

THE GROWING DIVERSITY PROJECT

PROCESS & RESULTS



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Genetic Resources Action International



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INTRODUCTION

The 'Growing Diversity Project' was launched in January 2000. The aim was to take stock of the situation with respect to the local management of agricultural biodiversity and to provide for a platform for discussion and sharing of experiences amongst the groups involved. Two years later, the project cumulated in a major international workshop held in the Brazilian Amazon, bringing together farmer groups and NGOs from all over the world.

In between was a fascinating journey, involving the documentation of over 80 local experiences – from 37 countries - with the management of agricultural biodiversity, the holding of five regional workshops in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and the production of numerous information and educational materials at the local, national and international levels.

The whole process was a tremendous organisational challenge. We had set ourselves ambitious goals. We wanted to create information channels between groups that normally do not communicate. We aimed to identify bottlenecks, to articulate new strategies, to increase awareness and to link all of this to developments at the international level. Most importantly, we aimed to involve and empower grass roots organisations – farmers, hunters, fishermen, indigenous people – and we set ourselves the goal of incorporating many 'new faces' in the process.

This report describes the Growing Diversity Project, and discusses its outcome. It explains the thinking of the initiators at the outset, describes the consultation phase to further shape the project, and discusses in detail the documentation of the experiences involved, and the outcome of the regional and international workshops. The final chapter of the report pulls together some conclusions on the extent that the original objectives of the project have been reached.

In presenting this report, GRAIN would like to thank the other initiators of this project - Bread for the World from Germany, Crocevia from Italy, and the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation from Sweden – for their intellectual and financial support to this undertaking. We would also like to thank the other donors to this project: IIED, the French government, Misereor, Novib, and Swissaid.

Growing Diversity would not have happened without the consistent and enthusiastic efforts from the regional coordinators – Bob Brac, German Velez, Oscar Zamora, and Jeanne Zoundjhekpou – and the global coordinator, Angela Cordeiro. The Pelum Association also contributed to the project through its work in Southern and Eastern Africa. For GRAIN it was a privilege to be associated with this outstanding group of people, and we would like to warmly thank them for their input.

But our deepest appreciation goes to the farmers, fishermen, hunters, indigenous people, and other direct local users of biodiversity that formed part of the Growing Diversity journey. We hope that the project helped to strengthen their work and livelihoods, and provided inspiration to continue the struggle for a biodiversity based agriculture.

GRAIN

Barcelona, March 2003

Note: All documented experiences are available from a special section at GRAIN's Website: www.grain.org/gd, and summaries of them were compiled in the 'Growing Diversity Book', which is available from GRAIN. A list of other outputs of the project, is given in Annex 1

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In October 1999, a group of organisations composed of Bread for the World, Centro Internazionale Crocevia, Genetic Resources Action International (GRAIN) and the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC), decided to join efforts to organise an International Workshop on Local Management of Agriculture Biodiversity. The proposal was launched in January 2000, with a ‘Call for interest and feedback’ letter sent to organisations in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Some key paragraphs of this letter summarise the main elements of this project:

“The proposed project has three distinct and equally important objectives:

- *To provide a platform for discussion and sharing of experiences among groups involved in the local management of biodiversity in order to learn from such experiences, identify bottlenecks, and to articulate new strategies and approaches.*
- *Through this process of sharing and learning, to contribute to the empowerment and strengthening of the groups involved.*
- *Through its outputs and follow-up, increase awareness on the central importance of biodiversity in rural livelihood systems and promote the incorporation of local biodiversity management systems in a broader spectrum of rural development approaches, programmes and policies.*

The focus of the project is on the local management of agricultural biodiversity in its broadest sense: that part of biodiversity that sustains, nurtures and feeds people. It would include experiences with domesticated plant and animal diversity, but also the "hidden" (wild) diversity that is such an important source of food and health for many people. Overall, it includes that diversity that sustains livelihood systems. Clearly, the experiences to emphasise through this process should not be limited to those that focus on specific crops, but also those that integrate agro-forestry, livestock and aquatics.

In selecting the experiences to involve in this process, we would aim to focus on those that have as a guiding principle the strengthening of community control over biodiversity. Approaches with a primarily technical or genetic focus to conserve and develop diversity are of less interest than the ones, which tackle power issues directly. Within that context we foresee the participation of a broad range of people: Farmers and other Peoples Organisations, NGOs working with them, scientists aiming to support them, etc.”

GRAIN worked with an independent group of consultants to coordinate the project and to develop activities in Asia, North and West Africa, and Latin America. In the case of Southern and Eastern Africa, GRAIN established a partnership with PELUM – a regional network of grass root organisations. The project consisted of three phases: (i) consultation; (ii) documentation; (iii) regional and international workshops. The main results of each phase are described below.

2. CONSULTATION PHASE

The consultation process started at different times and took different procedures in each region. The Call for Interest and Feedback Letter (see Annex III) was the main tool to present the proposal to groups and organisations.

Latin America

The consultation process started in Latin America in March 2000 mainly by email and letters sent to members of national and regional networks. The Regional Coordinator presented the proposal to a regional meeting on agrobiodiversity organised in Nicaragua in July 2000 and attended by grassroots organisations from Central America and Caribbean. In Colombia, home country of the regional Coordinator, farmers and indigenous people organisations held their own national consultation process. From 212 individuals and organisations consulted, 60 responded.

Asia

The consultation in Asia was conducted by email with a regional consultation meeting organised in Bangkok. The first round of email consultations had about 10 percent responses, of which the earliest respondents were linked to the formal sector, such as universities. In the Bangkok meeting, there was a consensus for a need to conduct national consultations. National consultations ran from November 2000 to March 2001, mainly in Philippines, Cambodia, and Thailand. The second consultation saw an increase in respondents to nearly a third (36/115). A third consultation letter was sent in June and July to those who answered the 2nd call, with a summary of the of the previous responses, and further details about the project.

Africa

In North and West Africa the process was quite different. With the lack of strong networks and access to email, internet and fax, regional Coordinators had to organise visits to contact groups. In North Africa, trips were organised in Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania and Tunisia. In West Africa, after sending the Call Letter to contacts in nine countries, the regional coordinator travelled for a couple of months through Burkina Faso, Côte D'Ivoire, Benin, Senegal, Mali and Togo to contact local organisations. A theatre play called "*Doctor Alex and his hunter uncle*" was produced to disseminate the project objectives. The PELUM Association organised a regional workshop with representatives of its network to present the proposal and to discuss a methodology to carry out documentation. Therefore, the consultation process in Africa relied mainly on personal contacts requiring frequent trips.

3. DOCUMENTATION

One of the concerns of the GD Project was to avoid using extractive or exploitive practices to gain information from local communities. A special Terms of Reference (TOR) document was drawn up for this purpose. This document became the main tool for presenting the project to local partners and guiding those who were involved in the documentation. According to the TOR contents, the objective of documentation would be:

“To empower the local group and to provide inputs for discussion and sharing of experiences at local, national, regional and international level, among groups involved in the local management of biodiversity in order to learn from such experiences, identify bottlenecks, and to articulate new strategies and approaches.”

