

**MINUTES OF THE 3<sup>RD</sup> STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE EU FUNDED BEE HEALTH PROJECT HELD ON TUESDAY 4<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 2014 AT THE AFRICAN REFERENCE LABORATORY FOR BEE HEALTH BOARD ROOM, *icipe*, DUDUVILLE, NAIROBI, KENYA**

**Attendance**

1. Abebe Haile Gabriel- AUC
2. Suresh Raina- *icipe*
3. Annie Florence Youbissi- Ministry representative, Cameroon
4. Amssalu Bezabeh- Ministry representative, Ethiopia

**Observers**

1. Frank Langevelde- Technical Advisory Committee
2. Shi Wei- Technical Advisory Committee
3. Patrick Bastiaesen- Technical Advisory Committee
4. Simplicie Nouala- AU-IBAR
5. Norbert Mbahin- AU-IBAR
6. Everlyn Nguku- Bee Health Project, *icipe*
7. Shifa Ballo- *icipe*, Ethiopia
8. Harimanana Rasoanarimalala- Ministry representative, Madagascar
9. Patrick Ndiangui- Finance, *icipe*
10. David Mwenda- Finance, *icipe*
11. Everlyne Khamala- Bee Health Project, *icipe*

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Steering Committee Meeting of the EU funded Bee Health Project was called to order at 14.45hrs by Everlyne Khamala.

## 1. Opening Remarks

- Dr. Abebe Haile Gabriel who chaired the meeting on behalf of H.E Mrs. Rhoda Peace Tumusiime welcomed all delegates to the meeting and said that H.E Mrs. Tumusiime had sent apologies for not being able to attend the meeting. She however wished the Steering Committee well in its proceedings.
- The chair congratulated Dr. Segenet Kelemu, *icipe* Director General, for winning the L’Oreal UNESCO global award. He said it was a great achievement for Dr. Kelemu, *icipe* and Africa at large.
- He also congratulated *icipe* for the inauguration of the African Reference Laboratory for Bee Health and said the African Union was proud to be part of this important milestone. He added that honeybees play a very important role in food security, thus the reference laboratory was an excellent initiative.
- He gave the following suggestions to be considered for discussion during the meeting:
  - The steering committee should consult and consider to make some adjustments to the project completion date for *icipe* since AU-IBAR started its activities 6 months later
  - The steering committee should address the challenge being faced by project countries including Liberia
  - The steering committee should reflect on sustainability i.e. satellite laboratories in project countries serving as regional laboratories as well
- All members were in agreement that the above issues should be discussed.
- In ending his opening remarks, the chair thanked the EU for its support to the Bee Health project and reiterated the commitment of the African Union in collaborating with *icipe*.

## 2. Review and Adoption of Agenda

- The chair suggested that review and adoption of the agenda should be included as the second item on the agenda. With agreement from all members, it was included and the agenda was rearranged such that reporting by TAC chair was placed before presentation of 1<sup>st</sup> year financial report. With that, the agenda was unanimously adopted.

## 3. Approval of Minutes of Last Meeting

- The chair said the minutes should have been more elaborate, especially Min 2. Dr. Bastiaesen corrected the last item of Min 6 to read OIE instead of TAC. The minutes of the last meeting were adopted.

#### 4. Matters Arising from Minutes of Last Meeting

- It was noted that since the last meeting where it was reported that the Project Agreement between *icipe* and Cameroon had not been signed, the situation was still the same. The chair therefore asked for suggestions on the way forward. Dr. Simplicie Nouala suggested that the project agreement that was sent to Cameroon should be retrieved and a new one sent through AU-IBAR. This, he said, was because the delay in signing the agreement might have been caused by the fact that Cameroon had not worked with *icipe* before and they were still weighing the pros and cons of working with the organization. On the other hand, AU-IBAR is known to Cameroon and it might be easier for them to sign the document if it went through AU-IBAR. He added that the document has had to go through a long process in Cameroon and last year in August he received a message that it had been sent to the office of the President. Dr. Nouala further suggested that payment can be made directly for those activities that can be implemented without the project agreement.
- Prof. Raina responded by saying that according to *icipe* regulations, it is not possible to send money without the agreement. David Mwenda (*icipe* accounts department) agreed with Prof. Raina.
- The members agreed on the following concerning Cameroon:
  - It was agreed that Cameroon should be given a timeline of February, 2015 and if the agreement will not have been signed by then, the Steering Committee would take practical steps to assist Cameroon sign the project agreement either through *icipe* or AU-IBAR. This should be done before the next steering committee meeting.
  - There would be no change of country because part of the project funds had already been invested in Cameroon.

