

# Constitution and ByLaws of the African BioGenome Project (AfricaBP)



African **BioGenome** Project

Genomics for the future of biological diversity across Africa

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Author: African BioGenome Project (AfricaBP)

[info@africanbiogenome.org](mailto:info@africanbiogenome.org)

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## PREAMBLE

The African BioGenome Project (AfricaBP) is a pan-African initiative dedicated to the preservation of Africa's biodiversity through genomic research. This document defines the structure, mission, and operational guidelines for the governance and administration of AfricaBP to achieve its objectives in a transparent, inclusive, and efficient manner. All individuals and entities within AfricaBP agree to abide by the AfricaBP Constitution and ByLaws.

## CONSTITUTION

**ARTICLE 1.** The organisation shall be called the “African BioGenome Project” and referred to as the “AfricaBP”.

**ARTICLE 2.** The goal of the AfricaBP is to promote the improvement of food systems, enable sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity through genomics and integrated multi-omics approaches, and promote data sharing and equitable sharing of benefits.

**ARTICLE 3.** AfricaBP has voting members with rights and privileges as described in the ByLaws.

**ARTICLE 4.** The officers of the AfricaBP shall be AfricaBP members performing continent-wide or cross-regional level functions, which include: 1 Chairperson, 4 Regional Coordinators, 1 Chair of the Science, Technology, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (STMEC), 3 Co-Chairs of the STMEC, 1 Treasurer, 1 Senior Programme Manager, and 1 Secretary-General. Officers and offices shall be elected or appointed according to the ByLaws of the organisation. All offices and officers shall perform cross-regional, transnational, and cross-project functions. No office or officer shall serve or represent a particular institution, organisation, group, project, or initiative.

**ARTICLE 5.** The primary purpose of the 4 Regional Coordinators shall be to organise and coordinate the annual AfricaBP Open Institute regional workshops and implement the Grand Challenges of AfricaBP at the regional level through intra-regional, cross-regional, or continent-wide collaborations. Each Regional Coordinator shall establish a regional node of AfricaBP within their region and align its structure, processes, operations, and functions with the AfricaBP Constitution and ByLaws.

**ARTICLE 6.** Governance and management of AfricaBP shall be vested in the Steering Committee known as the “AfricaBP Steering Committee” or “AfricaBP SC”. The Steering Committee shall be made up of the 4 Regional Coordinators and the Chair of the Science, Technology, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee. Each member of the Steering Committee shall also be referred to as Co-Chair of AfricaBP or Co-Chair of the AfricaBP Steering Committee, aside from the Chairperson who shall be referred to as the Chair or Chairperson.

**ARTICLE 7.** There shall be an Annual General Meeting to be facilitated by the Chair of the AfricaBP. The time, format, and place of the annual general meeting shall be determined by the AfricaBP Steering Committee.

**ARTICLE 8.** Amendments to this constitution may be proposed in writing by any member of the AfricaBP to the Secretary-General, who shall submit them to the AfricaBP Steering Committee for consideration and vote. Such proposed amendments as have been approved by the majority of the AfricaBP Steering Committee shall be submitted to AfricaBP members for a vote and may be adopted by a favourable vote of the majority of the voting members.

**ARTICLE 9.** There shall be a notice period of at least 14 days before any AfricaBP voting date alerting members of any voting schedule. The notice of votes shall contain issues to be voted on, and these issues shall be enabled through sensitisation and awareness which shall be carried out within the notice period.

**ARTICLE 10.** The AfricaBP shall be an Unincorporated Charity Association or Constituted Group unless otherwise stated in ByLaws. The fiscal year and terms of office shall be from 1st January to 31st December unless otherwise specified in ByLaws.

**ARTICLE 11.** The Open Institute shall be one of the programmes of the AfricaBP, and it shall organise regional workshops which shall be a key function of the AfricaBP. Each African geographical region shall organise an annual regional workshop with a schedule to be agreed by the AfricaBP Steering Committee. This workshop must be coordinated by the relevant Regional Coordinator using the format and model agreed upon by the AfricaBP Steering Committee.

**ARTICLE 12.** The AfricaBP shall have no capital stock. No member shall be entitled to receive as dividends, profits, or otherwise, any property or money derived from the operation of the AfricaBP, but all property, earnings, and income of the AfricaBP, after payment of necessary charges and expenses of operations, shall be used exclusively

for purposes of scientific and educational development of the AfricaBP aims as expressed in Article 2 above.

**ARTICLE 13.** AfricaBP solicits and accepts donations for purposes that will enable AfricaBP to further fulfill its aims and mission. The AfricaBP will not accept donations that will result in inappropriate or unlawful consequences for AfricaBP and that fall outside the purposes of AfricaBP's aims and mission. Decisions to accept or reject donations shall be made by the Steering Committee with majority approval.

**ARTICLE 14.** AfricaBP Steering Committee shall set up an ad hoc Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) and appoint its members whenever this becomes necessary. The SAB may, among other responsibilities, perform advisory roles within AfricaBP.

**ARTICLE 15.** AfricaBP shall be apolitical. It shall focus on actualising the needs of African researchers, its people, and institutions in biodiversity genomics and bioinformatics, inspire policy step-change, infrastructural development, and capacity-building. It shall sequence and analyse African endemic and indigenous species using local resources and infrastructures in Africa.