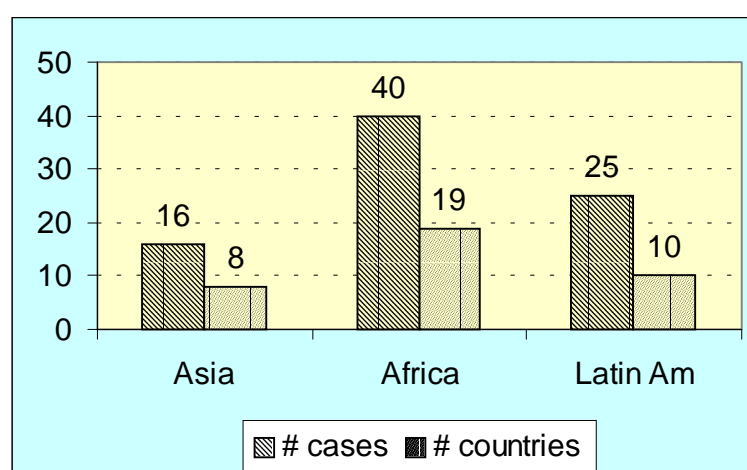
It was agreed that the format of documentation could take many different forms and should be useful to the group involved in the first place. A supporting fund was allocated in the budget to finance the costs of documentation, especially local outputs such as video, slides, and booklets. In addition, participants were asked to also present certain types of documents which could be shared at the at the Regional and International Workshops.

How many cases and how many countries?

By the end of year 2001, a total of 67 experiences had been documented (cases¹) in 37 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. In addition, another 14 Brazilian cases were added during the International Workshop held in Rio Branco, increasing the number of documented experiences to 81 cases (see Figure 1). Following the decisions of regional consultation in Asia, cases were also included from two developed countries; one from Australia and another from Japan.

On average there were 2 cases per country. However, some countries were better represented: Brazil (16); Benin (8); Philippines (5); Côte D'Ivoire (4); Malawi (3); Thailand (3).

Figure 1: GD Project: number of cases and countries involved in each region.



¹ Note: We have used the term ‘experiences’ to represent the practices, knowledge and experiments carried out by farmers, hunters and indigenous people, and ‘cases’ to represent the documentation of these experiences.

Profile of participants

The GD Project's original objective was to empower and support local groups. NGOs, and government and academic institutions were not excluded, but local communities were the priority for the documentation of their experiences and for participation in the workshops. This was quite an ambitious goal considering the international scope of this project.

Types of experiences documented can be grouped as follows:

- Cases developed by individual farmers:
- Cases developed by local organisations (farmers, indigenous people, women, fishermen, hunters, healers)
- Cases developed by NGOs
- Cases developed in partnership between NGOs and local organisations
- Cases developed in partnership between government or academic institutions and local organisations.

Using this classification, individual farmers experiences represent 12% of all the cases. The majority are experiences documented by PELUM as part of its project to show farmers' innovation. Peoples' organisations – which includes farmers, indigenous people, fishermen, healers, hunters, women – share 31% of total cases. However, cases developed as a partnership between local organisations and NGOs or official institutions represent 42% of all cases. These three categories represent 85% of cases, which are based on local organisations' experiences. Experiences described by NGOs represent only 15% of cases.

Thematic focus of documented cases

The majority of the groups involved in the GD Project do not have biodiversity as the central theme of their work. Instead most groups see biodiversity as an important part of their work or strategy. These groups have usually started with a more general issue, such as "local development", and have later evolved towards biodiversity use and conservation. By contrast, there are groups that started working on saving locally important seeds and at later stages incorporating other issues such as agroforestry or marketing.

Of all the cases, 39% specifically worked with biodiversity management on farms, 35% worked with biodiversity management in more general terms, 12% worked on the management of genetic variability, and 9% were specifically interested in increasing species diversity.

In order to facilitate comparative analysis, cases were grouped by thematic focus. The classification in a specific category does not mean that other components are not present, but indicate the main area of connection with biodiversity. Since most of the experiences deal with a broad range of issues, it was necessary to use thirteen categories to see how closely linked the cases were with the GD Project focus (see Table 1).

Table.1: Thematic areas covered in documentation and number of cases by theme.

Thematic area	No. of cases
Agroforestry – distributed in Latin America and Southern Africa	8
Aquatic resources (marine and inland) – all of these cases are based on small scale fishing groups.	9
Crop genetic resources	8
Diversity in farming systems – to overcome food shortage, natural resource depletion, low income or ecological imbalances in farming systems.	5
Ecological agriculture	6
Forest management – issues on the managing of the forests' biodiversity and associated spiritual values.	6
Natural resources management – soil and water conservation, and climate change.	19
Marketing – addressing the role of consumers as a potential driving force towards agrobiodiversity conservation	1
Nutrition	1
Seed management – seed banks, reproduction of seeds, and networking.	11
Sustainable development – conservation of natural resources and poverty alleviation.	1
Traditional knowledge – this is conceptual element present in all cases. However, an NGO from Benin used cultural expressions – poems, proverbs, songs -, to document local communities perception and practices on biodiversity management. Therefore, it was set within this category.	1
Wild Species Diversity (Fauna and Flora) - Usually, plants are the dominant component in biodiversity management. The GD Project included some traditional hunters' organisations from West Africa. Thus, game management and cases using wild plant species were grouped within the wild species diversity, including an experience of wild species community seed bank developed in Burkina Faso.	5

Constraints and bottlenecks

A review of the documents showed almost two hundred problems (environmental, economic, cultural and social) faced by local communities which directly impact on biodiversity conservation.

Genetic erosion is one of the most frequent problems mentioned, especially by those cases grouped within “Crop Genetic Resources” and “Seeds” category. Pressure to replace local varieties comes from different sides. Green revolution is the main driving force mentioned, pushing government policies towards the expansion of monocultures and the use of commercial seeds. Participants found themselves in the “centre of the typhoon”, trying to rescue seeds and knowledge to rebuild diversity and to recover their self-autonomy.

Cultural erosion and its impact on food habits is another cause of genetic erosion. In these cases, communities are not strongly affected by changes in the farming system introduced by agriculture policies, but by external influences on their cultures. They are more in the “borders of the typhoon” and defending their cultural identity is one of the main tools to conserve the diversity still available.

Global climate change: Excessive drought leads to yield failures and losses of local varieties. In some areas, low production obliges people to eat the seed stock, resulting in genetic erosion and dependence. Whatever the original cause, genetic erosion negatively influences food security, resulting in more pressure on natural resources.

Deforestation is another problem mentioned frequently, especially by those cases grouped in “Agroforestry”, “Forest Management” and “Natural Resources Management” categories. Government policies that support logging, monocultures, cattle expansion and big projects are mentioned as the main driving force. Therefore, conflicts of interests between local communities and landowners are very common, and in many cases become a source of inspiration to strengthen the organisation and struggle for community rights. Cutting forests for fuel is often mentioned as an important pressure on forest resources, especially in coastal areas. Mangroves have been lost with the consequent impact on fishing. Forest resources are strongly connected with spiritual values in different cultures. Therefore, the influence of religious or cultural erosion affects the conservation of forest genetic resources. In communities where their survival depends on hunting, such as the hunters in Africa, deforestation can lead to a complete change in their culture and life style.

Water pollution, destruction of mangroves and over fishing have generated enormous problems for local communities. Consequently, local communities would like to develop new regulatory systems to reduce the pressure on fish stocks and mangroves, and create nature reserves. However, these commitments for conservation do not get the involvement of big companies that continually practice over fishing.

Strategies adopted locally: common elements

Documented cases demonstrate that biological diversity is necessary for food security and to maintain cultural integrity. The way each community approaches the issue varies. However, there are some common elements shared by the different cases at conceptual, methodological and strategic level.

