



United Nations
Environment Programme

UNEP-GEF Project for Building Capacity for Effective Participation in the Biosafety Clearing House



Global Environment
Facility

15, Chemin des Anémones, 1219 Châtelaine, Geneva, Switzerland

First Quarterly Progress Report on the UNEP-GEF Project for Capacity Building for Effective Participation in the Biosafety Clearing House (BCH) June 2004

Introduction

1. In March 2004, approval was given for a new UNEP–GEF project entitled “Building Capacity for Effective Participation in the Biosafety Clearing House (BCH) of the Cartagena Protocol”, hereafter referred to as the BCH project.
2. This project was developed as a direct response to the needs of the countries for access and management of the Biosafety Clearing House and in close collaboration with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). It was first presented to the GEF Council in the July 2003 inter-sessional meeting but, at the request of one GEF Council member, it was postponed and finally included in the work programme presented to the GEF Council meeting of November 2003. The November Council meeting approved the project in principle, and final clearance was received from the GEF Secretariat in March 2004.
3. The BCH project will assist 50 countries to participate in the BCH as established under Article 20 of the Cartagena Protocol. Eligible countries must have ratified or acceded to the Cartagena Protocol by the time of the first Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol (COP-MOP/1). Countries may not be beneficiaries of any GEF demonstration projects for implementation of their National Biosafety Frameworks.
4. At the time of COP-MOP/1, the number of eligible countries was 61. A list of eligible countries attached as Annex 1. These are 11 more than were originally envisioned in the project when it was presented to the GEF Council in November 2003.
5. Also, based on recommendations from COP-MOP/1, COP 7 gave guidance to expand the eligibility of the project to include all developing countries and countries with economies in transition which:
 - Are Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity; and
 - Provide clear political commitment towards becoming Parties to the Protocol through a written assurance to the Executive Secretary that the country will become a Party on completion of activities to be funded.
6. If decided by the GEF Council, this will potentially increase the number of eligible countries by another 90 to approximately 140.
7. During the GEF Council meeting in May 2004, the extension of the project to include countries based on the guidance of COP 7 was discussed. Para 61 of the Joint Summary of the Chairs cites “The GEFSEC and UNEP were requested to organize consultations of regional scientists and technical experts to advise on the project for building capacity for participation in the biosafety clearing house of the Cartagena Protocol before expanding the project pursuant to the guidance of the COP. The concerns expressed by Council Members about the GEF-financed biosafety projects should also be taken into consideration in developing proposals to expand the

project.” UNEP-GEF is seeking clarification from all partners possible to know how to proceed to enable currently non-eligible countries to benefit from the project.

8. In anticipation of the approval of the project by the GEF Council at its November 2003 session, the UNEP-GEF Biosafety Unit in November 2003 recruited a task manager for the project. In addition, an information-technology specialist has been identified and will start work from mid-June 2004.

9. Between January and February 2004, letters had been sent to the 61 countries informing them of their potential eligibility to participate in the new BCH project. As of mid-June 2004, 45 countries had sent letters from their GEF Focal Points indicating their interest in participating in this project.

10. In May 2004, a meeting of experts was convened to investigate various ways in which the development of the training programme for the BCH could be moved forward in an expeditious and efficient manner. The two-day deliberations by these experts raised a number of important issues in the methodology to be used by the BCH project in delivering training programmes to assist countries to set up, maintain and use BCHs, whether through the central portal or by setting up their own national BCHs. In accordance with the discussions in the workshop, the project design has been adjusted to reflect the concerns of the participants.

Background

11. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety entered into force on 11 September 2003, 90 days after the date of deposit of the fiftieth instrument of ratification by the Republic of Palau on 13 June 2003. Entry into Force of the Protocol means it is legally binding internationally as well as in the legal systems of consenting states. States are, therefore, obliged to comply with and implement all provisions of the Protocol.

12. Article 20 of the Protocol established a Biosafety Clearing-House in order to:

(a) Facilitate the exchange of scientific, technical, environmental and legal information on, and experience with, living modified organisms; and

(b) Assist Parties to implement the Protocol, taking into account the special needs of developing country Parties, in particular the least developed and small island developing States among them, and countries with economies in transition as well as countries that are centres of origin and centres of genetic diversity.

13. The Protocol requires that countries enter and manage their own data in the BCH. It is imperative, therefore, that all countries have the capacity—equipment, tools and training—to fulfill their obligations towards the BCH and take advantage of its benefits.

14. The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), following recommendations of the Intergovernmental Committee on the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (ICCP), launched a pilot version of the BCH in March 2001.