**ARTICLE 16.** All AfricaBP-related publications shall adhere to the AfricaBP Publication and Authorship Policy. Where available, AfricaBP-related publications shall also adhere to the AfricaBP committees- or subcommittees- specific publication guidelines, practical guides, or policy.

**ARTICLE 17.** The aims of AfricaBP shall be targeted towards African scientists in public and private institutions, organisations and sectors, and bring biodiversity genomics, bioinformatics, and molecular biology technologies and techniques closer to the African people.

## **BYLAWS**

### **ARTICLE I. NAME**

The name of the organisation shall be the African BioGenome Project (AfricaBP) as indicated in Article 1 of the AfricaBP Constitution.

### **ARTICLE II. PURPOSE, MISSION, AND VISION**

### **Section 1: Purpose**

The purpose of AfricaBP shall be to promote, facilitate, and lead a coordinated effort across Africa to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity through genomics as well as integrated multi-omics for Africa's indigenous plant, animal, protists, other eukaryotic microbes, and ensure equitable data sharing and benefits.

### **Section 2: Mission**

The mission of AfricaBP is to advance biodiversity genomics and bioinformatics across the African continent through collaborations, research, innovations, and inspiring policy step-change.

### **Section 3: Vision**

- To bring biodiversity genomics and bioinformatics closer to the African people and bridge infrastructural gap

### **Section 4: Objectives**

- promote biodiversity conservation and sustainability through biodiversity genomics and multi-omics studies
- promote collaboration across African and global institutions for biodiversity genomics and multi-omics
- train and mentor the next generation of African genomics and bioinformatics scientists.
- develop a pan-African infrastructure for biodiversity genomics and bioinformatics to support sequencing and analysis of African species locally.
- engage and enable Africa's implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF) and associated instruments and protocols in the Convention of Biological Diversity.

## **ARTICLE III. STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE**

The AfricaBP is currently an Unincorporated Charity Association or Constituted Group, pending future incorporation or affiliation directive by the Steering Committee. Unless otherwise stated, all roles and responsibilities are unpaid positions. The governance and organisational structure of AfricaBP is composed of the following offices and officers:

## **Section 1: Chair, Steering Committee**

The Chair of the Steering Committee is the highest leadership position in AfricaBP. The Chair of the Steering Committee is also known as the Chair of the AfricaBP. The Chair of the AfricaBP shall rotate amongst the AfricaBP Regional Coordinators on an annual basis starting in January each year, using the AfricaBP fiscal year in Article 10. Once the Chair position rotates to another Region, the former Chair shall automatically become a Co-Chair, and will be eligible to be a Chair again when the regional leadership rotation is completed.

The Chair is responsible for guiding the strategic direction of AfricaBP, representing the organisation in all official matters, and ensuring the alignment of AfricaBP's activities with its mission and vision. The Chair's duties include:

- presiding over all Steering Committee meetings, setting the agenda, and ensuring proper execution of the Steering Committee's decisions;
- acting as the principal facilitator of Steering Committee monthly general meetings and annual general meetings within AfricaBP and working with the Secretary-General to conduct all Steering Committee directed meetings;
- serving as the primary representative for the AfricaBP, leading the Steering Committee in all AfricaBP-related meetings and ensuring these meetings run smoothly;
- ensuring that decisions taken during Steering Committee meetings and other AfricaBP-related meetings are implemented effectively;
- managing the performance of Steering Committee members and leadership;
- collaborating closely with the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) (Article III, Section 16), Regional Coordinators (Article III, Section 3), and Chair of the Science, Technology, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (STMEC) (Article III, Section 10) to ensure smooth operations across AfricaBP's regional and national nodes;
- working with the Treasurer (Article III, section 8) to ensure the financial sustainability of AfricaBP and its initiatives;
- acting as a key liaison person between the AfricaBP and other organizations, collaborators, partners, and SAB, where this becomes available and applicable.

## **Section 2: Steering Committee**

The Steering Committee shall comprise 5 members, each of whom plays a vital role in governance, policy-making, and management. The Steering Committee shall be made up of the 4 AfricaBP Regional Coordinators, who shall also be the 4 AfricaBP Open Institute Regional Workshop Coordinators, and the Chair of the Science, Technology, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (STMEC). Each member of the Steering

Committee shall also serve as Co-Chair of the AfricaBP. Regional Coordinators and the Chair of the STMEC shall also be Co-Chairs of the AfricaBP Steering Committee or Co-Chairs of the AfricaBP. The Steering Committee's main responsibilities are to:

- provide governance, and supervision and make major decisions that guide the overall direction of AfricaBP;
- approve and manage the annual budget and ensure proper financial management, subject to the availability of funding;
- ensure that AfricaBP's objectives and operations align with its mission;
- evaluate the performance of executive members;
- promote diversity and inclusiveness in AfricaBP's leadership and operations;
- serve as advocates for AfricaBP in the global genomics, bioinformatics, and biodiversity space.

### **Section 3: Regional Coordinators**

AfricaBP will appoint Regional Coordinators for each of the African geographical regions (North, West, East and Central, and Southern Africa). African geographical regions are as described by the African Union. Regional Coordinators shall notify the Steering Committee of their primary coordinating institutions and persons that lead the annual AfricaBP Open Institute regional workshops and they shall establish a regional node of AfricaBP within their region.

