or destruction)
- Intellectual Property & Ownership (Traditional Knowledge, Patenting, Sharing of Data)
- Biosafety issues (Compliance against select restrictions on poisonous or otherwise dangerous materials etc.)
- Cross border or jurisdictional overlaps (How would we handle the situation)

ETHICAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES

- Indigenous People & Local Communities (Over 50 IPLCs in Africa, 24 Countries)

- These communities include hunters, gatherers, pastoralists, and farmers
- Lack of constitutional recognition in most countries
- Zoo Sample Collections & Unethically collected Samples (What would be the potential way forward)
- Animal Welfare issues
- Local Customs and Cultures
- Benefits & Overall Recognition

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS TO SOME OF THE PROBLEMS

1. ENGAGEMENT EVALUATION

- ❖ Overall review of projects at every phase i.e Pilot Phase, Phase 1, Phase 2 (This would inform our best practices and rules of engagement, also allowing us to deal with challenges presented at every phase)
- ❖ Community Consultation/Engagement (Collaborative Partnership & Social Value Review)
- ❖ This could be used benchmark against the Ethics of the Research (Should be effective and sustainable, taking into account the variables and challenges of the different communities)
- ❖ This also promotes inclusivity, accountability, and fairness
- ❖ Scientists should also take part in this engagement evaluation as this allows us to understand the true nature of the situation on the ground
- ❖ We need to establish common ground between the communities being engaged and the scientists (Experiences & Challenges from all involved parties)
- ❖ **LONG TERM GOAL - COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT, COUNTRY ENGAGEMENT TOOL**

2. SCOPE OF CONSENT

- ❖ There is a need to also establish how best to engage the communities and explain the research in a manner that is accessible and understanding
- ❖ We must be able to link the concepts to local knowledge
- ❖ In light of that, we must develop consent guidelines and procedures as well as solutions for consent required in times of emergencies (i.e. At the beginning of the pandemic, research was significantly halted)

3. STANDARD MATERIAL TRANSFER AGREEMENT

- ❖ ABP SMTA should include the following in detailed specificity:
 1. The Material of Research
 2. The Exact Work
 3. The Storage Conditions
 4. The Duration
 5. The Parties involved in the research
 6. The Data Sharing and Collaboration
 7. Provisions on other work (If samples must be used for other work)

4. OTHER MEASURES FOR CONSIDERATION

- ❖ Capacity building scheme for researchers from all partner sites
- ❖ Synchronized DataBase
- ❖ Development of synchronized release policies (Contributors should be able to analyze data before its made public)
- ❖ In future, AfricaBP should be able to develop a software that allows remote analysis without investing in infrastructure for analysis and storage (Phase 2 or Phase 3 considerations)
- ❖ Ph.D. studentship exchange/Research officer exchange (Technology exchange)
- ❖ Workshops with contributors vis-a-vis feedback platform
- ❖ Development of a template governing preliminary data sharing as well as third-party data sharing(Open access vs restricted access)
- ❖ Development of a template for the rules of engagement for endangered species and IPLCs where there is no government recognition
- ❖ What are the endangered species AfricaBP plans to research on?
- ❖ Advocacy for endangered species conservation to show social value addition of the project (Conservation effort policy, remote analysis) (Benchmark of additions to the bioeconomy)
- ❖ Animal Welfare (Pain & Distress Acknowledgment statement) (Reduction & Refinement measures)
- ❖ Need to develop preliminary and post research adherence statements
- ❖ Need to develop AfricaBP DSI Policy

OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Over the last few months, the ELSI committee has been able to:

1. Develop the terms of reference and documentation intended to guide our rules of engagement
2. Develop a summary of issues that are likely to be encountered in the course of the project.
3. Develop Introductory legislation
4. Develop Material Transfer Template and Sampling documentation templates
5. Develop Sampling Ambassador survey
6. Synchronize sampling activity documentation with the Sampling committee

PROJECT PLAN/ROADMAP



Appendix 1: Intellectual contributors to the AfricaBP ELSI ROADMAP AND GUIDELINE DEVELOPMENT

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