The Project

15. The BCH Capacity Building Project has been developed taking into account the recommendations of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Cartagena Protocol (ICCP), and was formulated based on the needs identified by countries on many occasions. It consists of the following two components:

- a) **Training Component:** A BCH training package will be developed in collaboration and in cooperation with many partners, including participating countries, donor governments and training organizations. Assistance at a country-level will be provided through regional experts trained through the project. It is envisioned that there will be 20 for the 50 countries experts (5 for each of the four world regions) currently participating in the project. These numbers will be scaled-up in proportion to the number of countries participating in the project. The regional experts will, in turn, deliver training at country-level and will offer assistance to countries in making their decision regarding national access to the BCH, and by providing hands-on assistance to operationalise the national BCH choice and to give follow up on such issues for a limited period.
- b) **Equipment Component:** This will create an enabling environment for Parties to meet their obligations for implementation of the Protocol, by providing participating countries with limited support for purchase of computer hardware and software for data storage and exchange (with the BCH) including over the Internet as well as by other means.

Current Status

16. The project received final approval in March 2004. A number of activities have already been on-going in order to start the project:

Developing Material for Training

17. It is envisioned that a training curriculum will be developed and delivered at a regional/sub-regional level and will be in a form usable by countries for their own BCH national workshops. The package will have several different components which would include:

- background material,
- interactive tools and tutorials,
- a BCH toolkit,
- user-friendly computer based training manual,
- database and website templates, and
- workbook(s).

18. A workshop was held in Geneva in May 2004 which brought together experts who were selected based on their involvement in various aspects of developing either their national Biosafety Clearing Houses, in the negotiations leading up to the various ICCP recommendations and MOP decisions on the BCH, or in training for the BCH. Participants chosen in such a manner as to cover the variety of expertise relevant to the implementation of this project.

19. The original design of the project involved training three participants from each participating country at a number of regional workshops to deliver training at a national level and set up the BCH. However, the opinion of the training experts and BCH experts was that this would not be likely to lead to an effective or efficient methodology for delivery of training. Training such national experts in a week would not be sufficient to meet these aims and could raise unreasonable expectations. In addition, the focus of capacity building in the project was considered by the workshop participants to need to be less focused on formal classroom training for many elements of the BCH and more focussed on meeting the very specific country needs in different ways by

means of expert external advice. This led the meeting to conclude that a better design of training delivery would involve the increased use of regional experts to provide advice, support and training where needed. Therefore the project would provide for intensive and extensive training of a number of regional experts who will then deliver training, advice and assistance to countries during the project life and afterwards.

20. A major focus for the future will be to find a number of appropriate regional IT experts and regional experts familiar with the Cartagena Protocol, in consultation with the CBD Secretariat and then train them to become effective BCH experts.

21. The deliberations at the workshop also focused on the need to develop specific training material targeted at certain audiences, which were identified and agreed upon by the participants. It was felt that the training programme should be developed in a modular fashion so that it would enable training to be targeted at different levels of capacity in terms of both IT and understanding the Biosafety Clearing House (BCH). This would also allow for the training to be able to be customized to fit specific country needs. Different modules can be put together to develop a training programme that would suit the specific needs of each participating country.

22. Further, it was also felt that there was a need to develop a refresher/primer course for the different levels of audience understanding. This should include a module that would allow people to test their understanding of the BCH.

23. The meeting also concluded that there was a need to create a knowledge management and networking module that would enable experiences to be captured and ensure that experiences were shared among people working on the BCH.

24. Based on the recommendations of the expert workshop, four modules, as described below, will be developed for the BCH project:

Module 1. “Obligations of the Cartagena Protocol” that will include an interactive CD-Rom with three sections:

- Introduction/instructional section;
- Rapid refresher section; and
- Test your knowledge/understanding section.

There will also be other material for the module:

- Instructional manual
- Workbook

Module 2. “Using the BCH” which will also include an interactive CD-Rom:

- Introduction to the BCH central portal
- Using the BCH effectively, i.e. search, roster of experts etc
- Rapid refresher
- Test your knowledge/understanding section

There will also be other materials for the module, such as:

- Instructional manual
- Workbook

Module 3. “National BCH”. This will have two different sections:

I. All the requirements for national BCH access, example BCH focal point accounts etc and 4 options etc to help countries decide on their choice of national access for the BCH.

II. Tools to set-up a country's choice of national BCH.

Module 4. "Knowledge Management and Networking"

- Develop and provide tools to enable networking opportunities for countries.

25. InWent, the German training agency, will collaborate with the Biosafety team to develop the curriculum for the "Training of Trainers" (creating regional experts). They have also, in principle, agreed to host the first "training of trainers" workshop in Germany.

26. UNITAR will assist in developing the instructional manuals and workbook. The US, Canada and Switzerland are assisting through offering tools to countries to set-up national BCH access. The US tool will be used as a basis to create a sample of an interactive, simplified national BCH that could be easily installed (plug and play).

Country-Level Participation

27. As stated above, 61 countries are eligible to participate in the BCH project (as of February 2004). All these countries have been informed of their eligibility; and 45 countries have already responded (as of June 2004), informing us of their strong interest in participating.

28. In the next months, the BCH Team will be negotiating and finalizing Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with the interested countries. Letters of Intent (LOIs) and MOUs will be the instruments that will be used as the basis for executing the project at country-level. The process of setting up BCH Task Forces within the interested countries has already begun, and interaction is underway between the BCH team in Geneva and interested countries in identifying their priorities and needs to set up national BCHs and therefore manage their related obligations relating to the Cartagena Protocol.