Regional Coordinators shall also be called Co-Chairs of the AfricaBP Steering Committee or Co-Chairs of the AfricaBP. Each Regional Coordinator is accountable to the Steering Committee and coordinated by the Chair or the Chairperson, ensuring regional efforts are aligned with AfricaBP's global strategy. The essence of a regional node is not to compete with other regions in Africa but to synchronise and collaborate with other African regional nodes to advance biodiversity genomics and bioinformatics across Africa. The East Africa Regional Coordinator shall also coordinate the Central Africa region, pending when a resource person from Central Africa becomes available.

A Regional Coordinator who is not performing well or meeting expectations can be replaced by a 70% vote of the Steering Committee. This process can only take place where a genuine complaint is received from the regional coordinating team, AfricaBP members and partners, or where the Steering Committee believes that the Regional Coordinator is not meeting expectations.

Regional Coordinators' responsibilities include:

- coordinating the activities of AfricaBP's regional nodes, ensuring they align with AfricaBP's mission and vision;
- managing operations of regional initiatives, including budget management, coordination, partner engagement, and the annual AfricaBP Open Institute regional workshops;
- facilitating communication between the regional node and AfricaBP's Steering Committee;
- ensuring that national nodes within their region are fully operational and supported;
- representing AfricaBP at regional events and promoting partnerships with local institutions and partners;
- replicating AfricaBP structures, operations, and functions at the regional level;
- fostering regional scientific collaborations amongst national nodes, institutions, organisations, and scientists.

Expectations of a designated AfricaBP regional node:

- demonstrate strong commitments to the AfricaBP project or objectives;
- an active member of AfricaBP for at least 24 months, and shall have a primary institutional affiliation to the African geographical region being represented;
- establish strong connections with at least two sample collection sources (including, but not limited to, biobanks, conservation centers, aquariums, zoos, and field sites) in their country or region, either through a Memorandum of Understanding or other collaborations and partnership evidence type/s;
- establish strong connections with at least two reference laboratories for genome sequencing (such laboratories should have both long-read and short-read sequencing capabilities) and two institutions with High-Performance Computing or Cloud computing capabilities;
- demonstrate traction in the AfricaBP Open Institute for Genomics and Bioinformatics activities, especially its annual regional workshops;
- strong understanding of the AfricaBP Ethical, Legal and Social Issues (ELSI) *Practical Guide to Accessing and Sharing Biological Diversity Material and Data: A Research Stage-Based Approach*;
- demonstrate practical experience and understanding required for navigating ethical, legal, and social implications when acquiring and sharing materials and data relating to genetic resources;
- demonstrate track records of trust and reliability to deliver AfricaBP goals in collective, collegiate, and communal ways;
- demonstrate that the regional node will be autonomous and accountable to the AfricaBP Steering Committee;

- have at least one full-time administrative staff working on the AfricaBP project for the region under consideration;
- be able to replicate the coordinating AfricaBP structure at the regional level;
- separate their institutional interests from AfricaBP interests. On matters involving AfricaBP, AfricaBP interests take priority. Regional coordinators shall be able to decouple their institutional role from that of their role in AfricaBP, especially when potential conflicts arise;
- maintain an auditable financial account for their regional node;
- sign an institutional MoU with AfricaBP.

#### **Section 4: Expanded Management Committee**

The Expanded Management Committee of AfricaBP shall be made up of the Chair and Co-Chairs of the Steering Committee, the Chairs and Co-Chairs of the Science, Technology, Monitoring, and Evaluation Committee (STMEC), Co-Chairs of the STMEC Subcommittees, and leaders of Specialised Working Groups. The leadership of the Management Committee shall be monthly and rotate between the Chairs and Co-Chairs of the STMEC Subcommittees.

The Expanded Management Committee does the general day-to-day coordination of the progress made by the STMEC and Specialised Working Groups. The Expanded Management Committee meets monthly and is accountable to the Steering Committee. The Expanded Management Committee coordinates the AfricaBP Grand Challenges and interactions between the AfricaBP partners and their roles towards the achievement of the purposes of special programs and initiatives of the AfricaBP such as Fellowship programs as well as related projects.

The AfricaBP Grand Challenges shall include:

- Genomics and Bioinformatics Technologies for the Agri-Environment
- Crops and Livestock Improvement and Health
- Genomics for Conservation of Endangered and Endemic Species
- Socio-economics, Ethics and Policy Issues
- Technology Development, Knowledge Exchange and Industry

## **Section 5: Senior Programme Manager - AfricaBP Open Institute, Partnerships, and Fundraising**

The Senior Programme Manager for the AfricaBP Open Institute is a full-time paid role, subject to the availability of funding. This position is essential for ensuring that AfricaBP secures the necessary resources and partnerships to achieve its mission in the AfricaBP Open Institute. His/her responsibilities include:

- managing the activities of the AfricaBP Open Institute, which focuses on responsible open science, data sharing and benefits, public-private partnerships, and capacity-building;
- developing and managing partnerships with key partners, including academic institutions, funding bodies, and corporate entities;
- leading fundraising efforts to ensure the financial sustainability of AfricaBP's Open Institute's programs and initiatives;
- coordinating with the Regional Coordinators to leverage partnerships for maximum impact across Africa.

