



2007 Report

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Introduction

BioNET-NAFRINET has been established in May 2002 in Rabat, Morocco, with four countries, i.e. Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt. Institut Agronomique et Vétérinaire Hassan II, Rabat (Morocco), has been designated NECI and Professor Mohamed Rejdali as Regional Coordinator.

In early 2007, Prof. Rejdali resigned from his position and the BioNET-NAFRINET Coordinating Committee (LCC) called for a Regional Meeting at the Institut Scientifique, Rabat, Morocco, in 25-26 June 2007 in order to review NAFRINET activities and elect a new NECI and Regional Coordinator.

Two proposals have been submitted for the issue of regional Coordination. Borj Cedria TechnoPark (BCTP) has been elected by LCC members as NECI and Prof. Mohamed Elyes KCHOUK as Regional Coordinator for a three years term.

As newly elected Regional Coordinator, I report for the last 5 months (End of June – End of November).

Most of this short time has been spent in administrative procedures in order to establish the new NECI of BioNET-NAFRINET. A Memorandum of Agreement has been signed in November 14th 2007 between BioNET-International and BCTP.

Contacts have been made with Libya (in September 2007) and Mauritania (November 2007) inviting them to join NAFRINET.

A great part of the Work Plan established by former NECI Coordinator faced several difficulties which were probably behind his resignation. Activities and subsequent funding of NAFRINET suffered from this fact.

In June 2007, country representatives delivered their Country report during the LCC Meeting. Therefore, I based the present Report on each of these Country Reports following whenever possible BioNET guidelines suggested by Dr. Richard Smith.

Taxonomic capacity building and related activities

1. Capacity building activities in the region during 2007

Egypt

Training

- Red Listing (IUCN training on guidelines for applying criteria: Annabelle Cuttelod, Med Red List coordinator)
- Biodiversity monitoring in Protected Areas has trained about 60 rangers and provided them with BioMAP software to help them with analysis of the data
- Run the IUCN evaluation scheme to measure the performance of the national parks of the country (RAPPAM)

2. Workshops / seminars organized or participated in.

Algeria

- 2002 – 1st workshop University of Oran. 6 coordinators designated.
- 2004 – 2nd workshop. Posters and communications about plant taxonomy / other.
- 2005 – 3rd workshop. University of Cherkh Larbi Tebesii Tebessa. Communication about various taxa.

Tunisia

2003 national workshop on:

- Assessment of human resources (taxonomists and parataxonomists) and assessment of needs. *Output:* a list of Tunisian taxonomists established (about 100)
- Assessment of state of collections, needs and state of knowledge for different groups. *Output:* Report on the status of invertebrates including insects, higher plants and mammals.

Morocco

1st NAFRINET workshop report is on the web (see www.israbat.ac.ma), 95 participants

During this meeting some projects were prioritized, such as:

- database, ID key, systematics, ecology, threats, chorology (building on individually managed databases)
- training on taxonomy and Red Data Listing
- teaching and research on poorly known groups of animals and plants
- build relationships with users (researcher, manager, product users)... "popularise taxonomy and its products"
- create / support specialist libraries in the field of biodiversity and conservation
- create / support scientific collections.

In 2004, a National Commission published volumes on: micro-orgs, cryptograms, vascular plants, vertebrates, invertebrates (arthropods and non arthropods)

3. LOOP activities planned for 2008 and already funded.

Algeria

- Cytogenetics of *Argonia spinosa*
- Phytopathogenic and symbiotic fungi: morphology and biochemistry.

Tunisia

- Red listing of plants
- Inventory of genetic resources for agricultural crops: action plan for conservation.
- Inventories of protected areas, urban parks.
- **Funding from WB / IUCN** / external via consultant / company that manages activities.

Egypt

Biodiversity Conservation:

- Ministry of Environmental Affairs, Nature Conservation Sector produced a recent report about the status of biodiversity work in Egypt, called "Biodiversity Conservation & Capacity Building in Egypt".

National Biodiversity Database

- BioMAP project is **funded by Italian Cooperation** (Debt Swap).
 - Specimen/observation based. Will be online later in 2007.
 - GIS/mapping against different layers including climate, soil, altitude, habitat etc. Will be used by rangers, scientists and others.
 - BioMAP employs 15 young graduates and has trained them to do the work; afterwards they will be employed by the Nature Conservation Sector in Egypt.
 - Consultants from Universities have contributed records and helped revise records; skilled members of the public have also volunteered records to be included after revision and filtering by experts.
- Minimum information needed: what spp, where collected or observed, when. If possible, ecological function. Number of records now in the database is about 600K records.
- Output: first book on the 62 butterflies' species of Egypt is now ready: atlas, Red Listing and conservation status. Others on mammals, reptiles and some plant groups will follow.
- Gazetteer/georeferencing is a major task.
- Maps of species richness are contrasted against the distribution of Protected Areas (Gap analysis),
- Biodiversity and future land use in Egypt: assessment of the impact of mining and petroleum / gas extraction plans and other plans on biodiversity of the country.

Monitoring of biodiversity.