Conceptually, the majority of cases share principles like the promotion of diversity and sustainability. The link between cultural and biological diversity is visible by all the work on local knowledge. Participation is an important component for initiatives developed at community level to succeed. Fundamentally, the strengthening of community organisation requires efforts to increase awareness. Training and sharing of experiences are important tools for capacity building; getting people involved is by the demonstration of real experiences. The successful cases usually start “slow and small”, following observation, trials and monitoring.

Lack of support from government policies, access to credit and basic services are common problems of all cases. Therefore, actions to influence changes on public policies are present in many of the strategies adopted locally. Partnership with other sectors – research institutes, universities, consumers - are considered by many organisations as an important step to get more visibility from society and to empower local communities. Networking is also an important element to overcome isolation and empower local groups.

Achievements & future challenges

The majority of cases demonstrate how local initiatives to increase diversity contribute to the improvement of life conditions. Beyond the progress on biodiversity conservation, the main achievements mentioned are:

- Increasing income
- Strengthening local organisation
- Capacity building
- Empowering local communities and farmer or women organisations
- Influencing government, research or the public
- Increasing awareness

In the future, participants of the project indicated that they are interested in disseminating their experiences to a larger audience. They also showed willingness to involve more farmers and groups within their experiences and to incorporate a broader concept of biodiversity conservation. The main challenges that participants saw in the future to their continued work, include the introduction of new technologies (such as GMOs) and the lack of change within government policies.

4. REGIONAL WORKSHOPS

The five regional workshops were organised during September, October and November 2001 (Asia, Latin America and three in Africa). The workshops included a sharing of documented experiences, field visits and plenary sessions on policy issues. Each Workshop presented recommendations for the international workshop and released a public statement summarizing the conclusions. The Southern Africa workshop was organised somewhat differently where the evaluation of documentation processes and the presentation of results to policy makers were the main objective. A summary of the participation at the workshops is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Participation in the Regional Workshops

Region	No. of countries represented	Total no. participants*	Farmers & indigenous people %
Latin America	8	43	53%
Asia	7	61	34%
North Africa	4	20	20%
West Africa	6	33	24%
Southern Africa	8	24	17%

* including organisers

The main recommendations from the regional workshops for local action are presented in Box 1. Proposals and recommendations for policy makers were summarised in “Declarations” for broader dissemination. Declarations from North Africa, West Africa and Latin America reinforced the role of local communities on biodiversity conservation and called for the governments to develop policies in their favour. The Asian declaration stated opposition against globalisation and the green revolution, but emphasised the commitments of participants to continue the struggle against all the problems mentioned. In all cases, NGOs people played a key role in drafting declarations.

Overall, Regional Workshops were organised with a small budget, creating limits to the number of participants invited and creating other organisational constraints. In places where local NGOs joined the process as co-organisers, such as in Asia and North Africa, budgetary constraints were partially overcome. Nevertheless, the regional workshops were an important step to strengthen regional links and crucial in the preparation for the International Workshop. Without these regional meetings, the organisation of the International Workshop would have been much more complicated and the meeting itself probably less effective.

BOX 1: Recommendations for local action that came up from GD Regional Workshops

LATIN AMERICA

- Strengthen local organisations and network amongst themselves
- Increase training activities
- Improve agroecosystem management
- Increase recovering of local varieties
- Influence public policies and obtain State recognition
- Promote market access, fair price and local certification
- Strengthen cultural identity
- Defend and protect territories and continue the struggle for land reform

SOUTHERN AFRICA

- Establish an innovators' organisation which will bring innovators together and enable them to lobby for their common interests
- Come up with strategies to build the capacity of farmers
- More workshops that will sensitise the farmers at grassroot level of the importance of contributing to policy development
- Need for a mechanism of information exchange and dissemination between policy makers and farmers & farmer organisations
- Farmers need to know how policies are made and implemented

WEST AFRICA

- Appropriation of GD Project by local communities of West Africa
- Restitution to each country of Workshop results
- Lobbying in each country for the protection of communities rights on natural resources
- Create network at the sub-regional level for information exchange, training; etc with GD participants
- Value local experiences through exchange and synergy

ASIA

- Conduct more seminar workshops where lessons from the Regional Workshop can be shared with local communities.
- Implementation results from this conference (for NGOs and farmers)
- Post conference reporting (reporting of follow-up activities)
- Conduct of more farmers exchange visits
- Fundraising to accomplish aims
- Capacity building of farmers and NGOs to effectively address at the local level the various issues identified in the Regional Workshop
- Strengthen regional joint research on various issues affecting biodiversity conservation and management
- Follow up meetings at the regional and national levels to address the issues. The participants were unanimous that they should engage national government policy makers in national meetings.
- Establishment of a secretariat that would follow-up activities of the network and monitor activities of TNCs.
- Establishment of a regional farmer's network
- Translation of the outputs of the Asian regional conference-workshop into local languages (by country).
- More grassroots level documented success stories

NORTH AFRICA

- Reporting the workshop results to the community, target professional groups, University and research institutes, and donors
- Diffusion of El Oued Declaration to governments and international community
- Organise further meetings
- Promote information flow through the distribution of the statements and declarations to local communities, and encourage use of internet
- Continue the documentation of experiences

5. INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP

The “*International Workshop of Local Management of Agricultural Biodiversity*”, commonly known as the Rio Branco Workshop, was held in Acre, Brazil, from 9 to 20 May 2002, as a partnership between GRAIN and GTA (Grupo de Trabalho Amazônico), a Brazilian network.

The initial planning expected around 40 participants for the international workshop. However, during the preparatory period numbers increased as more people from the GD project wanted to be involved. In the end 80 people attended plus a further 16 people who came to support the event. Farmers and indigenous people made up nearly half (48%) of all the participants (see Table 3). In Asia and Africa, NGO staff had to come with farmers to help in the translation to their local languages, reducing the number of farmers in these delegations. Despite this, the proportion of farmers and indigenous people who attended the international workshop was close to the highest proportion obtained in the regional workshops.

Table.3: Profile of participants at the International Workshop

	ASIA	AFRICA	LATIN AMERICA	BRASIL	EUROPE	TOTAL
Total no. participants	18	15	13	28	6	80
No. Farmers, fishermen, and Indigenous people	5	6	9	18	-	38
Others (NGO, institutions.)	12	6	1	8	1	28
Coordination	1	2	1	1	1	6
Support and Observers	-	1	2	1	4	6
No. of countries	6	10	9	1 (10*)	3	28

* No. Brazilian states represented

The conclusions that came up from the presentations at the international workshop were similar to the conclusions from the regional workshops: the threat of the green revolution; no support from government policies; globalisation; and land tenure. One very apparent difference between Africa and the other regions was that groups in Africa had large problems in forming networks and communicating within and outside of Africa. The strong connection between farmer or indigenous people organisations and NGOs was characteristic of Asia and Latin America experiences. Participants from Japan and Germany presented experiences from developed countries, showing the potential for alliances on issues that afflict both North and South, such as GMOs and intellectual property rights.

Work groups

Beyond the main presentations, time was set aside for groups to discuss specific issues: agroforestry; local seed management; spirituality and sacred forest; biodiversity and water management; GMOs; International Trade. The group on **Agroforestry** focused the discussion on very technical aspects and reinforced the need for documentation on successful experiences in this area. The conclusions of the **Local seed management** group discussed the difficulties of saving seeds and new threats such as GMOs. The group provided an opportunity for sharing very practical aspects of saving seeds applied in the different regions. Recommendations stressed the importance of continuing their experiences and of developing a special system of protection of local varieties by registering and documenting old varieties and endangered species. Introduction of farmers' rights into the legal system in every country was also mentioned.

