

## **The PNG ICBG Recognized as a “Best Practices” Example of ABS in the Pacific.**

Several scholars in Australia are involved in the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol. Most are concerned that the Nagoya Protocol’s explicit description of source country rights and responsibilities positively influences current practices of the Convention on Biodiversity in developing countries of the Southern and Western Pacific. One of the first studies to be published in this area is titled: **Towards Access and Benefit-Sharing Best Practice; Pacific Case Studies**, by Professor Daniel Robinson of UNSW. This specific study “was commissioned by the Commonwealth Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (DSEWPaC), funded by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), and supported by the GIZ-implemented multi-donor ABS Capacity Development Initiative.”

As described in the posted work: “Four case studies from the Pacific were selected to demonstrate some of the attributes that would be expected of ‘best practice’ biological research (often broadly described as ‘biodiscovery’) access and benefit-sharing agreements, as well as the challenges that stakeholders face in seeking to achieve the fair and equitable sharing of benefits.” The PNG ICBG is one of the Case Studies selected and serves as a positive example of collaboration between institutions of developed and developing partner countries. It was rewarding for us personally to contribute the requested records and files to facilitate Dr. Robinson’s important work. Furthermore, it is certainly gratifying to be recognized internationally as a success story by those who are working on the global effort to implement the aspirations embodied in the Nagoya Protocol and the Convention on Biodiversity. The ICBG will continue to provide good examples of best practices (see below). In addition, the ICBG will continue to provide strategic support to initiatives that promote the adoption of protocols that ensure PNG meets its sustainable development and conservation goals. **The pdf of Dr. Robinson’s study is attached here.**

Here is an example of a recent small success story that provides us continued inspiration: Our “school fund donations” and “appreciation gifts” are considered as benefits to our collaborating communities that can have short, medium or long term benefits. However, the lasting benefits really depend on the wisdom and foresight of the community’s leadership to come to fruition. Sometimes it is difficult for us to picture specific benefits beyond maybe new text books or essay pads, or deferred housing or food costs for the targeted children from “school fund donations”; or the local benefit of a specific improvement such as a water tank or civic meeting hall, etc., from the “appreciation gifts”. In late 2010, we conducted a botanical recollection visit to PNG’s Cape Rodney (Cloudy Bay and Amazon LLGs of Abau district). Cape Rodney was one of the first regions visited by the PNG ICBG botanical collecting team in 2003. We were pleasantly surprised by how lasting and important our small donation turned out to be for our collaborators. The community invested our “appreciation gift” in a new school

house. The school house is in heavy use today and is a magnet for children from surrounding communities as well. It is situated next to the road on beautifully manicured grounds and playing fields. It is very reassuring to revisit a partner community after seven years and learn that they had thoughtfully invested our donations in their community's future for the betterment of all. This is, of course, our hope for all our partner communities, and we have not yet been disappointed! It is true that small investments can reap big rewards.



**Merani village school house built with ICBG “appreciation gift” in 2003-4.**

On the other hand, there was also a down side to the expedition. It was disheartening to see that some of the areas in which our team had conducted botanical collection in 2003 had been logged and converted to agriculture in the interim. Conservation in PNG continues to be challenged by extractive industries. We hope implementation of the Nagoya Protocol and the Convention on Biodiversity with all their ramifications will help lead to a comprehensive approach to the sustainable utilization and conservation of PNG's remarkable biological diversity.