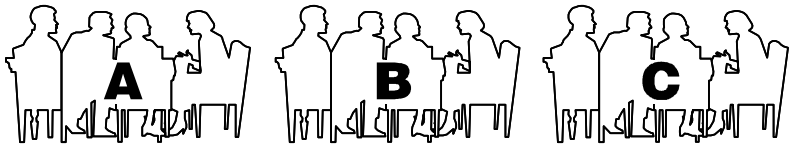
Exercise 12. Developing Goals, Priorities and Strategies for Plant Genetic Resources of the Republic of Tanwanbia: A Hypothetical Case

(role-playing technique)

The aim of this exercise is to apply the provisions of the international legal and policy instruments covered in the module to a concrete national situation, thus enabling trainees to develop a national strategy, action plan or program on genetic resources for a national public institution responsible for science and technology policies.

Phase 1. Defining roles (15 minutes)

1. Form three groups of participants.



2. The groups will work on the hypothetical case below and will play the following roles:

   - **Group A** plays the role of Visionary International Consultancy Partners. The group prepares a presentation (using a flipchart) to *convince* the audience that its proposal is the best. It will enhance the performance of the National Committee and will make the national activities concerning plant genetic resources related to food and agriculture highly successful. The group can use all sorts of arguments, including their own experience, concepts, assumptions, etc.

   - **Group B** plays the role of a competitor (the Zenith Global Consultancy Group). The group prepares a presentation (using a flipchart) to *convince* the audience that its proposal is better than Group A's proposal. They will argue that their proposal will not only enhance the performance of the National Committee and make the activities highly successful, but also that it will restore public confidence in the Minister's proactive and innovative performance.

   - **Group C** plays the role of the National Committee chaired by the Minister.

     (a) The group members agree on the criteria for deciding which proposal is best.

     (b) The group listens attentively to the two proposals in order to make a decision.

(c) The group examines the pros and cons of the proposals presented by Groups A and B.

(d) Finally, the group votes, on the basis of the credibility of the proposals.

Phase 2. Preparing for the meeting (60 minutes)

3. Groups A and B prepare a presentation to convince Group C that their proposal is best. (50 minutes)
4. Group C meets to discuss the hypothetical case thoroughly so they can judge the proposals to be presented by Groups A and B.
5. The hypothetical case presents the following situation:

Visionary International Consultancy Partners and the Zenith Global Consultancy Group have been invited by the National Committee of the Ministry of Science and Technology to review all national activities concerning plant genetic resources related to food and agriculture, with the aim of developing goals, priorities and strategies on the subject for the Ministry of Science and Technology of the Republic of Tanwanbia.

The Minister has announced that the company that prepares the best review and develops the best goal, priorities and strategies will be nominated permanent adviser to the National Committee.

Keep in mind that the Minister of Science wishes to receive the conclusions in point form by tomorrow (and she is not joking—she does not know much about the subject, but a newspaper article embarrassed the Ministry and now she wants action—so you are feeling the heat).

Make sure that your report is presented in point form on one page and contains the following:

- a review of all national activities concerning plant genetic resources related to food and agriculture
- goals
- priorities
- strategies
- immediate actions that should be taken by the National Committee

Tanwanbia is a developing country in the southern Africa. It has typical farming systems and average per capita income for the region. The population is predominantly rural, but the urban centres are growing rapidly. The official language is English, though 36 indigenous languages are spoken. The country has a significant national debt, but its credit rating is good and the government is reasonably stable. There are several opposition parties.

There is a national genebank (and a small botanical garden) on the campus of the main university. It has five chest freezers. There is no seed drier, but perhaps a $3000 model might be obtained from a donor if a good proposal were written. There are 5000 accessions in the genebank, covering 69 species. Most of the material was collected in

Tanwanbia, but there are gaps in the collection (chiefly from the central arid region). Tanwanbia is a centre of diversity for two globally minor crops.

The genebank collection has relatively good, though basic, passport information. Approximately 30% of the collection has been characterized. Some 10% (mostly two crops) has been evaluated. The genebank maintains good written records containing this information.

There are two research stations in the country, one in the North and one in the extreme Southwest. These stations have 25 breeders (nine with PhDs working on four crops. There has been some recent private sector activity: three companies are importing seed for the commercial agricultural sector. One NGO is engaged in on-farm management projects in three communities. Others are involved in various agricultural development projects (irrigation, appropriate technology, market development, etc.)

The genebank director ha participated in international negotiations at FAO and your country has signed and plans to ratify the IT. An Environment Ministry official has represented Tanwanbia at the meetings of the Convention on Biological Diversity to which it is a Party. The genebank director also attends yearly regional network meetings.

Yearly budget allocations have remained steady in real terms for two years. The general state of the national economy is not particularly positive. Education and health care have been hit hard by budget cuts.