African experiences were the focus of the discussion in the “**Spirituality and sacred forest**” group. The links between spirituality and biodiversity and how it manifests itself in the different cultures were considered. Sacred sites were facing increased pressure from the rise in human population, the continued expansion of agricultural land and poverty. Proposals included strengthening networks and urging government policies to recognise local knowledge and traditions. The group also highlighted the need to push ethical and spiritual arguments on IPR and TRIPS debate.

The group on “**Biodiversity and Water Management**” included both farmers from arid regions and fishermen. Problems that came up included climate change, drought, pollution, overfishing, and big projects such as dams and offshore petroleum exploration. The group also discussed the trends on water privatisation, and proposed to stress the rights of local communities on water access and management. Conclusions emphasised that water scarcity requires solutions generated locally, and the need to consult local communities. Networking at the national and international level was suggested as a way to influence government policies and stress the links between water management and biodiversity.

GMOs and International Trade participants shared information about what is going on in their countries and GRAIN staff complemented with information at the global level. Differences in the approach to fight against GMOs were shown between regions. While in Latin America campaigns tended to fight for food and agriculture to be “GMO free”, African and Europeans talked more of using moratoriums. These differences led to different strategies of how to fight GMOs. However, participants were unanimous that more information flow is necessary in formats more accessible to people that are not easily connected to the internet. Alliances between farmers and consumers at national and international level were mentioned as an important strategic element.

Regional workshops

In an effort to further strategic discussion, participants were invited to develop a workplan to define what to do, responsibilities, timing and scale (local, regional, or global level).

Asia: Asian participants presented a ten point strategic workplan. According to the plan, almost all activities have already been started, so the plan just reinforced commitments assumed at the regional workshop. NGOs take the lead to ensure the implementation of the proposed activities, which included strengthening networking and the organisation of other regional meetings.

Other areas for action include:

- Information flow: legislation that support communities rights, practical knowledge on seed and genetic resources management
- Lobbying: governmental policies, legislation, development programs
- Capacity building: training
- Campaigning
- Systematise local level initiatives

Latin America: The Latin American group presented a ten point working plan, requiring the support of the GD project to carry out some of the activities at the regional and global level. The plan includes:

- Information Flow: promote sharing of experiences with support of GD project to document new cases.
- Training: GD support to exchange experiences among local groups.
- Legislation and regulatory system of community rights: GD support on networking, alliances and information on this issue.
- IPR and biopiracy: GD support to disseminate campaigns and denounce biopiracy.

- Search for more involvement of indigenous people, which were not well represented in the GD project.
- Local actions to improve conservation of genetic resources: strengthen autonomy, marketing access, and management of natural resources

Africa: Because of language differences, Africa split into two groups: French and English speakers. North and West Africa defined a common plan, including inter-regional activities. A key role was assigned to NGOs as facilitators of the process, especially GRAIN and BEDE. The main activities proposed are:

- Capacity building: regional Seminars on GMOs and IPR
- Information flow: disseminate more information in French
- Sharing of experiences: promote farmer-to-farmer activities
- Research on the following topics: Sacred Forest, Seed Bank, Integrated Management of water and natural resources

PELUM representatives from Southern Africa countries proposed a plan that includes:

- Information flow: dissemination of results from the international workshop
- National and Regional planning: replicate the planning on biodiversity issues at national and regional level
- Policy advocacy: strengthen activities of policy advocacy on issues such as community rights
- Network at international level beyond PELUM boundaries for sharing experiences and strategies

In addition to these plans, the 'Rio Branco Commitment' (see Annex IV) was the other main output of the International Workshop. This declaration was written by farmer representatives working together from all the regions, rather than by NGOs - the NGOs were there to provide the necessary support.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The original objectives presented in the “Call for Feedback Letter” (see Annex III) have been taken as a guide in the presentation of these conclusions.

A platform for discussion & sharing of experiences

Regional and International Workshops were the main venues for discussion and sharing of experiences. In Asia, common issues identified during the consultation process stimulated exchange visits between local groups. Contacts and information on areas of interests were distributed among participants. In Latin America, a bulletin disseminating publications produced by participants was edited and distributed to those that answered the consultation and to some of those subscribed to the *Biodiversidad* magazine.

Time was short at the Regional and International Workshops. There was a lot to discuss and talk about. The presentation and sharing of experiences was set as a priority – and consequently there was less time to go deep into analysing them. Time was also set aside at the International Workshop to allow for everything to be translated simultaneously into four languages (English, French, Portuguese, Spanish) and sometimes into the local language of the farmer. All participants also had the opportunity to display their experiences and time was provided for participants to visit each others experiences, which helped in the process of information exchange. Nevertheless, language and time available for presenting the experiences remained limited, particularly in the International Workshop. There were many experiences and participants had worked hard to produce some informative and colourful exhibitions, and yet it was still not possible to make the time available to share all experiences.

Despite the difficulties of finding enough time to do everything at the International Workshop it is clear that the GD project put together a diversity of experiences, nationalities, and cultures. The GD project was an extraordinary opportunity for people from around the world and from diverse environments to discuss and exchange a diversity of experiences.

Identifying bottlenecks

Both the documentation and the workshops provided a good picture about the bottlenecks faced at the local level for the management of biodiversity. However, due to lack of time these bottlenecks were not always thoroughly analysed during the meetings or in the documentation.

The original Growing Diversity book, published by GRAIN in 1992, mentioned the green revolution, lack of recognition of farmers’ role, and a large number of policies as the main threats faced by local communities to conserve genetic resources. Fifteen years later little has changed. Local communities are still pressurised by a development model that favours industrial agricultural and ignores the needs of small farmers and indigenous people. In addition today, there are now GMOs and patents on life so the challenges are even bigger than before. On the other hand, there are many more and better publicised experiences. Local communities’ role in biodiversity management has become more visible, and there are more partnerships between farmers and indigenous people with the academic and government sector.

Despite the improvements, local communities still need support to bring together and recreate their successful experiences. There is a large amount of information circulating, but in many cases it does not reach local communities. It is therefore necessary to make such information accessible to local groups and NGOs that work at field level. However, improving access to this information does not only mean better dissemination, but empowering communities to use the information for their benefit.

This would mean that the internet is not sufficient for distributing information and more innovative ways of dissemination are needed. The theatre play written and performed by the Benin group for the GD project is a good example of a creative and effective way to disseminate information.

Articulate new strategies & approaches

Although the bottlenecks were well identified, the aim to directly involve more farmers and indigenous people - with the sharing of experiences a priority - discussions on strategy were somewhat superficial and did not add all that much to what is already known. Additionally, the majority of the participants were not very familiar with the global issues related to their work, which made it difficult to go deep into strategy development.

Nevertheless, participants returned home with a lot of new ideas and plans. For instance, the farmers' organisation from Northeast of Brazil has incorporated some methodological aspects they learned with Colombian farmers during the regional workshop. This mutual learning has probably happened with many other groups influencing local strategies. But a more in-depth assessment would be needed to provide information about this.

Empowerment of the groups involved

"Empower" is defined as *"to give someone more control on their own life or situation"*. To some extent, the opportunity to present a local experience at international level empowers the organisation and the community. The same could be said for those communities in Acre that received the visitors from abroad. In the last day of the meeting the farmers from the Reca Project mentioned that they have just been invited to give a presentation in a Brazilian university because people knew they had received visits from foreigners participating at the International Workshop. Access to information and sharing are important sources of empowerment also.