## **Section 6: National Coordinators**

Each Regional Coordinator shall appoint a National Coordinator for their respective national nodes. National Coordinators shall work closely with the Regional Coordinators and are under the structures or organogram of the Regional Coordinators who shall be responsible for managing the National Coordinators. The National Coordinator can be from academic, research, corporate, or not-for-profit organisations that manage or coordinate functions of the AfricaBP consortium in a particular African country. There shall only be one National Coordinator for each country. Responsibilities of National Coordinators include:

- leading biodiversity genomics and bioinformatics research activities at the national level;
- ensuring that national projects and activities align with AfricaBP's broader goals and regional strategies;
- collaborating with national institutions, research and industry organisations within and across their regions;
- acting as the primary scientific representative for the country in AfricaBP general meetings and workshops.

### Expectations of a designated AfricaBP national node:

- demonstrate strong commitments to the AfricaBP project or objectives;

- an active member of AfricaBP for at least 12 months, and shall have a primary institutional affiliation to the African country being represented;
- establish strong connections with at least 2 national biobanks (or other sample collection sources) in their country or region, either through MoUs or other partnership evidence type/s;
- establish strong connections with at least two reference laboratories for genome sequencing (such laboratories should have both long and short reads capabilities) and two institutions with HPC or Cloud computing capabilities;
- demonstrate traction in the AfricaBP Open Institute for Genomics and Bioinformatics activities, especially its regional or practical workshops;
- strong understanding of the AfricaBP Ethical, Legal and Social Issues *Practical Guide to Accessing and Sharing Biological Diversity Material and Data: A Research Stage-Based Approach*;
- demonstrate practical experience and understanding of navigating ethics, legal, and social implications when acquiring and sharing materials and data relating to genetic resources;
- demonstrate track records of trust and reliability to deliver AfricaBP goals in collective, collegiate, and communal ways;
- demonstrate that the national node will be autonomous and accountable to the leadership of the AfricaBP Regional Node for the region under consideration;
- have at least one full-time administrative staff working on AfricaBP for the country under consideration;
- be able to replicate the coordinating AfricaBP structure at the national level;
- separate their institutional interests from AfricaBP interests. On matters involving AfricaBP, AfricaBP interests take priority. National Coordinators shall be able to decouple their institutional role from that of their role in AfricaBP, especially when potential conflicts arise;
- maintain an auditable financial account for their national node;
- sign an institutional MoU with AfricaBP.

## **Section 7: Secretary-General**

The Secretary-General is a full-time, paid position responsible for the overall administration of AfricaBP, subject to the availability of funding. The Secretary-General plays a central role in maintaining organisational coherence and ensuring smooth internal operations. Key duties include:

- managing the routine and administrative operations of AfricaBP;
- ensuring proper documentation and record-keeping for all organisational activities;

- serving as the point of contact for internal and external communications;
- organising Steering Committee meetings, supporting the delivery of workshops, and other official events;
- coordinating with all AfricaBP committee members to ensure timely and effective implementation of initiatives.

### **Section 8: Treasurer**

The Treasurer is a part-time, paid position responsible for managing AfricaBP's financial health, subject to availability of funding. Duties include:

- managing the preparation and execution of AfricaBP's annual budget;
- ensuring transparent and accurate financial reporting to the Steering Committee and partners;
- managing all financial transactions, including sponsorships and funding;
- ensuring compliance with financial regulations and conducting periodic audits;
- advising the Steering Committee on financial risks and opportunities.

### **Section 9: Project Sponsors**

Project Sponsors provide vital financial or quantifiable in-kind resources to support AfricaBP's initiatives. These sponsors may include institutions, not-for-profit organizations, or corporate entities. The responsibilities and benefits of project sponsorship include:

- financially funding specific AfricaBP projects or programs or through in-kind contributions;
- receiving recognition and acknowledgments in AfricaBP publications, events, and promotional materials;
- having the opportunity to collaborate with AfricaBP's research teams and regional nodes.

### **Section 10: Science, Technology, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (STMEC)**

The Chair of the STMEC and its Subcommittee Chairs lead various activities within the STMEC. The Chair of the STMEC is also referred to as the Co-Chair of the AfricaBP Steering Committee or Co-Chair of the AfricaBP. Subject to the availability of funding, STMEC Chairs, Co-Chairs, and subcommittee Chairs may be recruited through the **AfricaBP Affiliate Program**. Committee and subcommittee Chairs are delegated based on their expertise and leadership skills, playing a crucial role in AfricaBP's program and project delivery. These chairs are responsible for:

- managing specific programs or projects aligned with AfricaBP's mission and vision;
- managing the activities of Committee Members within their committees;
- reporting committee progress to the Steering Committee and working with other leadership to implement decisions;
- ensuring that each committee's activities support the overall mission of AfricaBP;
- providing reports on best practices for specific thematic areas.

