

Enhancing capacity for biodiversity data mobilization and use in support of sustainable development in West Africa

Programme: CESP

Project ID: CESP2020-005

Project lead organization: Department of Plant and Environmental Biology, University of Ghana (Ghana Biodiversity Information Facility)

Project implementation period: 1/8/2020 - 31/7/2022

Report approved: 1/6/2021

Narrative Midterm report

Project partners

University of Kansas

Country: US

GBIF Participant Represented: Liberia Node

Role in the project: Co-Lead

University of Liberia

Country: Liberia

GBIF Participant Represented: Liberia Node

Role in the project: Facilitator

Forestry Research Institute of Nigeria

Country: Nigeria

GBIF Participant Represented: Nigeria Node

Role in the project: Facilitator

Ecole Normale Supérieure de Nouakchott

Country: Mauritania

GBIF Participant Represented: Mauritania

Role in the project: Facilitator

UNEP-WCMC

Country: UK

GBIF Participant Represented: UNEP-WCMC

Role in the project: Mentor

United States Geological Survey

Country: US

GBIF Participant Represented: US Node

Role in the project: Facilitator

University of Kansas

Country: US

GBIF Participant Represented: US Node

Role in the project: Mentor

Executive Summary

The project has made substantial progress in the area of building human capacity for data mobilization and publication especially regarding the "Essential biodiversity Variable" and sample-based data through mentoring activities. The project continues to make progress in mobilising research-grade

sample-based data for publication via GBIF.org. Implementation of some of the project activities are, however, being hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic such that these activities have to be postponed until international travel restrictions are removed and it is safe to travel. The project team is very committed to achieving the objectives of this project, and as such, monitoring the current situation through meetings and / discussions.

Mandatory milestones attached to the midterm report

Mandatory milestones attached to the midterm report:

1. Project organized.
2. Mentoring activities undertaken.
3. Data mobilization underway and at least one sample-based dataset published.

Information on progress against milestones is provided in the activities and deliverables sections.

Report on Activities

Activity progress summary

The project have made substantial progress with regard to the milestones attached to the mid-term report. Specifically, we have made progress as follows:

(1) Project Organised: To ensure efficient project organisation we designed a project implementation plan with assigned tasks and timelines

(<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1KaB0M38tE1i4KLvF3ZmbmcPjvYI8yKP2BpaCTe3G03o/edit#gid=0>).

The implementation plan provides the framework for tracking and monitoring of project activities. We organised virtual meetings to discuss progress and address risks towards achieving milestones. The project meetings have been useful in taking major decisions about impact of COVID-19 pandemic.

(2) Mentoring Activities: The project has provided access to relevant information resources regarding the Essential Biodiversity Variable (EBVs) and Sample-based data. The project has also organised a virtual training course on the EBVs. The course took place on the 8th, 10th and 11th of March 2021 via Zoom. Prof. A. T. Peterson, University of Kansas was the resource person for the EBVs course.

(3) Data mobilization underway and at least one sample-based data published: Data mobilization activities have been planned in the different West Africa partner countries. As such, we have been able to published one sample-based dataset (<http://ipt-ghana.gbif.fr/resource?r=aburitrees>). A few already mobilized datasets will also be published soon via GBIF.org. However, progress with this activity has slowed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Data mobilization will continue to progress in West Africa among project partners but this activity will progress slowly because of the impact of COVID-19 that has brought about changes in the work schedules of people.

Unfortunately, the regional capacity enhancement workshop has to be postponed until when it is safe to resume international travel due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important that this course be organised in-person to accrue the maximum benefit for which reasons it was envisaged. The production of BIPs and guidelines for mainstreaming of biodiversity has also been delayed because these products / outcomes when generated will have to be tested during the regional workshop to make them more user-friendly before wider circulation. The new expected date for these activities would be sometime next year (2022) when the impact of COVID-19 is minimal and travel restrictions have removed or relax.

Completed activities

Activity name: Project organisation

Description: This activity included project meetings, and development of a project implementation plan (that involves responsibilities and timelines).

Start Date - End Date: 1/10/2020 - 31/1/2021

Verification Sources: 1. Link to project implementation plan

(<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1KaB0M38tE1i4KLvF3ZmbmcPjvYI8yKP2BpaCTe3G03o/edit#gid=0>)

2. Meeting notes

Activity name: Mentoring activities

Description: Mentoring activities included providing access to rich information resources on sample-based data and Essential Biodiversity Variables (EBVs) as well as an online training course on Essential Biodiversity Variables (EBVs).