The other way to empower is to have experiences documented at the global level. The experiences on the Growing Diversity Project website have taken the experiences of participants to a much broader audience. This provides a voice for those that work at the local level and which may make policy makers listen.

In Annex II, a sample evaluation of participants in the Rio Branco workshop is given. Many stress the importance of this seminar in the sharing and taking home new ideas and energy, and feel more confident to continue with their efforts.

Increase awareness

The opportunity for sharing and discussion on common issues certainly contributed to an increased awareness among participants. The open sessions during the regional and international workshops were a first step to take these issues to a broader audience, as well as the dissemination of their documentation through different means.

However, as stated in the Call for Feedback Letter, increased awareness is a post-workshop activity and much can be, and is being, done. The fisherman from Togo sent a message saying that he has been travelling through Togo telling local communities about the discussions and results of Rio Branco. Some farmers and indigenous people in Brazil have done the same. In October 2002, representatives from Tunisia organised a regional workshop on GMOs and the Rio Branco results were presented, including a broad dissemination of Rio Branco's declaration in Arabic. Presentations about the outcome of the Growing Diversity Project were given at the World Food Summit +5 Summit and the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002. The GRAIN publication *"Semences de la*

biodiversité” published for Francophone Africa disseminated the results and contents of the Rio Branco Declaration. In November 2002, the Ministry of Environment of Brazil asked for a presentation of the results of the GD Project at a scientific workshop to discuss Brazilian regulations on access to biodiversity. The GD project was also presented at the Social Forum in Porto Alegre in January 2003.

Broad scope of biodiversity

While the original Growing Diversity book edited one decade ago concentrated on crop genetic resources management, the GD Project’s scope, as shown by the experiences, was much wider. However, this wider scope also made the project more complex and provided for broader or more unfocussed conclusions. To have such a diverse range of experiences may not in itself be a problem. But, it would have been interesting to process this diversity of information collectively to find common issues amongst the varied experiences. Due to lack of time, this has not been done within the frame of the project, but the regional summaries, drawn up by the regional coordinators could be interesting starting points for this exercise. In that context, the great diversity of experiences present in the Project should be seen as an opportunity rather than a constraint.

New faces

One objective at the outset of the project, was to involve new people, and to avoid that the project would only benefit those already connected in with the international discussion on biodiversity. An assessment made by regional coordinators during the last Steering Committee meeting in Barcelona concluded that the “new faces” goal was achieved. The majority of the participants had previously had little involvement at the international level.

The process showed that it is not easy to involve local organisations in international processes without using NGOs. This is especially true when international farmers organisations or indigenous people organisations are not involved. *Via Campesina* participated in the Regional Workshop, but the GD project did not get great exposure among international organisations representing farmers or indigenous people. On the other hand, biodiversity issues are not high on the agenda of these organisations. For that reason, this is another audience within which the GD project results can be disseminated.

Annex I: Summary of GD Project outputs

General:

- International Workshop Abstracts: book with summaries of all documented experiences translated to English, Spanish and French. 416p.
- GD Project Poster: an illustrative world map showing projects participants
- GD project web page <http://www.grain.org/gd>
- GD Project Video (to be launched in May 2003)
- Discussion Paper “*Biodiversity: opportunities and challenges*”(by Senator Marina Silva, Brazil), May 2002. 5p.
- Discussion Paper “*Cultures, Religions et Biodiversité*” (By Prof. Aguessi, Benin). May 2002, 10p.
- Discussion Paper “Towards Democratic Control and Participation in the Management of Agricultural Biodiversity” (By Michel Pimbert – IIED). May 2002. 18p.
- GD project: Process & Results – Internal Evaluative Report. (By Angela Cordeiro) November 2002. 36p.

Asia

- Full papers of 16 cases documented in: Australia (1), Bangladesh (1), Cambodia (3), India (1), Indonesia (1), Japan (1), Philippines (5), and Thailand (3).
- Magazine with pictures reporting Cambodia experiences.
- Slide set of Thailand experiences
- Asian Regional Conference Workshop on Local Management of Agricultural Biodiversity Paper. 28 October – 01 November 2001. Thailand. 15p.
- Asian Regional Conference Workshop on Local Management of Agricultural Biodiversity – A synthesis. 2002 (By O. Zamora)

North Africa:

- Full papers of 6 cases documented in: Algeria (2), Mauritania (1), Morocco (1), and Tunisia (2).
- Photo albums of all documented experiences
- Video “*Réhabilitation d’aménagements traditionnels en milieu de montagne aride tunisienne par la communauté des Zammouris, Tunisie*”
- Rapport de Mission au Tunisie et Sud-Est Algerien: 12 au 22 Septembre 2000. 42p. (by Najah, S. & Gutierrez, M.L.)
- Identification de communautés rurales pour la participation à l’atelier international de gestion de la biodiversité locale en agriculture. Rapport de Mission au Maroc. 75p (by J.C.Bois).
- Atelier Maghrébin d’échanges sur la gestion de la biodiversité en agriculture par les communautés locales. El Oued - Algerie, 4 au 7 novembre 2001. 24p (By BEDE)
- International Project Growing Diversity: Summary of the Project on the Maghreb Region in North Africa. 2002. 10p. (By Robert Ali Brac de la Perrière)
- D’El Oued à Rio Branco: promouvoir l’agro-biodiversité en zones arides. 2002. 43p

West Africa:

- Full papers of 21 cases documented in: Benin (8), Burkina Faso (2), Côte D’Ivoire (4), Guinea (2), Mali (1), Senegal (2), and Togo (2).
- Proverbs and Folk Tales on Agrobiodiversity Management from Azawad - Benin
- Video “*Biodiversity management by the hunter’s from the Idaasha region-Benin*”
- Video “*Medicinal plants management in Iléma – Benin*”
- Theatre Play “*Dr. Alex and his hunter uncle*”
- Poster and Calendar of GD Project experiences from West Africa
- Rapport de l’atelier Ouest-Africain d’échanges sur la gestion locale de la diversité biologique en agriculture. Cotonou - Benin, 16-19 octobre 2001. 35p (By GRAIN & OFEDI)

- Atelier International sur la Gestion Locale de la Diversite Biologique en Agriculture: Shynthèse de l'Afrique de l'Ouest. 2002. 11p (By J. Zoundjiekpon)

Southern and East Africa:

- Full papers of 13 cases documented in: Botswana (1), Kenya (1), Lesotho (2), Malawi (3), Tanzania (1), Uganda (2), Zambia (2), Zimbabwe (1)
- Report of the Research Orientation Workshop held in Lusaka, Zambia, 26-27 January 2001. 18p
- Research and Method Workshop Report: "learning from productive and sustainable farmers practices". 2001. 50p. (By PELUM)

Latin America:

- Full papers of 11 cases documented in: Argentina (1), Bolivia (1), Brazil (2), Colombia (1), Cuba (1), Ecuador (1), Mexico (1), Nicaragua (1), Dominican Republic (1), Peru (1).
- Photo album of cases documented in: Peru, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Cuba
- Book "*Ciência da Roça*" documenting the experience of indigenous people Kaiabi from Brazil, illustrated with motifs prepared by indigenous people themselves.
- Book "Integrated Farms to cultivate biodiversity" - Cuba
- Booklet describing the experience to use locally) – Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia
- Posters on Agrobiodiversity Management for training purpose - Farmers Union from Solanea, Brazil
- Poster of Agrobiodiversity Management – Colombia
- Slides set – Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia
- Seed collection – Peru, Colombia, Bolivia
- Cooking file describing local recipes - Bolivia
- CD Rom describing experiences in Peru and Cuba
- CD Rom with local folk music – Ecuador
- Video of the Regional Workshop held in Colombia, September 2000.
- Proyecto Cultivando Diversidad. Taller Regional de America Latina, Bogotá 15-18 Septiembre 2001. Memorias. 13p
- Manejo local de la agrobiodiversidad en America Latina: perspectivas y temas para el taller Internacional. 2002. 12p. (By G.Velez)