There shall be 8 subcommittees within the STMEC namely:

- *Sample Collections and Processing Subcommittee (SCPS)*: The SCPS works closely with sample custodians, ambassadors, and national and regional nodes across Africa to ensure the ethical, safe, and secure sourcing of biological materials. It provides support and guidance that enables adherence to legal and ethical frameworks, including the Nagoya Protocol and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), while guaranteeing equitable access and benefit sharing. Additionally, it oversees taxonomic working groups and national representatives to identify priority species.
- *Sequencing and Assembly Subcommittee (SASC)*: The SASC establishes standards, roadmaps, and best practices for reference genome sequencing and assembly. It ensures the implementation of these standards to improve genome quality and collaborates with other committees to integrate sequencing outputs effectively.
- *Annotation Subcommittee (AS)*: The AS develops roadmap documents and policies that define standards for high-quality genome annotation, including assembly quality, required data types (e.g., transcriptome and multi-species protein data), reproducible software pipelines, and database curation and release. It collaborates to implement these standards, facilitates genome annotation, and addresses the unique challenges of annotating diverse taxa across Africa.
- *Data Science and Artificial Intelligence Subcommittee (DAIS)*: The DAIS integrates biology, bioinformatics, statistics, and Artificial Intelligence to analyse genomic data. Comprising bioinformaticians, statisticians, and biologists, it works closely with the Sequencing and Assembly, and Annotation subcommittees to develop analysis plans and pipelines. It also performs exploratory and genomic evolutionary analyses on data generated by other teams to extract meaningful biological information and enhance data visualisation.
- *Information Technology (IT) and Infrastructure Subcommittee*: The primary goal of the IT and Infrastructure subcommittee is to support the African BioGenome

Project by assessing its technological needs and developing infrastructure, standards, and solutions to meet these challenges effectively.

- *Ethics, Legal and Social Implications (ELSI)*: The ELSI subcommittee identifies potential ethical, social, and legal challenges that could affect its activities and proposes strategies to address them. This subcommittee ensures that all AfricaBP initiatives, including research and partnerships, are conducted in a responsible and ethically sound manner. The ELSI subcommittee supports all AfricaBP activities by publishing practical guides for material and data sharing and through meetings and engagements with AfricaBP researchers.
- *Communications and Public Affairs (CPA) Subcommittee*: The CPA subcommittee is responsible for coordinating and overseeing media relations, including press releases and interviews, while developing strategies for outreach, science communication, visibility, networking, and marketing. It plays a key role in establishing AfricaBP as a leading authority and voice in the conservation and research of African biodiversity.
- *Partnership, Fundraising and Open Institute Subcommittee (PFOS)*: The PFOS defines the core values, outcomes, and processes that drive AfricaBP's collaborative efforts, establishing a foundation for corporate, institutional, and associate partnerships, translation of basic sciences to applied and social benefits, technology development as well as fundraising activities. The subcommittee also oversees the Open Institute, which facilitates knowledge exchange and capacity building for African scientists through workshops on genomics sequencing, annotation, and bioinformatics, research fellowships, and Digital Sequence Information (DSI) database and infrastructure development.

The AfricaBP Open Institute and its regional workshops shall be the fulcrum upon which the AfricaBP shall revolve to ensure that AfricaBP continues to foster collaborations and share scientific progress across Africa. Regional Coordinators have the power to nominate a national node to organise and coordinate the regional workshops on their behalf within a specified year. In this case, the AfricaBP Steering Committee shall be notified in writing at least 3 months to the planned regional workshop date.

The AfricaBP Steering Committee has the power to move a regional workshop from a current regional workshop organiser to another prospective regional workshop organiser should this be established by the AfricaBP Steering Committee to be in the interest of the AfricaBP and where performance for a regional workshop has not been met. In this case, when such a regional workshop is moved, the Regional Coordinator shall lose the position of the Regional Coordinator for that particular region. Two meetings shall be held, one to brief the Regional Coordinator about the concerns and a second to make a removal decision by voting, and a new Regional Coordinator shall be appointed.

*Specialised Working Groups:* A specialised team is a team of experts in an area that is strategically important to guide the consortium's activities and programs, e.g., the Taxonomic Working Group. Each committee or subcommittee can set up an informal Working Group to deliver medium- to short- term activities in AfricaBP. The establishment of Specialised Working Groups shall be approved by the Chair or Co-Chair of each Committee or Subcommittee.

## **Section 11: Subcommittee Members**

Committee members are persons who contribute to the various programs and projects within AfricaBP. Subject to availability of funding, subcommittee members may be recruited through the **AfricaBP Volunteer Program**. Their duties will include:

- supporting the execution of committee initiatives and projects;
- participating in meetings, workshops, and activities relevant to their committee;
- providing valuable expertise to enhance AfricaBP's programs as well as guidance on best practices;
- performing cross-regional, transnational, and continent functions of supporting the various AfricaBP regional and national nodes respectively.

## **Section 12: Partnership Framework**

AfricaBP will foster multi-institutional partnerships as a strategy to deliver its goals.

The partnership framework will be initiated through a Memorandum of Understanding that will formalize the intention of the AfricaBP partners to engage in collaborative activities targeted at coordination for all non-human genome sequencing initiatives in Africa. Representative partners will be classified as institutional, associate project partners, or corporate partners.

### *a. Institutional Partnerships*

AfricaBP will establish partnerships with academic, research, and governmental institutions to advance its mission. Institutional partnerships help strengthen AfricaBP's scientific capacity and increase its impact across Africa. The establishment of institutional partnerships shall be carried out through a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Each institutional partner may nominate a maximum of one person as a representative and this will be categorised as AfricaBP institutional member representative. Responsibilities of these partners include:

- collaborating with AfricaBP on research projects, capacity-building efforts, and data sharing;
- providing access to scientific resources, expertise, and infrastructure;
- co-hosting workshops, conferences, and training programs.

