



Beans



Chickpeas



Cowpeas



Cassava

GCP's concept on communities of practice

October 2011

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Introduction

GCP's mission is 'Using genetic diversity and advanced plant science to improve crops for greater food security in the developing world'. To realise this mission and sustain it beyond the Programme's lifetime, GCP is working on establishing Communities of Practice (CoPs) for the most important food security crops. CoPs are meant to connect a group of crop researchers – primarily breeders – whose nucleus will be existing users of the Integrated Breeding Platform (IBP). CoP members will be willing to share experiences, information and tools on modern breeding methods and data management, best field practice and improved varieties with a larger community. Establishing a high level of communication and collaboration within a community will avoid duplication of efforts, trigger optimum utilisation of resources and orient research towards a more applied path. CoPs will require enhanced support and capacity, for which GCP will provide tailored capacity development in human resources and infrastructure, as well as technical backstopping.



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General terms of reference for CoPs

Though the specifics will vary given the unique needs of each proposed community of practice, the general terms of reference for a CoP are:

- Promoting interaction, building alliances and facilitating co-ordination and synergy of research initiatives by members
- Mapping existing knowledge and identifying gaps for proactive interventions
- Promoting innovation by creating new knowledge and developing new capabilities
- Facilitating information- and experience-sharing for problem solving
- Participatory building of a shared repertoire of resources, tools and methodologies
- Standardising professional practices by leveraging best practice

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Setting up the CoPs

How do we group individuals into CoPs?

Given our focus on breeding, we have opted on mainly grouping by crop or crop-group as our primary system. This will allow members of a given CoP to have relevant interactions and exchanges given that they may share the same challenges, constraints and aspirations for their particular crop or crop-group. One exception to this grouping is the data management CoP which is discipline-based.

Who qualifies for CoP Membership?

Members will be accomplished scientists, emerging young scientists, associates, PhD students and specialised technicians, who would all benefit from the discussion forums, learning materials, online training, informatics tools and interactive helpdesks.



Driving the CoPs

Members of the CoPs will be linked through many ways including: the management team composed of a coordinator and a mentor, a website with a social networking component and workspace, online meetings, face-to-face meetings and joint projects.

Benefits in participating in the community

The CoP will add professional value to members as individuals, and also to their work and that of the teams they belong to. Most of the CoP services will be offered through the IBP web portal. These services will be a mix of various integrated breeding services, capacity-building opportunities, technical support, helpdesks, online and downloadable informatics tools, and social networking. They will include:

- Forum or social space where community members will exchange ideas, methods, best practice, advances in technologies.
- An ordering service for germplasm of interest
- Breeding support service that will provide do-it-yourself (DIY) templates for breeders to design their schemes
- Training opportunities including both face-to-face and online (data handling, data management, data analysis, small bioinformatics, mapping, etc)
- Orientation for resource mobilisation and networking, including providing tips and templates for writing concept notes and proposals.
- Support for CoP members to carry out genotyping through the Genotyping Support Service or Marker Service of the IBP.
- Improving phenotyping infrastructure for CoP initiatives within existing budget.



- Travel grants to cover intra-CoP exchange visits.
- A resource centre for various documents such as reports, learning materials and key articles on the CoP's area of interest.
- Priority consideration of CoP members for human resource development opportunities.

What to give back to the community

CoP members should give back to the community by participating in the forum of discussion, and by providing information to their peers when suitable.

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The road behind us

During Phase I, GCP established two successful CoPs – one for rice breeders in the Mekong region in Asia and another for cassava breeders in Africa. Both these CoPs evolved around formal research projects. We envisage they will grow to span Southeast Asia for rice, and sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America for cassava.

As of September 2011, an additional four CoPs were in existence: data management established February 2010, while the chickpeas CoP and a joint one for cowpeas and soyabeans were both launched in May 2011. The latest addition is the sorghum CoP launched in September 2011.

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The road ahead

In GCP Phase II, three other CoPs are to be launched building on outputs generated through GCP projects. They include one for rice in Africa, and two others for beans and maize. The rice in Africa CoP and the beans CoP will be built on existing networks – the Breeding Task Force of AfricaRice and the Pan-African Bean Research Alliance (PABRA). The maize CoP will be based on GCP and CIMMYT networks while sorghum will be established on the basis of GCP's network.