*[Action point: icipe and AU-IBAR to take steps to assist Cameroon to sign the project agreement and report in the next steering committee meeting]*

- Under min 6, it was noted that presentations and other preparatory materials were not circulated in advance. Prof. Raina told members that the delay was caused by the fact that the date of the meeting was confirmed very late by AU-IBAR and the report from AU-IBAR was sent to him a few days before the meeting. Members agreed that the tentative date of the next meeting would be decided in the current meeting, after which the actual date would be fixed based on consultations. The materials would therefore be sent out as per the TORs, i.e. at least 10 days before the date decided in the meeting.

*[Action point: icipe scientists, AU-IBAR and country coordinators to submit presentations and reports to Team Leader one month before the SC meeting to enable secretariat to send out preparatory materials to members within the time stipulated in the TORs]*

## 5. Presentation of 1<sup>st</sup> Year Technical Report

- The project Team Leader Prof. Raina presented the 1<sup>st</sup> year technical report as annexed. Among the milestones in the report was the fact that the African Reference Laboratory for Bee Health at icipe, Nairobi had been launched the previous day and was now operational.

## 6. TAC Report on Technical Progress of Project

Dr. Langevelde gave the TAC report on behalf of the TAC chair Prof. Robin Moritz who was not able to attend the meeting.

- He said the TAC noted that the overall project progress was impressive. They hoped that all those involved in the project would work together to make better progress.
- He recommended that project scientists should inquire and get information from TAC scientists on the right sample sizes to be used. In addition, he said that TAC expects a lot from the newly opened reference laboratory e.g. publications from the project scientists should be given first priority and TAC expects a few publications by the next SC virtual meeting (April, 2015).
- He also reported that the TAC recommended that the reference laboratory should be utilized well to achieve results and if need be, the project should consider increasing the human resource.
- He noted that in their presentations, the scientists made reference to time constraints which was an indication that they were doing well. It was also a pointer that more human resource is needed, which would be a tradeoff for spending more time.

*[Action point: project scientists to give priority to publications and have a few done by the next steering committee meeting]*

## 7. Presentation of icipe 1<sup>st</sup> Year Financial Report

- In his presentation of the 1<sup>st</sup> year financial report, the icipe Project Accounts Manager, Patrick Ndiangui began by saying that the finance department was facing a challenge with the report, given that none of the partners had submitted their reports. He said the auditors needed proof that partners have contributed as per project agreements, thus it was important for project countries to give detailed financial reports that include all their contributions.

- Patrick then gave the consolidated icipe financial report that included Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia and Liberia; and a separate report for Madagascar. This, he said, was because the Madagascar budget was initially not part of the project but it was a special request by the EU Brussels.
- He noted that funds had not been transferred to Cameroon because there was no project agreement.
- He further told all partners to note that there would be no transfer of funds until they had accounted for previous transfers.
- Patrick reminded the partners that while reporting, they should reflect contribution by their respective governments, consumables, honey collection centers etc. This should be done every year.
- He further reported that the finance department had only received one request from Liberia for the purchase of the vehicle. He said *icipe* had sent derogation to the EU concerning the Liberia vehicle but there was no feedback yet.
- Ethiopia on the other hand had specified the vehicle model i.e. Toyota, in their bid documents. This is against EU regulations, thus they were advised to give general specifications of the vehicle needed and restart the process. (Annex 1st year financial report)

*[Action point: Project partner countries to include their government contributions in their reports and those whose funds have already been disbursed to finalize purchase of project vehicles]*

## **8. Discussions**

- The chair proposed two issues to be discussed as follows:
  - Adjustments in project timeframe to be done in view of the fact that AU-IBAR signed the agreement 6 months late
  - Status of the satellite laboratories, especially with regard to Cameroon and Liberia

### *Finance*

- Patrick Ndiangui informed the committee that the finance department has not been able to get in touch with the satellite stations, which is a challenge in terms of financial reporting.
- The chair responded by saying that it should be noted that the EU has stringent rules, thus even if funds have been spent but no report submitted, the EU will consider that as ineligible expenditure. He therefore advised that financial rules should be strictly observed according to agreements and all partner contributions clearly reported.