Annex II. Participants evaluation of Rio Branco Workshop

WHAT DID YOU TAKE HOME FROM THIS WORKSHOP? (Source: Video records)

“Beyond many new friends, I will take with me a better understanding on the big dimension of biodiversity. I learned about the importance of biodiversity for the people that live in the forest, the link between spirituality and nature. I could also see the different realities faced by people in different parts of the world and their strategies to manage biodiversity.” (NGO participant, Brazil)

“I am glad to share with people from different countries and from diverse ethnic groups. I will take the message to my people about the problems of hybrid seeds and the other seeds (GMOs) that are already being spread by industry. I will tell to my people what I have learned with other people from different countries. There was the language barrier but with the help of other people we could talk among each other. For me it was an important opportunity to share our experience on recovering and conserving the Amazon Forest. I could tell the others that we also have been struggle. We learned with our practice and have something to show already. It is good to share experience.” (Indigenous people representative, BRAZIL)

“We are happy to have all these experiences to share and we will take back the empowerment of all participants. We now know how can we act to the next step. We are happy to share on specific actions that we can take from this stage to the future. Next time, if we have chance to host this meeting, we will offer GMO free and organic food and very good meal to all of you”. (NGO participant, Japan)

“I say thanks to Brazil and Brazilian people. I will take a lot of experience with me to share with my community in Tunisia” (Farmer, Tunisia)

“I would like to thank also Brazilian people, both for the quality and warm reception. I learned a lot during the field trip and through the participation in this Workshop, especially the field visits to RECA and Chico Mendes experiences. I am glad to see the experiences on how local people conserve Amazon Forest.” (NGO participant, Tunisia)

“I will take home the friendship of participants and of the local people. And I will take lot of things about the cultural diversity of participants and the Brazilian culture. There is the technical aspect as well, but I think that culture is the most important thing. Of course for most is the friendship of people around here.” (University researcher, Philippines)

“I will take many things with me from this very different Workshop that jointed peasant, fishermen, NGOs together from different parts of the world. The local community experiences from Latin America show lots of imagination, creativity and combat.” (NGO participant, Algeria)

“It was a nice experience to be here. I will take with me very pleasant memories of friendship, networking and many good ideas to work with. I hope to keep in touch with all participants and be part of this family of Growing Diversity”. (NGO participant, INDIA)

“I was invited to come with the objective to share with other participants. I am impressed with the experiences presented. Despite the differences between countries and cultures, I can see that there are many coincidences about small farmers conditions in different parts of the world. I am taking many experiences to share with my community and my organization in Nicaragua and the message that the struggle of small framers is the same and we need to organise ourselves better to face this struggle. The opportunity for sharing with companions was very important and despite the language barrier we did some effort to share and managed that. We Latin American could fell the love and fraternity with companions from Asia and Africa.” (Farmer, Nicaragua).

“This workshop is a support to our work and empower the activities on seed network that we are already carrying out in our place. We certainly will enlarge our action after the learning we had in this Workshop”. (Farmer, Brazil)

“The Workshop was a success, despite the difficulties to organise it. And this happened because the quality of the presentation of different experiences, the field visits, and the diversity that we were faced with. However, the rhythm to present the experiences was very rigid and was not in accordance with the African style. Moreover, the audiovisual material was not possible to present. Unfortunately, we could not present some of our documents, despite that we have work hard to prepare it. Regarding the challenges, fishermen and farmers leave this meeting quite worried about threat posed by GMOs and IPR.” (Francophone African Group)

“I am quite happy to receive you visit in our RECA project and we hope you will take this memory with you. I am sure that in this kind of meeting we can show our differences to find our unity” (Farmer, Brazil)

“This meeting brought us very important questions. Sharing is the source to feel love and to open the door to a GMO free society and to build a new society free of problems. This is something that brings me emotion and I would like to share with you.” (Farmer, Colombia).

“I will take many learning from Latin America, Asia and Africa experiences. I’ve learned the differences between each region, and the state of deforestation and difficulties faced in each country. I had a wide vision about the issue. Now, I have a better understanding about the deforestation here in Amazon also.” (Farmer, Brazil)

“I was invited to share the experience of my people on indigenous people agriculture. I could learn how the other farmers are doing, including people that are not indigenous. I took many important things to share with my people. We have our culture and our traditions. I have seen the problems other people are facing because they lost that.” (Indigenous People representative, Brazil)

“I am taking home very deep experiences of very nice people who can contribute for world food security and for our life.” (NGO participant, Germany)

“First, I will take to my University the message about all issues related to the role of scientific community in the improvement of agriculture biodiversity. For the farmers and indigenous communities that I work with, I will share the contents discussed here. I will support them to participate in the future GD initiatives, including their participation in the expansion to get new groups involved.” (University researcher, Costa Rica)

“In his workshop we tried to understand the principles that orient each experience in each country, considering the different cultures, languages, and practices. So, the principle is what matter and the core issue to strength our work in Bolivia. So, it is important to learn the strategies adopted by groups that share the same views with us. The experience from Tanzania was the one that called my attention. They developed strategies by themselves without external support, and in the case of Tanzania she is a woman. So I was very interested to learn from her. I also was interested to understand how people manage nature here in Brazil. Here nature is very visible and is created and recreated constantly. On the other hand, in the Andes the condition is more complicated and we have to develop sustainable way to manage nature that it is not like here.” (University researcher, Bolivia)

“I will take many experiences with me that I learned from Africa, Asia, especially from friend from Philippines that have similarities with the kind of organization we have in Bolivia. I will take all this learning as a product to share with our local communities in Bolivia”. (Farmer, Bolivia)

“The Workshop was very useful because we could share experiences with people from different parts of the world. I will take to my fishermen community the commitment to respect biodiversity and to produce in fair way to get better life quality for fishermen family and in a sustainable way to preserve the environment.” (Fishermen, Brazil)

“I will take lot of experience, much wisdom and beauty from Acre and from the experiences we shared with the other Continents. The dissemination of the results of this Workshop will be very important to our Region.” (Women Farmer, Brazil)

“I am happy to be here with many friends across the world that engaged themselves to conserve biodiversity, as the major option for food security and for poor communities. The message I will take is that farmers all over the world are in the battlefield to conserve their seed genetic resources and biodiversity. It is a long run and they have to fight against TNC and globalisation. So we have to prepare ourselves to do it. We have also to consider this initiative as a process and we have to keep it alive. The people all over the world are now in a very serious position and we have to work locally, nationally and globally. The venue was very good and the interaction, food, accommodation were all right. The most important thing in this Workshop is that it provided opportunity for sharing experiences and strategies among participants.” (NGO participant, Bangladesh)

“I met many people from different countries and I learned many from Asia, Latin America and African experiences. I will take those experiences and learning, such as: respect for the nature, for the God Patchama and I will tell Japanese people about these issues.” (NGO participant, Japan)

