

Guiding principles for knowledge collaborations

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This a living document that will be developed over time, in consultation with SwedBio partners under the Collaborative partner implementation pathway, SRC researcher, and others.

Introduction

Two important enabling trajectories for change for SwedBio are (1) *knowledge exchange between actors from different knowledge systems*, and (2) *equitable engagement of local actors in collaborative initiatives and policy processes*. Central for both is to facilitate mutual understanding and co-creation of new knowledge across knowledge systems and cultures, based on equity, reciprocity and usefulness for all involved. This involves bridging between scientists, practitioners, and policy makers, with the intention to contribute to improved understanding, knowledge generation, management and good governance of social-ecological systems.

One of SwedBio's intentions is thus to contribute to an improved dialogue culture in the field of SwedBio's work. In this endeavor, it is important to have a clear framework and transparent principles and procedures to guide the motivation, character, and intent of the various collaborative initiatives undertaken between SwedBio, its collaborative partners, scientists, Indigenous peoples and local communities as rights holders and knowledge holders, as well as other actors that are involved in interactions with SwedBio. The guiding principles as outlined below, are an evolving work in progress, and are continuously revised over time to mirror joint learning and development of new practices. These guiding principles are applicable in all SwedBio's collaborations, under both the Dialogue for knowledge and policy and the Collaborative partner implementation pathways in the programme period 2020-2024.

Some existing frameworks and guidelines that are important starting points in SwedBio's work are:

- the international human rights framework, including the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples¹;
- the CBD Tkarihwaí:ri Code of Ethical Conduct²;
- the CBD Akwé: Kon guidelines for cultural, environmental and social impact assessment³;
- the CBD Mo' otz Kuxtal guidelines to ensure free, prior and informed consent⁴ as well as
- relevant guidance from the CBD Nagoya protocol on Access and Benefit-sharing⁵.

Further, IPBES has developed "*Draft methodological guidance for recognising and working with Indigenous and local knowledge in IPBES*"⁶ (with engagement of SwedBio staff and partners) which outlines how ILK and ILK holders are engaged during the full cycle of an IPBES assessment.

In successful knowledge collaborations across knowledge systems and cultures, the attitudes framing the exchange are essential. Underlying principles of *respect* for diversity, *trust*, *reciprocity* and *equal sharing*⁷ are essential.

¹ http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf

² <http://www.cbd.int/traditional/code.shtml>

³ <http://www.cbd.int/doc/publications/akwe-brochure-en.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.cbd.int/doc/publications/8j-cbd-mootz-kuxtal-en.pdf>

⁵ <http://www.cbd.int/abs/>

⁶ <https://ipbes.net/event/ipbes-7-plenary> IPBES/7/INF/8 Information on work related to indigenous and local knowledge systems

⁷ Tengö, M., and P. Malmer (eds). 2012. Dialogue workshop on knowledge for the 21st century: Indigenous knowledge, traditional knowledge, science and connecting diverse knowledge systems. Usdub, Guna Yala, Panama, April 10–13, 2012. Workshop Report. <http://www.stockholmresilience.org/21/policy--practice/swedbio/dialogues/guna-yala-dialogue.html>

In the following section, we elaborate on practices and features that contribute to delivering on those principles of respect for diversity, trust, reciprocity and equal sharing.

Transparent open communication and mutual sharing and learning are important, and should be emancipatory. The collaborators should consider how they might wish to manage:

- Expectations - for example, through reflection and evaluation at different stages to ensure expectations are realistic and attainable;
- Timeframes - for example, by planning for necessary financial and human resources, time required to engage with relevant actors, and adapting to changing circumstances;
- Information - including process documentation and safeguarding sensitive or restricted information. This needs to be based on an understanding on which information is sensitive and which should not be included in the collaboration, or disseminated further, in cases where physical integrity of collaborators may be at stake always prioritise their security;
- Mutual learning and mutual sharing – usually in SwedBio’s collaborations there is mutual learning taking place. However, in some cases mutual sharing may be less explicit. For example, when taking up actors’ time - consider giving something back at the immediate occasion, it can be in economic terms, or to share knowledge as agreed with actors, such as sharing of literature, a seminar, teaching in schools or institutions in the case of field visits.

We emphasise the following important features for good meetings and dialogue processes:

- Equality of all participants and absence of coercive influence. Nobody’s perspectives or opinions are more important than anyone else’s.
- Listen with empathy and seek to openly understand each other’s viewpoints.
- Bring assumptions into the open.

Keeping these considerations in mind, SwedBio focuses on the following core underlying values:

Participation & Representation

Collaborations should create space for meaningful and culturally appropriate participation of representatives of social groups. All collaborations should begin with clarity on how to manage, who should be involved, and for what purpose⁸. It is important to have a transparent process and manage expectations.

Women & Gender

The policy for SwedBio’s work on gender equality⁹ also applies to all kinds of knowledge collaboration. SwedBio applies a gender equality perspective to all its activities, partnerships, advocacy and dialogue efforts, with the aim of bringing knowledge of women, Indigenous and disadvantaged groups to the local, regional and global policy level. SwedBio follows the lead of partner organisations and their priorities in creating spaces for mutual learning on forwarding gender equality. In SwedBio’s gender policy, there is reference to guidelines and tools for mainstreaming gender. For example: “Addressing Gender Issues and Actions in Biodiversity Objectives”, from the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity¹⁰ and “Gender Equality in Practice” from Sida.¹¹

⁸ Natural Justice Biocultural Community Protocols: A toolkit for community facilitators. www.community-protocols.org

⁹ SwedBio policy on gender equality can be found in Annex 5.