29. In addition, based on the recommendations (paras 20-25 above), the project design has been adjusted whereby the role of the regional experts has been extended and will now include direct support to countries by:

- Assisting in making the choice for type and style of national participation in the BCH;
- Delivering training activities including a training workshop, where required, with national counterparts to train up to 20 participants in the use and access of the BCH; and
- Assisting in setting-up and making the choice of national BCH access operational.

Collaboration with Partners

30. The BCH Team has been engaging with a number of partners to ensure that the project builds upon the work already being carried out by others and is able to harness the lessons and practices from the past work.

31. This project has been developed in collaboration between the UNEP-GEF Biosafety Unit and the CBD Secretariat. In line with the recommendations of the above-mentioned expert workshop in the first week of May, the CBD Secretariat would be likely to be involved in reviewing the training modules related directly to the Cartagena Protocol and the central portal; and provide inputs for one week of the "training of trainers" workshop for the regional experts.

32. Some donor governments have offered to contribute to the development of certain aspects of the training courses for the BCH regional and national-level workshops. The governments of Canada and Switzerland, for example, wish to support the BCH project by donating in-kind resources, for example open source code, multiple language capability tools for websites and

databases and man hours. The government of Germany is offering collaboration with their training agency, InWEnt.

33. The US Geological Survey's National Biodiversity Information Infrastructure (NBII), has developed and will provide database and website templates that will make it simpler for many developing countries to jump-start their BCH. The NBII, in conjunction with the US State Department, will donate the time of technical staff for the training workshops, and for the development of training manuals.

Timeline and Next Steps

34. The training material for the regional and national-level workshops will be developed over the period June-August 2004.

35. A "training of trainers" workshop that will include 5 experts from 4 regions (Central and Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean) is scheduled for September 2004, and may be hosted by InWEnt in Germany. The number of regional experts trained will be proportional to the number of countries in the project. Therefore, an increase in the number of countries participating will lead to the BCH project team identifying and training more experts to deliver assistance to countries in their regions.

36. In the meantime, negotiations with eligible and interested countries to finalize LOIs and MOUs for their participation in the project will be ongoing.

37. Closer to the end of the year, possibly in November/December 2004, a number of countries are likely to begin to send in their requests for equipment purchase to set up their national Biosafety Clearing Houses and for conducting their national-level training workshop.

38. A decision regarding support to the additional 11 countries that meet the original criteria to participate in the project, over and above the 50 that are being funded through this project will be addressed by the GEF in the future. Also, the GEF will be asked to consider funding for the additional 10 countries that are, as of 11 June 2004, Parties to the Protocol after the time of the MOP, and therefore do not currently fit the eligibility criteria of the original project. The broadening of the eligibility criteria to take on-board the recommendations of COP 7 will also be considered later in the year.

Annex 1**List of Potentially Eligible Countries for the BCH project approved in March 2004**

ELIGIBLE COUNTRY	DATE OF BECOMING A PARTY TO CPB
Latvia	2/13/04
Belize	2/12/04
Tajikistan	2/12/04
Bangladesh	2/05/04
Grenada	2/05/04
Vietnam	1/21/04
Bahamas	1/15/04
Hungary	1/13/04
Egypt	12/23/2003
Brazil	11/24/2003
Madagascar	11/24/2003
Slovakia	11/24/2003
Iran	11/20/2003
Jordan	11/11/2003
Lithuania	11/7/2003
Turkey	10/24/2003
Ethiopia	10/9/2003
Senegal	10/8/2003
El Salvador	9/26/2003
Tonga	9/18/2003
Cambodia	9/17/2003
Antigua and Barbuda	9/10/2003
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	8/27/2003
South Africa	8/14/2003
Nigeria	7/15/2003
Romania	6/30/2003
Korea, Democratic People's Republic of	6/29/2003
Mongolia	6/22/2003
Palau	6/13/2003
Ukraine	12/6/2003
Ghana	5/30/2003
Tanzania, United Republic of	4/24/2003
Burkina Faso	8/4/2003
Moldova, Republic of	3/4/2003
Ecuador	1/30/2003
Marshall Islands	1/27/2003
Tunisia	1/22/2003
Slovenia	11/20/2002
Botswana	6/11/2002
Mauritius	4/11/2002
Mozambique	10/21/2002
Croatia	8/29/2002
Mali	8/28/2002
Nicaragua	8/28/2002
Belarus	8/26/2002
Bhutan	8/26/2002
Niue	7/8/2002
Djibouti	4/8/2002

Barbados	9/6/2002
Samoa	5/30/2002
Venezuela	5/13/2002
Bolivia	4/22/2002
Liberia	2/15/2002
Maldives	9/2/2002
Panama	5/1/2002
Nauru	11/12/2001
Lesotho	9/20/2001
Czech Republic	10/8/2001
Saint Kitts and Nevis	5/23/2001
Fiji	6/5/2001
Trinidad and Tobago	10/5/2000