- **British Council (BC)** supports Egyptian graduates in conjunction with self-funded British volunteers in the programme of Operation Wallacea (OpWall); together with rangers and Bedouin, they have worked together during the summers of the last 3 years (2005-2007) to monitor the status of biodiversity of the national parks of the country, mainly St Katherine & Ras Mohamed .

Clearing House Mechanism (CHM)

- The Egypt's Clearing House Mechanism has been established and is live on the web now (see www.egyptchm.org)

4. LOOP activities planned for 2008 with proposals under development/ submitted

Tunisia

- Crop pests, pathogens and predators. Fact sheets have been prepared but need development.

5. Emerging areas of interest

No report available

Partnership activities

1. LOOP interactions with technical and strategic partners

(such as GBIF, Lucid, IABIN, Discover Life, GISP, CABI, IUCN, CGIAR, etc.)

Egypt

- British Council

Tunisia

- Inventories of protected areas, urban parks; **Funding from WB / IUCN** / external via consultant / company that manages activities.

2. Interactions with key international policy and regulatory frameworks

(such as CBD (national focal points, others), GTI, Plant Protection organizations, CITES etc via national / regional focal points and or secretariats)

No report available

Sustainability of the LOOP

1. Financial support

(source, amount, including in-kind support) for NECI and NACI coordination and Coordinating Committee operation. (For example, are NACIs / NECI supporting coordinator time and providing networking facilities? Is project income supporting core LOOP coordination costs?)

- Meetings & Workshops financed by NACIs and local funders.

2. Interactions with funders:

(list those that you have communicated with / submitted proposals to).

- Except for Egypt, funded by Italian Government (Debt swap) and British Council, no interactions reported.
- Morocco: GBIF project submitted as NAFRINET National Commission including collaboration between 3 institutions, but the proposal was not successful because Morocco isn't a full member of GBIF

Concerns, comments and suggestions / concerns / comments:

1. Issues affecting the operation, effectiveness or sustainability of your LOOP

Tunisia

Needs Assessment

- Consolidate national structure
- National CBD Representative asked for projects to be prepared
- Reported to Min of Env.
- Proposal for creation of Tunisian Association for taxonomy

Morocco

- National Commission in charge of BioNet coordination for the last three years
- Meetings of National Committee on biodiversity
- Preparation of LOOP work plan 2004-5.

2. Threats and obstacles to practicing taxonomy and suggestions for how BioNET might help address these.

Algeria

- Lack of coordination between NACIs.
- Finances.

Tunisia

- Finding information (held by few researchers), collect taxonomic work, researchers belong to many different departments (e.g. agriculture and environment), lack of coordinating structure for disseminating information.

Egypt

- Mechanism for awareness and **reporting on a high political level** is needed.
- Specialists urgently needed to **write proposals and reports, communicate** (good language skills - English) national / regional / international.
- Sustainability: what happens after project ends? Fundraising and continuing work.

Obstacles:

- lack of equipment and funds
- weak human resources...lack critical mass to do research
- absence of projects that bring together institutions across the country (Flora is perhaps only example)
- lack of motivation...dependence on national coordinator...despite encouragement from NACI for collaborative work and addressing user needs.

What next:

- be realistic and pragmatic when defining plans and objectives
- support existing teams and ongoing projects
- propose a regional common project, delivery in reasonable time
- assure minimum starting funds
- seek support from high level: e.g. letter from BioNET, BGCI, IUCN etc stressing importance of taxonomy, send to Min of Environment highlighting the CBD decisions and the country's obligations concerning releasing documenting and releasing stress on biodiversity, etc.

3. NECI: Borj Cedria TechnoPark

Regional coordination to date: lessons learned

- Problems faced by NAFRINET over the last three years have affected the performance and the outputs, and caused frustration for all parties. There has been long history of effort to solve these problems, which are concerned with the management of the fund, since there was no bank account to hold the seed fund, and the NECI asked for 40% as an overhead. The policy of BioNET is not to allow an overhead for managing funds it disburses. The idea to hold the seed funds in the UK has not been accepted by BioNET. Other options to solve the problem were not accepted either by CABI (BioNET's host organization), since these options are against their policies and regulations.
- Mohamed FENNANE (Morocco National Coordinator) explained the situation saying he met the former Regional Coordinator, Prof. Mohamed Rejdali, who said he did his best by proposing 3 solutions including reducing the overhead to 10%. But his resignation delayed everything.

Selection of new Regional Coordinating Institute (NECI) and Chair, LOOP Coordinating Committee

- Two proposals have submitted, from Tunisia and Egypt.
- Agreed: The Borj Cedria Technopark, Tunisia, to serve as the Network Coordinating Institute (NECI) for NAFRINET for the following three years with Prof. Mohamed Elyes KCHOUK as the Network Coordinator.