Start Date - End Date: 1/10/2020 - 11/3/2021

Verification Sources: 1. Link to online resources

(<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1KaB0M38tE1i4KLvF3ZmbmcPjvYI8yKP2BpaCTe3G03o/edit#gid=0>)

2. Attached flyer about online course on EBV

3. YouTube Links: <https://youtu.be/xzO9-tQzZ4g>.

4. <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/b16df867mbkf8yk/AACdtMCPE5Asbv9dhCYdyLLpa?dl=0>

Report on Deliverables

Deliverables progress summary

We have a number of products / outputs from this project that are linked to the following deliverables listed in our proposal:

(1) Efficient project management: We developed a project implementation plan and compiled notes taken during our project meetings. The project implementation plan has tasks assigned to people and timelines. The project meetings are also the forum for monitoring progress and risks associated with project implementation. Thus, these deliverables are important to assuring efficient management of the project.

(2) Enhanced human capacity in biodiversity data mobilization and production: Adequate human capacity is important to assuring effective biodiversity data mobilization. However, there is inadequate capacity regarding mobilising biodiversity data besides occurrence data. As such, we delivered mentoring activities specifically on the EBVs and sample-based data. We provided rich information resources and delivered an online course on the EBVs.

(3) Large volume of research-grade data records available via GBIF.org: The project continues to make progress in achieving this deliverable. More datasets will be published via GBIF.org soon. But data mobilization has slowed during to COVID-19 pandemic that have impacted work schedule.

The project will continue to find ways of delivering on the other outputs / products listed in the proposal, namely: (1) enhanced human capacity in data analysis and development of biodiversity information products (2) biodiversity information products (BIPs); and (3) guidelines for mainstreaming of biodiversity information, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Completed deliverables

Title: Efficient project management

Type: Documentation

Description:

Sources of verification: Meeting notes

Title: Enhanced human capacity in biodiversity data mobilization and publication.

Type: Documentation

Description:

Sources of verification: Reports about mentoring activities

Events

Online Course on Essential Biodiversity Variables (EBVs)

Dates: 2021-03-08 - 2021-03-11

Organizing institution: Ghana Biodiversity Information Facility

Country: Virtual

Number of participants: 55

Comments: This event was hosted jointly by Ghana Biodiversity Information Facility, and Biodiversity Institute at the University of Kansas, USA.

Website or sources of verification: YouTube Links: <https://youtu.be/xzO9-tQzZ4g>. Presentation:

https://www.dropbox.com/s/nehxufhctnlnv2h/Day1_EBVs.pdf?dl=0 Video:

https://www.dropbox.com/s/102m6ohat3tfm0s/EBV_course_day1.mp4?dl=0

Communications and visibility

The results of this project are being and will be shared with project stakeholders and broader GBIF community via a number of ways available to us. We will continue to share information about the project such as the course on the Essential Biodiversity Variables (EBVs) among project stakeholders, and widely among GBIF Africa participants using the group GBIF Africa Group WhatsApp platform.

The project resources / products such as those from the course on EBVs including the videos and presentations are being / and will be made available via YouTube and BITC website.

We will also share information and promote visibility of the project via the project page. We would like the project mid-term project report, and flyers, videos and presentations from the project to be shared on the project page.

Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation findings

The monitoring and evaluation plan put in place has been very useful in the implementation of project activities. The project leader has been responsible for the overall management of the project ensuring that project activities, sharing of responsibilities, and communication within the group and with GBIFs are done successfully. The project mentors has also provided useful advice to the project leader in taking concrete decisions about the project.

The regular project meetings has been very useful in keeping partners active in the project activities. We will continue with this arrangement during the remaining project implementation period. The support received from the GBIF Secretariat especially in light of the challenges with COVID-19 pandemic was great, and the project will continue to work with the secretariat as a central part in the management and implementation of the rest project activities.

The project team continue to demonstrate unflinching support to ensure the success of this project. The team has actually expressed their interest in every aspect of the project including project reports and deliverables.

Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on project implementation

The project team unanimously agreed that there was the need for a revision of the current project work plan due to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the project execution. The team took this decision in light of GBIF secretariat letter on CESP 2020 projects regarding international travel in 2021, i.e., GBIF would not accept cancellation charges as eligible expenses, for international travel not already booked.

The project team therefore suggested the following changes, in light of COVID-19 pandemic, on implementation of the rest of the project activities:

- (a). Mobilization and publication of sample-based data will continue to take place in West African partner countries. However, this activity will proceed slowly due to the COVID-19 restrictions, which obviously has affected work schedules in the project partner countries.
- (b) Postponement of the capacity enhancement workshop until year next year, 2022 or until international travels can safety resume. Resumption should after vaccination and clearance for foreign travels from partners' countries from the UK and USA.
- (c) The development of draft examples of Biodiversity Information Products (BIPs) and a guidelines for mainstreaming of biodiversity information into decision-making will continue. But these deliverables will be tested, improved and finalised at the capacity enhancement workshop to be organised later in 2022.

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