- It was agreed that if there are enough funds, the finance department should organize to train accountants working with the Bee Health Project in the project countries. The training can be conducted anywhere for about 2 days, after which the accounts department will conduct follow-ups with the countries. It was therefore necessary for the countries to identify the key accountants working on the project and recommend them for the financial training. Those recommended will be invited for training by *icipe*, after which they can train more staff in their countries.
- The committee was in agreement that the training should be organized before November 30<sup>th</sup> 2014.
- The chair reiterated that the training should focus on the main finance people in the countries but during follow-ups, other staff can be involved.
- Dr. Bastiaesen said he was looking forward to seeing *icipe* financial report as well in the next meeting.

*[Action points: countries to identify key accountants working with the Bee Health project and recommend them to icipe for training; icipe to organize and facilitate training for those recommended, to be done by 30<sup>th</sup> November, 2014; icipe finance department to make follow ups with individual countries in the course of the project]*

#### Liberia

- The committee noted that the Ebola situation in Liberia was affecting implementation of project activities in the country. In view of this, it was agreed that *icipe* and AU-IBAR should find a way of supporting Liberia such that implementation of project activities will continue. The support should be customized according to the circumstances on the ground. A progress report should be given in the next meeting.

*[Action point: icipe and AU-IBAR to take steps to assist Liberia to continue with project activities and report in the next steering committee meeting]*

#### Project Timeframe

- Dr. Nouala told the committee that AU-IBAR signed the agreement with the EU 6 months late. He noted that this was causing a delay to *icipe* because there are some activities like the technical report preparation and onsite training to the beekeepers that *icipe* can implement only after AU-IBAR has implemented their project activities.
- He suggested that the Steering Committee should propose to the EU a no cost extension of the project to *icipe* and the team leader was requested to initiate the process as soon as possible.

The committee was in agreement that immediate action should be taken to request the EU for a no cost extension.

*[Action point: Team Leader request EU for a no cost extension of the project for icipe]*

#### Satellite Laboratories

- The committee decided that the satellite laboratories should position themselves to serve as regional laboratories and not just the specific project countries.
- It was agreed that icipe and AU-IBAR need to start engaging the RECs about the satellite laboratories so that they feel involved in the labs as this will make it easier for the labs to function at regional levels. The committee tasked *icipe* and AU-IBAR to visit the RECs and start engaging them about the labs. This should be the action plan for phase 2 of the project with scaling up activities.

The chair said there was need for a sensitization and awareness program on the satellite labs. He suggested that icipe should prepare a two page summary on the project and the role of the satellite labs, which will be attached to letters to the RECs and countries, informing them that the satellite labs are there to serve the interest of the regions. Members agreed with the suggestion and it was decided that the SC chair together with icipe will write to the RECs and the countries. It was also agreed that there should be a document that specifies which countries will be served by specific satellite labs. Guidelines should also be developed to be shared and agreed upon by the coordinators once the satellite labs are operational.

*[Action point: icipe and AU-IBAR to start engaging RECs about the satellite labs; icipe to prepare summary of project and role of satellite labs to be used for sensitization and awareness programs to the RECs and countries; icipe and AU-IBAR to prepare document that specifies countries to be served by each satellite lab; icipe and AU-IBAR (in consultation with country coordinators) to prepare operational guidelines for the labs]*

#### Challenges

- Prof. Raina said the *icipe* Bee Health technical team under the research coordination of Prof. Torto and development coordination by Dr. Nguku is very capable thus he did not anticipate any major hitches in the process of implementation except in the area of procurement, which is due to procedures put in place. He said he is confident that in 6 months time there will be a good scientific technical report.
- Dr. Nouala informed the committee that when AU-IBAR started the policy activities, they sent a request to the EU to have an additional staff since the Project Officer/Coordinator is an entomologist and they are still awaiting a response. Concerning training, he said some member states had requested further TOT training but according to the project document, there was provision for TOT training only in the

1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> years. The committee agreed as per Dr. Mbahin's suggestion that the request for further training by some countries will be done in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year on need basis.