“I will take all raised questions and possible solutions that people are developing in different parts of the world. I work with women organization and I will take many experiences to share with them, especially those developed by African participants. (NGO participant, Brazil)

“I came here and I will take a lot to my home. First, I will take many good memories and good friends. Second, I learned a lot about Amazon. It is the bigger forest, and everything is big here. I have gotten lot of information back home. And this will help to improve our work. Thanks for the reception.” (NGO participant, Thailand)

“I will take many things I have learned with companions from all these countries. Many things we will take to our communities. Women experiences we will share with women from our community.” (Indigenous people representative, Ecuador)

“I will take a good feeling that in a way or another, everybody in the world is doing something. We fell empowered that we are not alone in this struggle against these people that wants to dominate farmers. Today we have the GMOS and what are they doing for the future? Certainly industry is planning something. But we leave this workshop knowing that we are not alone, we are together in this battle.” (Farmer, Brazil)

Annex III: ‘Call for interest and feedback’ (January 2000)

INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON LOCAL MANAGEMENT OF AGRICULTURAL BIODIVERSITY

‘CALL FOR INTEREST AND FEEDBACK’

Bread for the World, Centro Internazionale Crocevia, Genetic Resources Action International, Swedish Society for Nature Conservation

January 2000

Summary

This paper highlights a proposal to hold an international workshop, following a regionally oriented preparatory process, to share, evaluate, and help strengthen concrete experiences with local management of agricultural biodiversity. Over the past decade, numerous initiatives have sprouted in this area, ranging from the setting up of basic community seed banks to all encompassing approaches to biodiversity and agro-ecosystem management. Our idea is to facilitate a broad discussion on the current status of local agricultural biodiversity management, take stock of where we are, identify problems and bottlenecks, and draw lessons for the future.

Rather than a one-off meeting, the initiators of this proposal are thinking of a one/two year process to allow for a regionally-driven 'bottom up' approach involving a broad range of local experiences. During this period, the participants in the process will be identified, preparatory discussions will start at national and regional levels, some experiences documented, bottlenecks highlighted, etc. The meeting itself – to be held somewhere in the year 2001 - will provide for the opportunity to bring the different national and regional experiences together, discuss differences and commonalities, and formulate recommendations and follow up.

The initiators of this proposal, Bread for the World, Crocevia, GRAIN and SSNC, are all NGOs that have long been supporting on-farm approaches to agricultural biodiversity management, be it through policy research, advocacy work or direct project support. We believe that this workshop process could help to develop new strategies that would improve and strengthen the work at the local level as well as help influence the directions and decisions taken by policy makers and donor agencies. This ***‘Call for interest and feedback’*** is meant to launch the initiative and to identify potential groups & organisations interested to participate in this project.

Background & context

Over the past decade it has become widely accepted that development programmes affecting biodiversity for food, agriculture and livelihood systems should take the role and input of rural communities as a central starting point. Calls for support to approaches that build upon local biodiversity management have trickled up into international agreements where the rights of farmers, fisherfolk, herbalists and indigenous peoples are now undergoing various forms of recognition and formalisation. The donor community at large is earmarking special funds for on-farm biodiversity management strategies. Even the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, the institution behind the Green Revolution, is trying to incorporate on-farm methods into its otherwise top-down research strategies.

At the same time, however, governments are increasingly reshaping policies to give way to international trade pressure with potentially disastrous implications for locally-controlled management

of natural resources, community rights and food security. In addition, a new wave of concentration trends within the agricultural supply industries, coupled with the privatisation of genetic resources through intellectual property and bioprospecting, and the push for the development and use of transgenic crops and animals, is already undermining the capacity of local communities to further develop local biodiversity management systems. The role and capacity of the public research system in many countries to effectively support community approaches to biodiversity management is now in doubt, as the lure of corporate funding and high-tech agendas seem to take public science even further away from the people. All of this tremendously affects the capacity of local communities – and the groups working with them – to continue building sustainable livelihood systems based on biodiversity.

Of course, at the local level the management of biodiversity has been going on continuously, and long before the international institutions 'discovered' its importance and value. Yet just as the pressures against it get worse, multiple initiatives, experiences and new approaches have mushroomed over the past decade. It is not only the international donor community who has put biodiversity management on its agenda, but also many national and local NGOs and people's organisations are increasingly incorporating it into their day to day activities and plans. Such initiatives vary widely in scope, approach, focus and content. While some focus on the conservation and development of a specific crop such as rice or potatoes, others deal with the broader livelihood systems and take into account the wider agro-ecology. While some are more technical in approach, others take in the wider socio-economic and political dimensions. While some are essentially local in their focus, others are linked internationally. And while some pay lip service to the new donor agenda, others continue to fundamentally question equity and control issues at the local level in relation to biodiversity management.

Rationale & objectives

The proposed project has three distinct and equally important objectives:

1. To provide a platform for discussion and sharing of experiences among groups involved in the local management of biodiversity in order to learn from such experiences, identify bottlenecks, and to articulate new strategies and approaches.
2. Through this process of sharing and learning, to contribute to the empowerment and strengthening of the groups involved.
3. Through its outputs and follow-up, increase awareness on the central importance of biodiversity in rural livelihood systems and promote the incorporation of local biodiversity management systems in a broader spectrum of rural development approaches, programmes and policies.

The focus of the project is on the local management of agricultural biodiversity in its broadest sense: that part of biodiversity that sustains, nurtures and feeds people. It would include experiences with domesticated plant and animal diversity, but also the "hidden" (wild) diversity which is such an important source of food and health for many people. Overall, it includes that diversity that sustains livelihood systems. Clearly, the experiences to to emphasise through this process should not be limited to those that focus on specific crops, but also those that integrate agro-forestry, livestock and aquatics.

In selecting the experiences to involve in this process, we would aim to focus on those that have as a guiding principle the strengthening of community control over biodiversity. Approaches with a primarily technical or genetic focus to conserve and develop diversity are of less interest than the ones which tackle power issues directly. Within that context we foresee the participation of a broad range of

people: Farmers and other Peoples Organisations, NGOs working with them, scientists aiming to support them, etc.

Participation, process & organisation

More than the simple organisation of a seminar, we see this exercise as a two year process to achieve the objectives mentioned above. The international workshop itself is envisaged to be held mid or late 2001. The aim is that the preparatory process is nationally & regionally driven, and the focus will be very much oriented at that level. Preparation will include a process of identification of participants; working through a process of consultation, assessment, and documentation in selected countries and regionally; and if appropriate, the production of case studies and other papers.

After a first consultative process through this 'Call for Interest and Feedback' amongst a broad selection of interested NGOs, POs and other groups, the project will be reassessed and adjusted early in the year 2000. In this period also the funding possibilities will be assessed.

For the organisation of the preparatory process and the workshop, we have appointed a part-time Coordinator to manage the project. The Coordinator will work with a Steering Committee composed of people active in this work in the respective regions. Together, the Coordinator and the Steering Committee are responsible for the preparatory process: identifying participants, documenting experiences, conducting work sessions with different groups in the regions and formulating strategy ideas to take to the international workshop.

Final participation will result from a consultative process amongst selected NGOs and peoples organisations, but we envisage some 40-50 participants, mostly from developing countries and with direct and relevant experience in local management of biodiversity.

Feedback & Contacts

These are just starting ideas. We welcome all comments and contributions. We especially would appreciate ideas about specific topics and issues that you think should be addressed, and information about people and/or organisations with relevant experiences in this field, whom you know of and think should be involved. Also, we would appreciate if you want to share any documents and other materials on experiences with local management of agricultural biodiversity you might be involved in or aware of.

