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# India's Access and Benefit Sharing Framework Crosses Rs 266 Crore

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ENVIRONMENT

GS3

CURATED &amp; WRITTEN BY

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# India's Access and Benefit Sharing Framework Crosses Rs 266 Crore

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## WHY IN NEWS

The National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) disclosed in June 2026 that India's Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) mechanism has mobilised over from users of biological resources since 2008, of which around **Rs 145 crore** has been disbursed to more than 10,500 Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs), farmers, researchers and institutions. The NBA realised **Rs 21.26 crore** in FY 2025-26 alone, signalling deepening industry participation in India's biodiversity governance framework.

## WHAT IS ACCESS AND BENEFIT SHARING (ABS)?

Access and Benefit Sharing is the principle that those who **access** genetic resources and the **traditional knowledge** associated with them must **share fairly and equitably** the benefits arising from their utilisation with the communities and country that conserved them. It is the operational backbone of the third objective of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

## The global architecture: CBD and the Nagoya Protocol

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INSTRUMENT	YEAR	SIGNIFICANCE FOR ABS
Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)	Adopted 1992 (Rio Earth Summit), in force 1993	Three objectives: conservation, sustainable use, and <b>fair and equitable</b> ( <a href="https://ujiyari.com/vocab/equitable/">https://ujiyari.com/vocab/equitable/</a> ) <b>sharing of benefits</b> from genetic resources
Bonn Guidelines	2002	First voluntary, non-binding framework on ABS implementation
Nagoya Protocol ( <a href="https://ujiyari.com/terms/nagoya-protocol/">https://ujiyari.com/terms/nagoya-protocol/</a> ) on ABS	Adopted 2010 (Nagoya, Japan), in force 12 October 2014	Legally binding supplementary agreement to the CBD; operationalises the third objective through Prior Informed Consent (PIC) and Mutually Agreed Terms (MAT)
Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework	Adopted 2022 (CBD COP15)	Sets Target 13 on ABS and establishes a multilateral ( <a href="https://ujiyari.com/vocab/multilateral/">https://ujiyari.com/vocab/multilateral/</a> ) mechanism for benefit sharing from Digital Sequence Information (DSI)

India is a party to the CBD and ratified the Nagoya Protocol. India submitted its **first national report on the Nagoya Protocol** in 2026, showcasing the ABS mechanism as a flagship achievement.

### Key concepts

- **Prior Informed Consent (PIC):** access to a genetic resource requires the prior, informed consent of the provider country or community.
- **Mutually Agreed Terms (MAT):** the terms of benefit sharing are negotiated and agreed between the user and the provider.
- **Genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge** are the two pillars over which benefit-sharing claims arise.

## THE BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY ACT, 2002 AND THE 2023 AMENDMENT

India enacted the **Biological Diversity Act, 2002** (<https://ujiyari.com/terms/biological-diversity-act/>) to give effect to its CBD obligations. The Act regulates access to biological resources, protects traditional knowledge, and establishes the institutional machinery for benefit sharing.

### The Biological Diversity (Amendment) Act, 2023

The amendment was passed to ease compliance burdens and encourage cultivation of medicinal plants, while keeping conservation goals intact. Salient features:

- **Eased compliance for AYUSH practitioners** and cultivators of medicinal plants, exempting registered AYUSH practitioners and codified traditional knowledge from certain ABS approvals.
- **Decriminalised offences** under the Act, replacing imprisonment with monetary penalties adjudicated by an authority.
- Encouraged **Indian companies** by distinguishing them from foreign-controlled entities for the purpose of approvals.
- Brought greater regulatory clarity for research, bio-survey and commercial utilisation.

*Critics flagged that easing ABS approvals for the AYUSH sector could weaken benefit flows to communities; the government argued it removes friction without diluting the conservation mandate (<https://ujiyari.com/vocab/mandate/>).*

## THE THREE-TIER INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE

ABS in India operates through a decentralised three-tier structure, with the NBA headquartered in **Chennai**, Tamil Nadu.

TIER	BODY	LEVEL	CORE ABS FUNCTION
National	<b>National Biodiversity Authority (NBA)</b>	Apex ( <a href="https://ujiyari.com/vocab/apex/">https://ujiyari.com/vocab/apex/</a> ) statutory body (estd. 2003, Chennai)	Regulates access by foreign citizens, NRIs and foreign-controlled bodies; grants approvals for IPR, third-party transfer and commercial utilisation; channels benefit sharing
State	<b>State Biodiversity Boards (SBBs)</b>	State	Regulate access by Indian citizens and companies for commercial use; advise State governments on conservation
Local	<b>Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs)</b>	Local body / Gram Panchayat	Document local biodiversity through People's Biodiversity Registers; primary recipients and stewards of benefit-sharing funds

## THE NUMBERS: WHAT ABS HAS DELIVERED

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INDICATOR	VALUE	DETAIL
Total ABS funds mobilised (since 2008)	<b>Over Rs 266 crore</b>	From research, commercial use, IPR, bio-survey and bio-utilisation approvals
Funds disbursed to beneficiaries	<b>About Rs 145 crore</b>	Reached communities across the country
Beneficiary BMCs	<b>10,500+</b>	Across 23 States and 4 Union Territories
Other beneficiaries	230+ farmers, 6 State Forest Departments, various institutions	Plus researchers and conservation bodies
Realised in FY 2025-26	<b>Rs 21.26 crore</b>	Largest annual realisation, reflecting rising industry participation