#### Madagascar

- The chair sought to know how Madagascar fits into the project and how it was selected. Prof. Raina explained that the EU made a special request to include Madagascar in the project based on the situation on the ground. Some funds had to be adjusted from the budget to cater for that, which is why the Madagascar budget is different from the other countries. He added that the IFAD grant for Island nations will soon be approved and Madagascar is one of the countries that will be on board. He said that when the grant is approved, the Madagascar Country Coordinator will be informed. Prof. Raina also informed the committee that there was a plan to involve Southern Africa and North Africa in the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the project.

#### Reference laboratory and Samples

- Dr. Bastiaesen asked what had been done about the problem of sending samples from countries. Prof. Raina said permits had been acquired for 5 countries at a cost of ksh. 600 each, valid for 6 months.
- Dr. Nouala said the reference lab is a continental lab and needs to have an agreement with countries such that there should be no issues with sending samples. He added that people think it is an *icipe* facility, thus there should be a summary on how to view and manage the reference lab. He also said that standards should be set on how the lab operates as a continental lab and how samples from countries should be handled.
- The committee agreed that the secretariat should come up with a proposal on how the reference lab can best position itself as a continental lab and receive samples from countries. This should be presented in the next meeting.
- Prof. Raina explained that *icipe* had opted to take a few permits at a time and given DHL numbers to all participating countries (47) to charge postal fees on *icipe* account.

*[Action point: secretariat to come up with proposal on how best the reference lab can work as a continental lab and easily receive samples from countries and report in the next steering committee meeting]*

#### Role of Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

- Dr. Bastiaesen said that *icipe* and AU-IBAR needs to clearly define the role and mode of communication with TAC because the TAC feels underutilized.
- The chair responded by saying that the comment should have been included in the TAC report to the SC. He however agreed that *icipe* and AU-IBAR should find a way

of improving communication with TAC. He added that the role of TAC as per the TOR should be clear.

- Dr. Nouala said the TORs are clear about the role of TAC and they specify that the SC and TAC meetings should be back to back, but the means of communication is not clear.
- It was agreed that *icipe* and AU-IBAR should come up with modalities on how to work with TAC and present these in the next meeting.
- Dr. Bastiaesen said the TAC would be happy to know how they can participate more in the SC.
- The Steering Committee was in agreement that it was a challenge for RECs to attend SC meetings. The chair and members agreed that in future, the composition of the SC should be carefully designed based on what it is that the project wants to achieve, whether they are stakeholders and if they see value in participating. The updated list of the SC members should be sent to the chair for approval.

*[Action point: icipe and AU-IBAR to come up with modalities on how to communicate and work with TAC and report in the next steering committee meeting; the two organizations should also consult on how best to update the SC membership]*

#### **9. Date of Next Meeting**

- The next meeting will be virtual and will take place in April, 2015.
- Dr. Nouala said the meeting can be organized in such a way that it runs for about 3 days. Documents will have been sent out in advance and members send feedback by email within the first two days. The virtual meeting can then take place on the last day.

*[Action point: members to inform icipe and AU-IBAR their availability in April, 2015 to facilitate the setting of meeting dates in consultation with the chair]*

#### **10. Vote of Thanks**

- The vote of thanks was given by Evelyn Khamala. She thanked the chair for making time out of his busy schedule to come and chair the meeting. She also thanked members for availing themselves for the meeting and for all their contributions; and added that she hoped members would stay in touch to share ideas that will have positive impacts on the project. She wished them pleasant journeys on their way back to their various destinations.

The meeting ended at 18.05hrs.