Thank you very much for your attention, and hoping to hear from you soon,

Mr. Henk Hobbelink, GRAIN, Genetic Resources Action International, Barcelona, Spain
 Ms. Pernilla Malmer, Swedish Society for Nature Conservation, Stockholm, Sweden
 Mr. Peter Rottach, Bread For the World, Stuttgart, Germany
 Mr. Antonio Onorati, Centro Internazionale Crocevia, Roma, Italy

Annex IV: The Rio Branco Commitment (May 2002)

We, over 100 representatives of farmers, fishermen, indigenous peoples, extractivists, artisans and NGOs from 32 countries, meeting in Rio Branco, Acre, Brazil, at the international workshop “Growing Diversity” from 9 to 19 May 2002, decided to make the following statement

- Considering that biodiversity is an invaluable heritage, which is being destroyed at an unprecedented rate.
- Reminding everyone that the current dominant models of the development driven by economic liberalization and corporate control, are the main cause behind the deterioration of biological diversity, reinforce social inequalities throughout the world, and undermine the sovereignty of nation states to take care of their people.
- Conscious and proud of the fundamental role of local communities and their traditional knowledge in the conservation and management of biological diversity in the past, the present and the future,
- Aware that the increasingly powerful multinational companies get richer and even more powerful by securing patents and other intellectual property rights over our biological resources to the detriment and at the expense of the inalienable rights of our local communities,
- Also aware that the majority of farmers in the world are women, and that they form the most vulnerable group which is adversely being affected by the destruction of biodiversity and their livelihoods.
- Considering that biodiversity in many of our communities is intrinsically linked to - and integral part of - our cultures, our religions, and our spirituality, and therefor cannot be treated as a simple commodity that can be bought, sold or wasted,

WE DECLARE

- That local communities and indigenous peoples are the custodians of biodiversity, and that they have the inalienable right and responsibility to continue to manage, save, exchange, and further develop the biodiversity under their custody, over and above any commercial or other interests.
- Similarly, we consider food sovereignty – the right of people to sufficient and healthy food at all times - as a central principle, which should not be subject to other interests or considerations.
- We reject the current push towards a globalization that is driven predominately by commercial interests and undermines our cultures and our capacity to sustain and control our livelihoods.
- We reject the destructive and outdated development models that destroy biodiversity and the livelihoods of local communities, such as big dam projects, indiscriminate mining and oil projects, and destructive timber extraction.
- Political instability and war in many regions of the world, are major causes of destruction of biodiversity as they uproot people, kill communities and destroy local knowledge and customs. Interests foreign to these communities cause most of this instability and these wars.

- We reject the technological packages of Green Revolution and similar technologies that are being imposed on us, including hybrid seeds, chemical fertiliser and pesticides, and inappropriate forms of mechanization.
- We declare especially our frontal opposition to GMOs, since they are a threat to our agriculture, our animals, our health and our environment;
- We reject biopiracy and the patenting of our products and knowledge because they go against our biological diversity and cultural identity. We object especially to the patenting of life forms.
- We reject the privatization of water resources, because it is a public good, a collective property and the source of all life.
- We draw the attention the depletion and pollution of aquatic resources caused by industrial fishing and other commercial interests, which undermine the livelihoods of local fishing communities.
- We also note that the world's forests and all their inhabitants are living systems, are an inherent part of life on earth. Still, these forests are being cleared by commercial interests, thus destroying huge amounts of biodiversity and undermining our very possibilities of survival.
- We especially recognise the importance of sacred forests in the customs, beliefs and livelihoods of many local communities, and we consider that they form important sanctuaries for biodiversity.
- We denounce that land is increasingly taken away from small farmers and food production and ends up in the hands of big landowners and used for the production of export commodities. This is a major cause behind the destruction of agricultural biodiversity, and we demand the effective implementation of agrarian reforms that bring land back into the hands agrarian of small farmers for the production of food.
- We especially recognise the rights of indigenous peoples to their territories and demand the immediate implementation of the Convention 169 of the ILO on the rights of indigenous peoples.

WE PROPOSE

- That biodiversity based and integrated production systems under control of local communities be adopted and promoted as the principal mode of agricultural production.
- These systems should guarantee, as much as possible, the control of the local communities over the production, processing and marketing of agricultural and extractivist products.
- Our governments have the central responsibility to develop and implement policies, legislation and research to achieve this goal. For this to happen, current policies have to be redirected towards a holistic approach to development, the promotion of local control over resources and the active participation of local communities in decision making.
- Scientific research should be based on the problems faced by farmers and local communities and should consider and respect local knowledge. Scientists should be accountable for the consequences generated by the practical applications of science.

- Concern over food security and the environment should take precedence over international trade interests. The World Trade Organization is not the place to decide on these issues. Neither should regional or bilateral trade agreements affect local biodiversity management.
- We demand from our governments to ensure a GMO free environment in our countries and in our farming systems and to support our efforts to raise awareness amongst farmers and consumers about the real and potential impact of GMOs to the environment and to human health.
- We also request a total ban on the patenting of live forms and the use of any IPRs on biodiversity and traditional knowledge. We want to see the strengthening of Farmers and Community Rights in the relevant international agreements and at the national level to ensure that farmers and local communities can continue to save, exchange and further develop biodiversity.
- We demand that our education systems be reoriented and sufficiently funded to teach our children understanding of, and respect for, indigenous knowledge and locally based biodiversity management.
- The current agricultural research institutions – national and international – should be radically restructured and reoriented to promote and support biodiversity based agriculture rather than undermining it. We see locally based and farmer led research – in partnership with scientists where needed – as the best way to carry out such research.
- Similarly, current destructive practices and policies in the fields of fisheries and forestry management should be stopped and reoriented to the sustainable management of the earth's forests and fish populations.
- Sacred sites should be respected and protected by international agreements, national legislation and taken into account in national and regional development policies.
- To address, with actions and policies, the problems faced by women, in different parts of the world, concerning gender discrimination. The gender issue should be included in all the educational and development programs and should be discussed with both men and women.

WE COMMIT OURSELVES TO

- Perform crop diversification and actively promote diversified integrated farming systems based on biodiversity in our communities and organizations. The use of local and traditional varieties should be promoted.
- To put up political pressure to promote public policies that that the interest of small farmers into account, and put the promotion of biodiversity central.
- To strengthen our efforts and campaigns to stop the patenting of life forms and to fight for an environment free of GMOs.
- To protect and enrich our local knowledge and organise local seed exchanges.
- Strengthen the role of women in agricultural biodiversity conservation and empower their organization in all levels.
- Organise peoples' movements. With little or no support from governments, grassroots initiatives to protect biodiversity are necessary.

- Establish an effective exchange and flow of information amongst us to coordinate future actions and campaigns against the threats to biodiversity.
- Compel governments and aid agencies to reorient their aid programs so as not to interfere with local initiatives of conservation and resource management.
- Think globally while acting locally.

Enriched and energised by our individual and collective struggles for the local management of agricultural biodiversity, we commit ourselves to this pledge of conservation and sustainable use of agricultural biodiversity. In this we promise to each other to be generous as the earth, clear as the water, strong as the wind, and as far and as close as the sun.

And before we return to our countries as a token of our pledge, today in the spirit of friendship we exchange life – we exchange our seeds of knowledge and wisdom past on from generations to generations.

Agreed in Rio Branco, May 19, 2002