### Sector-wise contribution in FY 2025-26

SECTOR	CONTRIBUTION (FY 2025-26)
Seed sector	Rs 11.75 crore (largest)
AYUSH	Rs 5.56 crore
Nutraceuticals	Rs 1.40 crore
Pharmaceuticals	Rs 1.18 crore
Others (biotech, cosmetics, chemical, biofuel, food and beverage)	Remaining share

**Red Sanders** (*Pterocarpus santalinus*, a red-listed endemic (<https://ujjiyari.com/vocab/endemic/>) of the Eastern Ghats of Andhra Pradesh) and the **seed sector** have historically accounted for the largest benefit shares. Red Sanders, traded internationally and listed under CITES Appendix II and the IUCN Red List, generates significant ABS revenue when its biological resource is commercially utilised.

## PEOPLE'S BIODIVERSITY REGISTERS (PBRs)

A **People's Biodiversity Register (PBR)** is a community document, prepared by each BMC, recording the availability and knowledge of local biological resources, their medicinal uses and any other traditional knowledge associated with them.

- PBRs are the **evidentiary foundation** for benefit-sharing claims, ensuring that benefits flow back to the communities that documented and conserved a resource.

- ABS funds are used to **prepare and update PBRs**, document traditional knowledge, restore habitats, build local capacity and support sustainable livelihoods for rural and tribal communities.

## LINK TO THE KUNMING-MONTREAL GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

The **Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF)** (<https://ujijari.com/terms/kmgbf-kunming-montreal-biodiversity-framework/>), **2022**) sets **Target 13**: ensure fair and equitable sharing of benefits from genetic resources and digital sequence information, and substantially increase benefits shared by 2030. India's ABS mechanism is a direct domestic vehicle for delivering on Target 13, and the maturing of the framework, evidenced by the Rs 266 crore mobilised, positions India as a leading implementer of equitable biodiversity finance.

## ANALYSIS AND WAY FORWARD

India's ABS framework is among the most institutionally developed in the world, yet challenges remain. The bulk of realisation is concentrated in a few sectors (seed, AYUSH) and a few resources (Red Sanders); broadening the base will require better valuation of lesser-known resources and stronger PBR documentation. The 2023 amendment's exemptions for AYUSH practitioners must be monitored so that benefit flows to communities are not eroded.

### Way forward:

- **Strengthen BMCs** with funding, training and digital PBR tools so the local tier is not merely formal but functional.
- **Resolve the Digital Sequence Information (DSI) question** in line with the KMGBF multilateral mechanism, as genetic data increasingly substitutes for physical samples.
- **Streamline approvals** without diluting Prior Informed Consent and Mutually Agreed Terms.
- **Improve transparency** in how disbursed funds reach grassroots beneficiaries and translate into measurable conservation outcomes.

## UPSC RELEVANCE

- **Prelims:** CBD (1992) vs Nagoya Protocol (2010, in force 2014); the three-tier NBA-SBB-BMC structure; NBA headquarters at Chennai; Biological Diversity Act 2002 and its 2023 amendment; PIC and MAT; KMGBF Target 13 and DSI; Red Sanders status (CITES Appendix II, IUCN).
- **Mains (GS3):** "Access and Benefit Sharing is the bridge between biodiversity conservation and equity." Examine India's institutional framework and its effectiveness. Also relevant for biodiversity finance, traditional knowledge protection and India's CBD commitments.

- **Linkages:** Tie to the BIOFIN initiative on biodiversity finance, the Biological Diversity Act's penalty regime, and the broader debate on benefit sharing from genetic resources

## FACTS CORNER

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Biological Diversity Act, 2002: India's domestic law implementing the CBD; amended by the Biological Diversity (Amendment) Act, 2023 (<https://ujyari.com/legislation/biological-diversity-amendment-act-2023/>), which eased compliance for AYUSH practitioners and decriminalised offences.

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD): adopted at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit; three objectives include fair and equitable sharing of benefits.

Nagoya Protocol on ABS: adopted 2010, in force 12 October 2014; legally binding supplement to the CBD operationalising ABS through PIC and MAT.

National Biodiversity Authority (NBA): apex statutory (<https://ujyari.com/vocab/statutory/>) body, established 2003, headquartered at Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

Three-tier structure: NBA (national) → State Biodiversity Boards (state) → Biodiversity Management Committees (local), which maintain People's Biodiversity Registers.

Key figures: Over Rs 266 crore mobilised since 2008; about Rs 145 crore disbursed to 10,500+ BMCs; Rs 21.26 crore realised in FY 2025-26.

Largest benefit shares: Red Sanders (*Pterocarpus santalinus*, Eastern Ghats; CITES Appendix II) and the seed sector.

Kunming-Montreal GBF (2022): Target 13 on ABS and benefit sharing from Digital Sequence Information.

*Sources: National Biodiversity Authority (<https://nbaindia.org>), Press Information Bureau (<https://pib.gov.in>), Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (<https://moef.gov.in>)*

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