*b. Associate Project Partnerships*

Associate Project Partners engage with AfricaBP on specific projects. The establishment of associate project partnerships shall be carried out through a signed MoU. Each associate project partner may nominate a maximum of one person as a representative and this will be categorised as an AfricaBP associate project member representative. These partnerships responsibilities may involve:

- providing expertise, resources, or funding for AfricaBP initiatives;
- collaborating on short-term or project-specific goals;
- receiving recognition and involvement in the dissemination of research findings.

*c. Corporate or Industry Partners*

Corporate or Industry Partners provide support to AfricaBP in the form of financial funding, technology, sponsorships, or specialised expertise. The establishment of corporate or industry partnerships shall be carried out through a signed MoU. Each corporate or industry partner may nominate a maximum of one person as a representative and this will be categorised as AfricaBP corporate or industry member representative. Their role includes:

- partnering with AfricaBP to develop innovative solutions for biodiversity genomics and bioinformatics;
- contributing to AfricaBP's sustainability through long-term financial and strategic investments;
- collaborating with AfricaBP scientists benefiting both AfricaBP and their industries;
- sponsoring specific AfricaBP projects, workshops, conferences, and initiatives.

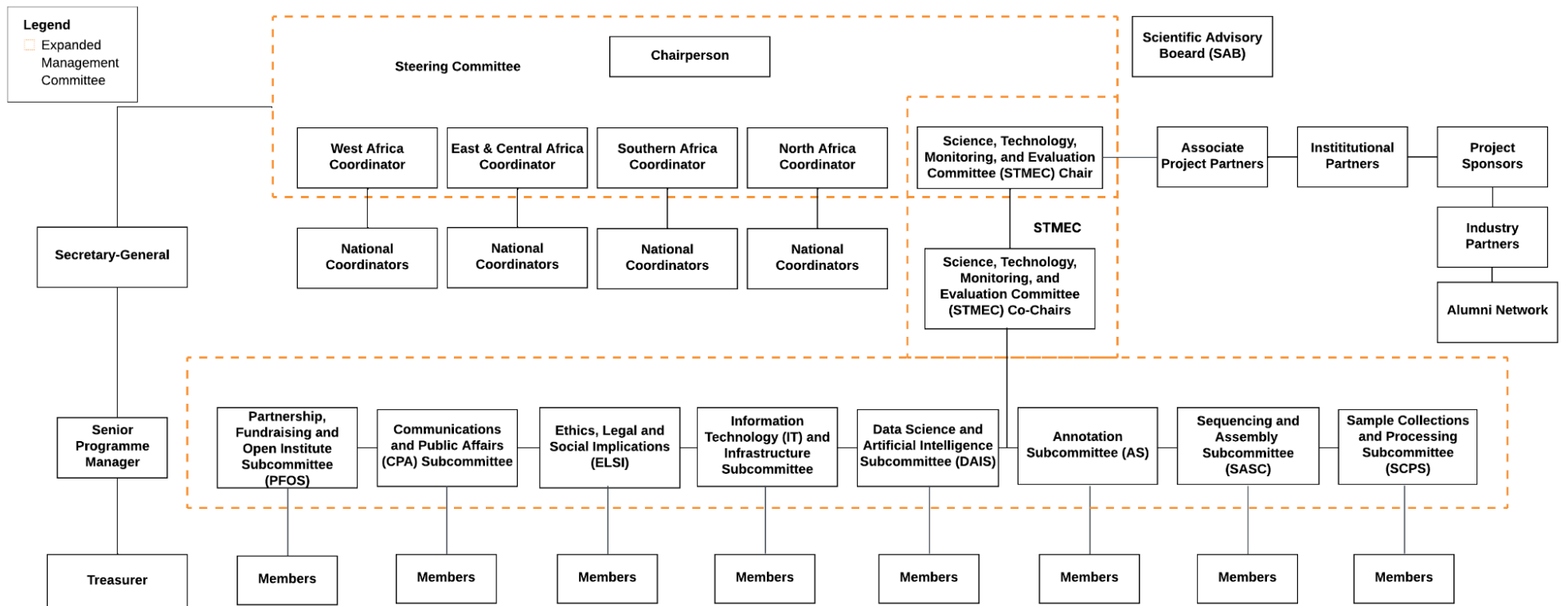
## **Section 13: Alumni Network**

AfricaBP shall maintain an alumni network to engage previous AfricaBP members through mentoring, advocacy, and continuous development and advancement of the fields of biodiversity genomics and bioinformatics across Africa. This will be subject to the availability of funding.

## **Section 14: Scientific Advisory Board (SAB)**

The AfricaBP Steering Committee shall set up a SAB whenever this is required. The Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) shall be composed of distinguished scientists and experts in genomics, biodiversity, ELSI, sample collections and processing, and bioinformatics. SAB members are delegated based on their scientific credentials and contributions to the field. They work in collaboration with the AfricaBP Steering Committee to help shape AfricaBP's scientific activities. SAB's role is to provide strategic scientific advice to the Steering Committee and AfricaBP's leadership on:

- the latest developments in genomics, biodiversity conservation, and bioinformatics;
- the scientific validity and impact of AfricaBP's projects;
- the alignment of AfricaBP's initiatives with global scientific standards and ethical frameworks;
- advising on potential areas for scientific collaboration, innovation, and research funding.



