

**CIAT/TSBF/UNEP/GEF/JNU Project**  
**Conservation and Sustainable Management of Belowground Biodiversity**  
**Phase II**  
**First Steering Committee Meeting – February 5, 2007**  
**Venue: Van Vigyan Bhawan, ICFRE Guest House, New Delhi**  
**Minutes**

The list of the participants in the meeting is given in Annexure 1. Dr R.K. Maikhuri, Scientist Incharge, Garhwal Unit of G.B. Pant Institute of Himalayan Environment and Development, though had confirmed his participation and had sent all the documents to be discussed in the meeting, could not attend the meeting because of some urgent and important work and requested Dr K.S. Rao to make presentations on his behalf.

At the outset, Professor M.C. Dash, Ex Vice-Chancellor, Sambalpur University and Chairman, Steering Committee thanked the members of the Committee for all support extended to the programme which led to approval and funding of the Phase II of the programme. On behalf of the Steering Committee, Professor Dash appreciated the hard work during phase I put in by the group of scientists involved in implementation of the project. The members also expressed a concern about the difficulties faced in maintaining continuity and enthusiasm due to more than a year-long 'transition phase' between phase I and phase II.

The Final Report of Phase I of the project submitted to the Tropical Soil Biology and Fertility Institute of CIAT (Annexure 2) was approved. The Committee adopted the Memorandum of Agreement and attached documents giving the details of technical plans and institutional arrangements for implementation of phase II -project activities (Annexure 3).

The National Coordinator, K.G. Saxena gave an up-date account of the project. The presentation spelt out : (i) February, 2007 was the starting and March, 2009 the ending date of the project as per the Memorandum of Agreement signed by the the authorities of the Tropical Soil Biology and Fertility Institute of CIAT and the Jawaharlal Nehru University, (ii) TSBF will deduct 2% of the total funds (about US \$ 380000) as handling charges, (iii) a more rigorous monitoring and evaluation of work progress, (iv) a summary of significant contributions made by the Indian team of scientists during phase I period, appreciations as well as deficiencies to this work from international community and a national plan of work for phase II (Annexure 4). The members advised the group to draw a very objective and systematic monitoring and evaluation plans to track timely achievements of the milestones and to address the problems encountered in achieving the milestones well in time.

The presentation of National Coordinator was followed by the presentations of Dr U.M. Chandrashekhara, Professor A.N. Balakrishna and Dr R.K. Maikhuri (presentation made by Dr K.S. Rao on behalf of Dr R.K. Maikhuri) that gave the details of major conclusions, workplan and fund requirements for the implementation of activities in

Kerala part of Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, Karnataka part of Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve and Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve, respectively.

Following the discussions on all the presentations, following suggestions/comments were made and decisions taken:

1. The members express concern over the scientific weaknesses of some of the statements made during the presentation from the University of Agricultural Sciences and over the limited capacity of scientists in terms of their knowledge and experience in inventorying a highly diverse belowground biodiversity. They advised the National Coordinator to strengthen and expand collaboration by involving more institutions and individuals. The members also asked for submission of all documents well before the meeting.
2. During the first three months of the project implementation during phase II, i.e., March-May, 2007, the participants should undertake activities confined to (i) improvement in presentation, analysis and discussion of data/information collected during phase I, (ii) prepare a detailed document on work plan, roles, responsibilities and fund requirements for remaining period of the project, i.e., June 2007 to March, 2009 conforming to the documents attached to the Memorandum of Agreement.
3. The work plans should ensure that the present programme adds to and not duplicates the past or ongoing activities. For each demonstration proposed for phase II a detailed documents should be prepared which elaborates on :
  - (a) the wider goal and specific objectives of proposed demonstration,
  - (b) a description of conventional and alternative technologies within the context of the proposed demonstration,
  - (c) a justification about selection of the technology for demonstration or for further improvement in technology,
  - (d) an analysis of ecological, economic and social viability/sustainability of technology selected for demonstration,
  - (e) policy dimensions of the technologies selected for demonstration.
3. The scope of the present project demands an integrated consideration of ecological, economic and social dimensions of environmental conservation in general and conservation of belowground biodiversity in particular. Identification of 'key species' or 'keystone species' and ways and means of supplementing/complementing indigenous knowledge/technologies with the conventional scientific and technological knowledge could be a potential way addressing the problem of conservation and thus should be a key consideration while identifying demonstration and development of technologies.
4. Rice bean has been a neglected crop and may be chosen for some of Phase II activities. There may be other double-purpose legumes too, i.e., human food and green manure values.
5. Although vermicomposting has received significant attention from government, the potential of indigenous earthworm species has not been capitalized upon. There is a need

of comparing the efficacy of indigenous and exotic species and an improvement in comparative knowledge on ecology and biology of exotic and native species. A lot of work has been done in this regard by the scientists of Sambalpur University and this knowledge can be taken as the starting point of further improvement in vermicomposting/vermitechnology. National Coordinator may contact Dr Sanjat Kumar Sahu to pursue this matter.

6. The National Coordinator may contact Professor B.K. Senapati to look into a feasibility of economic valuation of benefits from earthworms based on his work in collaboration with Professor Patrick Lavelle. Looking at the response from Professor Senapati, a workshop may be organized involving participation of Professor M.C. Dash, Dr J.M. Julka, Dr P.S. Pathak, Dr B.V. Chainappa Reddy and Professor D. Marothia to work out the details of economic valuation component of the project.

7. Dr J.M. Julka agreed to work out the details of training activities to organized during phase II period.

8. The committee approved release of Rs 2,18,000 to Kerala Forest Research Institute, Rs 1,50,000 to University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore and Rs 1,50,000 to the G.B. Pant Institute of Himalayan Environment and Development for meeting the expenditure required for the activities approved for the first three months of the project.

Annexure 1. List of participants

Annexure 2. Final Report of Phase I activities of the project

Annexure 3. Memorandum of Agreement for Phase II of the project

Annexure 4. Presentation of National Coordinator

Annexure 5. Presentation of Dr U.M. Chandrashekhara, Principal Investigator, Kerala Forest Research Institute

Annexure 6. Presentation of Professor A.N. Balakrishna, Principal Investigator, University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore

Annexure 7. Presentation of Dr R.K. Maikhuri, G.B. Pant Institute of Himalayan Environment and Development (presentation was made by Dr K.S. Rao)