Phase 3. Conducting the Review (2 hours)

In preparation, the furniture is arranged in a U-form to accommodate Group C sitting as Chair at the top of the U, with the other two groups on either side.

Role-Play:

1. Group A is invited by the Chair to present its proposal. (10 minutes)

2. Group B is invited by the Chair to present its proposal. (10 minutes)

3. Both groups — A and B — are given the chance to share views before debating. (15 minutes)

4. Both groups — A and B — are given a chance to debate. (10 minutes)

5. Group C asks questions for clarification. (15 minutes)

6. Group C meets to discuss the proposals while Groups A and B list the lessons learned from the debate. They use flipcharts to record their lessons (15 minutes)

7. Group C can ask additional questions, if necessary, before the members vote (by secret ballot) and announce the results. They provide feedback on the proposals and how and why they came to their conclusions. (15 minutes)

8. Groups A and B present the lessons learned, give comments on the results of the session, and provide feedback on the process of this exercise. (15 minutes)

9. The trainer invites the participants to continue the discussion by relating this case to their own national programmes on genetic resources management. (10 minutes)

10. The trainer distributes handout 5.12.4 (practical considerations for exercise 12), provides feedback on the effectiveness of the exercise and closes the session. (5 minutes)

Exercise 12. Worksheet

Practical Considerations for Exercise 12

(to be distributed after the exercise has been completed)

After doing this exercise, participants are able to apply the provisions of the international legal and policy instruments covered in the module to a concrete national situation.

General approach:

When dealing with practical problems such as those posed in this exercise, we realize that many of the real challenges faced by national programmes cannot be met primarily by policy/legal tools. This is probably especially true of the notion that local farmer varieties and associated indigenous knowledge should be protected by intellectual property rights. When faced with a practical situation, how many participants offered IPRs as a solution or strategy? What does this tell us?

Trainees should clarify what is the policy goal a country like Tanwanbia should pursue, taking into account its social, economic, cultural, scientific and ecological situation. Sometimes, decision makers are inclined to propose very (sometimes overly) ambitious goals that will in reality, not be possible, given the country's situation. It is important to relate the policy goal to baseline information that might be available in regards to Tanwanbia and, based on this, agree on a policy goal that could lead to realizable actions and activities.

Specific observations:

What is the policy and legal context? This is the foundation and legal ground upon which a national strategy for PGRFA can be developed and implemented. Trainees should be able to identify not only the CBD and IT as possible justifications to their strategy development process, but also other instruments (regional or national) and specific provisions within them.

Is a sectoral strategy or policy required, or a more general PGRFA policy? In the case of Tanwanbia, it is the Ministry of Science and Technology that is requesting advice on PGRFA. Trainees should take into account that issues related to PGRFA cross-cut a number of areas (agriculture, research and technology, rural development, finances, health, etc.) and more than one ministry may have competence on different aspects of PGRFA. In this particular situation, it is important to think about this broad scenario and the different legal provisions that might be applicable or relevant, and a more focused scenario that addresses the scientific and technological needs that are of particular interest to the Ministry.

What could the Ministry's more specific interests be and how do these relate to the CBD and/or IT? There may be an interest to strengthen the *ex situ* collection (genebank). This might require evaluating the type of materials conserved (are they covered by the IT?) and

whether there is a demand for them (MTAs?). This interest may also relate to provisions for technology transfer in the IT and the CBD itself. On the other hand, the Ministry may want to promote much more solid partnerships between the public research sector and private institutions to develop and breed better varieties suited for Tanwanbia's environment and ecosystems. This may also relate to CBD and IT benefit-sharing provisions and to laws governing public/private investment in the country. Regional cooperation could be an interesting possibility, which would also imply assessing regional (ABS?) instruments that might have an impact on building regional partnerships. The exercise offers a wide range of possibilities and avenues to explore and propose general and/or more concrete policy goals and specific actions to achieve these goals.

Basic considerations to keep in mind:

1. The Tanwanbia exercise is 'tailor-made' to produce proposals for regional or crop-based cooperation. Did the participants take advantage of this possibility?
2. Were the participants willing to propose reasonable, rational solutions? Were they willing to make hard decisions?
3. There are few correct answers for this exercise. Nevertheless, there are probably some incorrect answers! Doing everything, collecting everything, breeding everything – these are all examples of approaches that not even the best and most generously funded national programme could afford. Certainly, they are not an option for Tanwanbia.
4. Should Tanwanbia focus on its major crops? Advantage: They are major. Disadvantages: Everyone else is working on them; Tanwanbia has no comparative advantage; and Tanwanbia may be able to benefit from the work of others, particularly if it is in the international public domain. Should Tanwanbia focus instead on indigenous crops where there would be potential for big gains? Perhaps. Perhaps not. In any case, how much money should go into conserving crops that are not undergoing improvement? How much does Tanwanbia want to spend to operate a frozen museum of such materials? Could it encourage someone else to conserve them (under appropriate agreements specifying ownership and access)?