**Figure 1: Organogram of African BioGenome Project**

## ARTICLE IV. MEMBERS

### Section 1: Membership

Membership is open to any individual, institution, and organisation committed to the mission and values of AfricaBP.

### Section 2: Member Categories

The Steering Committee may, by resolution, establish, eliminate, or define categories of membership. The Steering Committee shall appoint members through a majority vote for nominations passed on by the Science, Technology, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee. Membership categories may include:

- 1. Individual Members:** Scientists, researchers, or professionals in genomics, bioinformatics, biodiversity, and related fields. Individual members shall be requested to re-confirm their membership every January or February of each year, and the decision to approve or reject membership shall be made by the Steering Committee. Currently, AfricaBP will not operate individual membership due to the resources required to maintain individual membership, and this constitution will be updated when this position changes.
- 2. Committee members:** These are individuals who serve on any of the AfricaBP committees. They could include, but are not limited to, scientists, non-scientists, researchers, non-researchers, policymakers, and industry personnel. Committee members shall be requested to re-confirm their membership every January or February of each year, and the decision to approve or decline membership shall be made by the Steering Committee using supporting statements and insights from the Chair of the Committee under consideration. The Steering Committee shall consult with the Chair of the relevant committee to make approval or rejection decisions.
- 3. Institutional Members:** These are primary representatives of AfricaBP institutional partners established through MoU. Institutional members shall be requested to re-confirm their membership once the length of the Memorandum of Understanding signed with AfricaBP has ended, and the decision to approve or decline membership shall be made by the Steering Committee.
- 4. Associate Project Members:** These are primary representatives of AfricaBP associate project partners established through MoU. Associate Project members shall be requested to re-confirm their membership once the length of the

Memorandum of Understanding signed with AfricaBP has ended, and the decision to approve or decline membership shall be made by the Steering Committee.

- 5. Corporate/Industry Member:** These are primary representatives of AfricaBP corporate or industry partnerships established through MoU. Corporate/Industry members shall be requested to re-confirm their membership once the length of the Memorandum of Understanding signed with AfricaBP has ended, and the decision to approve or decline membership shall be made by the Steering Committee.

### **Section 3: Power and Purpose of the Members**

Members are expected to contribute towards achieving AfricaBP's objectives. Members shall have the right to:

- participate in Monthly General, Annual General, and relevant Committee Monthly Meetings;
- propose new initiatives or committees to advance AfricaBP's goals;
- vote.

### **Section 4: Selection or reconfirmation of Members**

Members shall be selected or reconfirmed based on the procedure described in Section 2, ARTICLE IV of this ByLaws. Appointments are subject to approval by the Steering Committee.

Members shall be deemed to automatically lose their membership if a member suddenly becomes inactive for at least four consecutive months or having recorded committee meeting absences for at least four consecutive months, without notifying the Steering Committee or their relevant committee Chair.

### **Section 5: Records of Members**

AfricaBP shall maintain minimum information about its members, such as first and last name, contact information, organisation affiliation, and country of affiliation. Records of AfricaBP members shall be for voting purposes and AfricaBP's organisational activities. Beyond these, members' information will be de-identified whenever used in any type of reporting. Members' information will not be shared with any 3rd parties beyond the organisation.

## **Section 6: Conduct of Members**

Members must adhere to AfricaBP's ethical standards and objectives, including this Constitution and ByLaws.

## **Section 7: Suspension or Removal of Members**

Members may be suspended or removed by a majority vote of the Steering Committee for behaviour or action that is contrary to AfricaBP's goals.

## **Section 8. Resignation of Members.**

Members may voluntarily resign by submitting written notice to the Steering Committee. Resignations take effect immediately unless stated otherwise.

## **Section 9: Travel and Upskilling Award**

Steering Committee and STMEC members who have actively contributed to AfricaBP over 12 months are eligible for the AfricaBP Travel and Upskilling Award, subject to funding availability. This award provides financial support for these members to attend conferences, workshops, and training programs that align with AfricaBP's mission. Criteria for travel and upskilling award will be determined by the Steering Committee and will include, amongst others, contributing and developing a practical guide / best practice / terms of reference / checklist document, authoring publications, developing a framework or technical product, and other indexable document types, all of which must have evolved within the AfricaBP in the past 12 months.

Eligible members may also be considered for the fellowship award, a distinction offered to individuals who demonstrate exceptional contributions to AfricaBP. The award provides further financial resources for research or skill enhancement opportunities.

# **ARTICLE V. MEETINGS**

## **Section 1: Types of Meetings**

AfricaBP shall hold the following types of meetings:

- **Monthly General Meeting:** A monthly meeting of the entire membership to review the activities of AfricaBP and discuss the strategic direction.