¹⁰ https://www.cbd.int/gender/doc/cbd-towards2020-gender_integration-en.pdf

¹¹ https://www.sida.se/contentassets/0c376ea02bfa471aa57caefbc5d2d12f/gender-equality-in-practice_298.pdf

The Multiple Evidence Base approach (MEB)¹²

The MEB approach emphasises complementarity and equitable and transparent processes for connecting and collaborating across knowledge systems. Fundamental values, such as respect, trust, reciprocity, and equal sharing, need to characterise interactions at all scales. MEB emphasises that it is important to establish frameworks to promote and enable equal and transparent connections between knowledge systems, to level any power dynamics, to empower communities, in order to fulfil the potential of knowledge synergies for equitable ecosystem governance. To enable successful synergies across knowledge systems, there is a need for intercultural dialogues, which promote credibility and legitimacy among all actors involved.

The MEB is an approach for generating the levels of trust and respect required for dialogues leading to changing mental models and widened perceptions of how knowledge systems can cross-fertilize among all knowledge holders. The development of procedures concerning problem definition, assessment processes, and the evaluation of findings needs to involve co-design, co-generation and collaboration with relevant actors from the onset.^{13 14}

Human Rights-Based Approach and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities', including their Right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent

SwedBio has an important role in contributing to strengthened equity, democracy and rights perspectives in all its activities and emphasises the human rights-based approach (HRBA), along with gender equality, as one of its cross-cutting issues. See SwedBio policy on HRBA.¹⁵

Respect for and promotion of Indigenous and local knowledge helps in the realisation of human rights, self-determined development, and culturally appropriate pathways for strengthening local resource management, livelihoods and well-being.

Knowledge collaborations need to have respect for and realisation of the rights of Indigenous peoples and local communities, including their right to provide or deny free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) regarding activities that take place on their lands and territories, or otherwise affect them. The decision to provide or withhold FPIC is an ongoing process, not a single moment. At any stage of engagement with external actors, a community has a right to seek more information, say “no”, or withdraw entirely. Customary means of consensus-building or other forms of decision-making can be used as the basis for culturally appropriate FPIC processes. By definition, FPIC processes must respect the community's timelines and self-determined processes and must not be driven or influenced by project proponents.¹⁶ Furthermore, knowledge collaborations should consider a rights-based approach in identifying how these collaborations can contribute to Indigenous peoples' and local communities' individual and collective rights such as rights to information and rights to a healthy environment.

¹² <http://www.stockholmresilience.org/21/policy--practice/swedbio/dialogues/guna-yala-dialogue/multiple-evidence-base.html>; Malmer, P., Masterson, V., Austin, B. & Tengö, M. 2020. *Mobilisation of indigenous and local knowledge as a source of usable evidence for conservation partnerships*. (eds. Sutherland, W. J. et al.) Cambridge University Press.

¹³ Tengö et al. 2014. *Connecting Diverse Knowledge Systems for Enhanced Ecosystem Governance: The Multiple Evidence Base Approach*. *AMBIO*, 43:579–591

¹⁴ Tengö, M., Hill, R., Malmer, P. et al. 2017. *Weaving knowledge systems in IPBES, CBD and beyond—lessons learned for sustainability*. *Curr. Opin. Environ. Sustain.* 26–27, 17–25.

¹⁵ SwedBio policy on HRBA can be found in our website.

¹⁶ Developed from The Community Conservation Resilience Initiative Methodology, May, 2014, http://globalforestcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/New-Last-CCR-Initiative-methodology_May-2014.pdf

Indigenous & Community Ownership

Knowledge collaborations should preferably be initiated by Indigenous peoples and local communities themselves, or developed in collaboration with them. However, sharing of knowledge and practices also frequently occur during field visits to partners and during walking workshops and dialogues that are initiated by others than the community visited.

Regardless of circumstances, the principles specified in the Guidelines for knowledge collaboration are important to follow. Power relations between Indigenous peoples and local communities and colonising, dominant societies are often highly imbalanced and inequitable. Collaborations should aim to be emancipatory, participatory, and representative of local realities. They should recognise that Indigenous peoples' and local communities' relationships with their territories and areas are an integral source of their identities, cultures and well-being. The emphasis on Indigenous methodologies and approaches lays the foundations for bridging complementary systems of Indigenous, local and mainstream knowledge (as in the MEB Approach above).

In a meeting or during a specific event, everyone should feel safe and free to share their knowledge and perspectives, and have the right to say "no" regarding sharing of information that for any reason is not appropriate to share outside the group.

Knowledge co-generated through for example collaborations between scientists and practitioners may lead to new knowledge, data or information. It should be made clear at the beginning of any collaboration who owns any information or data generated from the collaboration. Free, Prior and Informed Consent should always be applied (ref section on Rights above). As part of this, it is important to discuss where and how the learning and information will travel after the sharing. Given participants in collaborations and dialogues are drawn from a diversity of knowledge systems and actors, they may include those based in communities, along with those mostly engaged in activities like research and policy. It is important that no information from the meeting is used or interpreted in a way that is different from what it was aimed at.

There are likewise the kinds of knowledge and outcomes that all participants may want to share, and even desire to be distributed widely and inspire actions that are mutually beneficial for all, such as in presentations, reports, social media and journal articles. The same meeting may generate information and knowledge for different levels of sharing, from strict protection to widely shared. It is important that all participants are clear about how and what knowledge to be shared. Quotations and pictures always have to be approved by concerned people.^{17 18}

¹⁷ Malmer, P., Tengö, M. et al. 2019. *Dialogue across Indigenous, local and scientific knowledge systems reflecting on the IPBES Assessment on Pollinators, Pollination and Food Production*, 21th to 25th January 2019, Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai

¹⁸ Developed from The Community Conservation Resilience Initiative Methodology, May, 2014, http://globalforestcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/New-Last-CCR-Initiative-methodology_May-2014.pdf