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**“Impact Assessment of ABSP-I: Training Related to the
Establishment of Intellectual Property Rights Policy and
Regulatory Framework”**

Mywish Maredia

Karim Maredia

James Oehmke¹

ABSTRACT

Through funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Agricultural Biotechnology Support Project (ABSP-I) at Michigan State University (MSU) was implemented from 1991 to 2003 to build capacity in developing countries in the development, use and management of agricultural biotechnology. Originally emphasizing biotechnology research needed to make transgenic crops suitable for developing countries, it soon became clear that the technical obstacles were easily overcome but the policy obstacles were much less tractable. The project evolved to take an integrated approach to capacity building, including policy, research, networking and management components. Perhaps the most critical theme encountered was intellectual property rights issues, both from the perspective of putting necessary intellectual property rights regimes in place and in terms of accessing the necessary proprietary intellectual properties such as favorable gene sequences, insertion mechanisms, and promoters.

This paper focuses on the first of the intellectual property rights issues, namely that of putting the necessary policy and regulatory frameworks in place. In order to advance this agenda, ABSP-I, invested in local and international training programs and provided consultants to developing countries to help write and establish legal procedures for

¹ Contact author: James Oehmke, Dept. of Agricultural Economics, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824. Phone +1 517-353-2981 Fax +1 517 432-1800 Email oehmke@msu.edu

intellectual property protection. These investments included bringing developed-country scientists and administrators to the United States for three-week short courses, holding one or two day seminars in-country, matching international legal scholars with developing countries to draft language appropriate to the countries' needs and legal institutions, and seminars to increase local decision makers (such as Ministers of Agriculture or Trade) about the need for and use of intellectual property protection for agricultural biotechnology.

The paper presents results of a 2004-5 survey of participants in these training activities. The primary objective of this survey was to determine if the training had an impact on the nature of intellectual property protection in the attendees' countries, or if it had an impact on the way in which agricultural researchers approached intellectual property issues. Survey results are currently being tabulated, and the Ravello conference will be the premiere event at which we plan to disseminate results.