- **Monthly Steering Committee Meetings:** The Steering Committee shall meet once a month to manage and discuss governance, strategic decisions, and scientific directions of AfricaBP.
- **Monthly Expanded Management Committee Meetings:** The Management Committee shall meet once a month to discuss updates and progress of the AfricaBP activities.
- **Monthly Science, Technology, Monitoring, and Evaluation Committee Meetings:** STMEC, including the various subcommittees, holds regular monthly meetings to discuss specific projects, operations, or initiatives. The STMEC Chair and Co-Chair shall rotate in anchoring the STMEC meetings, while the STMEC Subcommittee Chairs and Co-Chairs shall rotate in anchoring the STMEC Subcommittee.
- **AfricaBP Open Institute Monthly Meetings.** The AfricaBP Open Institute shall hold monthly meetings, and the Regional Coordinators shall attend (or nominate representatives to) these monthly meetings. This meeting shall provide the platform for cross-regional information sharing and understanding of progress in the planning, coordination, and execution of the various AfricaBP Open Institute Regional Workshops. This meeting shall be held as part of the PFOS monthly meetings.
- **AfricaBP Open Institute Annual Regional Workshops.** The AfricaBP Open Institute Annual Regional Workshops shall be the fulcrum upon which the AfricaBP revolves. Each African geographical region shall host and coordinate an annual regional workshop in line with the format, checklist, and model communicated by the Steering Committee.

## Section 2: Notice of Meetings

- **Annual General Meeting (AGM):** Notice of the AGM must be given to all members at least one (1) week in advance for the virtual AGM and at least six (6) months for the in-person AGM, specifying the date, time, and agenda.
- **Steering Committee Meetings:** Steering Committee members must receive at least one (1) day's notice before a Steering Committee meeting.
- **Monthly Management Committee Meetings:** Members must receive at least one (1) day's notice before a meeting.
- **Science, Technology, Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (STMEC) Meetings:** STMEC, and its subcommittees, shall establish their meeting schedules, however, members must be informed at least seven (7) days in advance.

- **AfricaBP Open Institute Monthly Meetings:** The notice of this meeting shall be at least seven (7) days in advance.
- **AfricaBP Open Institute Annual Regional Workshops:** Notice or advertisement of any Open Institute regional workshop shall be made 6 months before the start date of the regional workshop under consideration.

### **Section 3: Decision-Making**

Decisions during meetings shall be made by a majority vote unless specified otherwise in this constitution. In the case of a tie, the Chair shall cast the deciding vote. Where a decision was not made by majority vote, such decision must be accompanied by justifications in writing.

### **Section 4: Minutes of meetings**

The Secretary-General or relevant meeting coordinator shall record or document the minutes of all official meetings such as General, Steering Committee, Open Institute, and STMEC meetings, and make them available to relevant members.

## **ARTICLE VI. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

### **Section 1: Budget**

The Treasurer, in collaboration with the Senior Programme Manager and the Steering Committee, shall prepare an annual budget outlining expected income and expenditures. The budget must be approved by the Steering Committee before implementation.

### **Section 2: Financial Records**

AfricaBP shall maintain annual financial records, managed by the Treasurer. An independent auditor shall conduct an annual review of these records to ensure transparency and accountability.

### **Section 3: Fundraising and Grants**

AfricaBP may seek grants and sponsorships to support its activities. An AfricaBP-directed and coordinated grant application may happen directly through the AfricaBP consortia. The Treasurer, in partnership with the Partnerships and Fundraising Subcommittee, will manage all fundraising efforts.

Any AfricaBP member or group of members can apply for grants to help meet and support any of the AfricaBP's Grand Challenges.

## **ARTICLE VII. AMENDMENTS**

Any member may propose amendments. Proposed changes must be submitted in writing to the Steering Committee and voted on at the Monthly General Meeting. Amendments require a two-thirds majority vote of all members present.

## **ARTICLE VIII. CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

In the event of a conflict or dispute arising within AfricaBP, parties involved should first seek resolution through informal discussions. If unresolved, a formal mediation process involving the AfricaBP ELSI subcommittee or neutral parties will be initiated.

## **ARTICLE IX. ETHICAL CONDUCT**

All members, officers, and partners of AfricaBP are expected to uphold the highest standards of ethical conduct in their activities and ensure integrity, respect, and transparency in all dealings.

## **ARTICLE X. SECRETARIAT**

The Secretariat of AfricaBP shall be the primary affiliation of the Chair or Chairperson of the Steering Committee at any given time. Since the Chairperson is rotational amongst the Regional Coordinators, the Secretariat shall also rotate in line with the Chairperson's primary affiliation.

Functions of the Secretariat shall include serving as an administrative office for the Chairperson and the AfricaBP in general.

## **ARTICLE XI. DISSOLUTION**

AfricaBP shall be dissolved if:

- a. at any time there remains a maximum of three (3) members cumulatively; or
- b. a motion is moved by any of its members with at least 30% of signatories of members. Such a motion will then be put forward to the AfricaBP members for

voting. A minimum of 70% of AfricaBP members are required to cast their votes. A decision to dissolve AfricaBP shall be decided through a minimum of two-thirds ( $\frac{2}{3}$ ) of the votes cast by the members present.

Upon the dissolution of AfricaBP, a final comprehensive report will be made available that describes and highlights the history, present status, and progress made by AfricaBP to date. Any resources remaining shall be donated to an identified not-for-profit charitable network or organisation whose mission aligns with that of the AfricaBP before its dissolution.