Actions Agreed upon at June 2007 LCC Meeting

1. The project will be "Digitizing and mapping the fauna and flora of the collections of NAFRINET countries".
2. Each country will identify the groups they are interested in e.g. plants (Morocco, Algeria), insects (Egypt, Tunisia)
3. BioMAP (Egypt) will send their standard-format Excel sheet, and explain the process via emails for the countries to start entering their data.
4. All countries will try to collect all available maps (digitized, if possible), including geology, soil, climate, Protectorates, altitude, habitat etc. in order to help the process of mapping and generating biodiversity predictions for the target group in each country.
5. Countries (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia) will each contract two people for data entry, guided by specialists, to enter the data on the BioMAP sheet. The contract will be for six months, covered by the available seed money.
6. A meeting will be held in Egypt in Feb. 2008 to discuss the outputs of the database and the CHM. SAMY ZALAT will prepare the agenda and the estimated costs for the meeting.
7. A meeting will be organized in Tunisia in March-April 2008 to discuss the final outputs of the last year, and put a plan for the future of NAFRINET.

Conclusion

BCTP and Regional Coordinator will have to carefully boost NAFRINET activities after five years from its creation and develop the LOOP according to LCC directives.

The planned Work Plan and Budget 2008 have been made in consultation with LCC and BioNET. There is a need for a financial support of about 50,000 € (refer to corresponding documents). BioNET-International seed fund of 30,000 € will cover only part of BioNET-NAFRINET activities as agreed by the LCC and BioNET's Secretariat. With the collaboration and agreement of all NACIs Coordinators, BCTP will have to seek further financial support in order to fulfill its Work Plan Budget for 2008.

In using BioNET seed fund, Borj Cedria Technopark will prioritize the implementation of a strategy to ensure the long-term sustainability of the LOOP as stated in the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) signed between BioNET-International and BCTP (paragraph 7). Unless notified in writing to the contrary, the BioNET seed funding will be fully utilized within 12 months of the signature of the MoA.

Several of the activities planned might find support from GEF via National CBD Focal Points. BCTP will try to activate the GEF financial mechanism in the Region as a support to the GTI program and as a long-term process able to finance larger projects than planned. This will be done by fully involving country CBD/GTI Focal Points in NAFRINET's activities and seek appropriate human resources through NACIs' coordination.

Appendice I: NAFRINET & LCC members data

1. Algeria

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4. Tunisia

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Appendix II: Abbreviations & Acronyms

BIOCON The consortium of expert centres in the developed world that provide input to BioNET-INTERNATIONAL's sub-regional LOOPs (www.bionet-intl.org)

BC: British Council

BCTP: Borj Cedria TechnoPark, Tunisia.

CBD Convention on Biological Diversity (www.cbd.int)

CDI Capacity Development Initiative (www.gefweb.org/Site_Index/CDI/cdi.html)

CHM Clearing House Mechanism (of the CBD; www.cbd.int/chm/)

CITES Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (www.cites.org)

COP Conference of the Parties of the CBD

EcoPort A web-based ecology knowledge processor (www.ecoport.org)

Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (www.unesco.org)

Euro+Med PlantBase: Web-based database of European and Mediterranean plants

EuroLOOP The consortium of developed country expert institutions in Europe

FAO Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (www.fao.org)

GBIF Global Biodiversity Information Facility (www.gbif.org)

GEF Global Environment Facility (www.gefweb.org/)

GFAR Global Forum for Agricultural Research (www.egfar.org)

GISP Global Invasive Species Program (<http://jasper.stanford.edu/GISP/>)

GTI Global Taxonomy Initiative of the CBD (www.cbd.int)

IGO Inter-governmental organization

IPI International Pollinators Initiative

IPPC International Plant Protection Convention (www.ippc.int/)

IUCN The World Conservation Union (formerly the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources) (www.iucn.org)

LCC: LOOP Coordinating Committee

LOOP Locally Owned and Operated Partnership (= BioNET sub-regional network)

MA Millennium Assessment of Global Ecosystems (www.millenniumassessment.org/en/index.htm)

MEDUSA Information network dealing with native Mediterranean plants useful to humanity <http://medusa.maich.gr> .

MoA: Memorandum of Agreement

NACI National Coordinating Institute of a LOOP

NAFRINET The proposed North African LOOP of BioNET-INTERNATIONAL

NECI Network Coordinating Institute of a LOOP

NGO Non-governmental organization

NI National Institute of a member country of a LOOP

OPTIMA Organization for the Phyto-Taxonomic Investigation of the Mediterranean Area

PGRFA Global Plan of Action (GPA) for the Conservation and Sustainable use of Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (PGRFA),

PoW Program of Work

Ramsar Convention: Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, especially as Waterfowl Habitat (www.ramsar.org)

SBSTTA Subsidiary Body for Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (to the CBD) (www.cbd.int)

SDC Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (<http://194.230.65.134/dezaweb2/home.asp>)

SPS Sanitary and Phytosanitary

TCDC Technical Cooperation between Developing Countries (www.tcdcwide.net/tcdcweb/index.html / www.ecdc.net.cn/)

TCN Technical Cooperation Network

TecSec The Technical Secretariat of BioNET-INTERNATIONAL (www.bionet-intl.org)

UN United Nations (www.un.org)

UNCCD Convention to Combat Desertification

UNDP United Nations Development Program (www.undp.org)

UNESCO-MAB Man and the Biosphere Program of the United Nations

WTO World Trade Organization (www.wto.org)