

BIO SAFETY



NEWSLETTER

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Introduction

A number of events have taken place since issue no. 4 of our UNEP-GEF Biosafety newsletter in July 2003. Two new projects - a new add-on project for the Development Project and the (BCH) Biosafety Clearing House Project - have been approved; the UNEP-GEF Biosafety team attended the COP/MOP in Malaysia; and the Implementation team has released a new brochure on the implementation of their projects.

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1. THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL BIOSAFETY FRAMEWORKS PROJECT

The Add-on project

In August 2002, the Development Project reached its initial target of assisting 100 countries to develop their National Biosafety Frameworks (NBFs). In addition to the participating countries, a further 20 countries applied to participate in the Project. After the August 2003 mid-term review of project goal achievements, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) approved additional funding for an add-on Development project, in January 2004.

Requesting countries

Angola, Eritrea, Belize, Bhutan, Burundi, Cape Verde, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominica, Gabon, Latvia, Libyan Arab Republic, Malta, Morocco, Nepal, Saint Lucia, Serbia and Montenegro, Sierra Leone, South Africa and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

For further information on the project, please consult the GEF website:

http://www.gefweb.org/Documents/Council_Documents/GEF_C22/Biosafety_-_Global_-_Project_Document.pdf

Mid-term review on the Development project

During July and August 2003, two consultants carried out an independent mid-term review of the Development project. The purpose of the review was to assess the progress of the project towards original objectives, identify constraints and make suggestions for any corrections and adjustments.

The evaluation was done through a combination of consultations at different levels of the Project, desk reviews of project documents and other relevant data, and an email circular to members of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (ICCP).

For the full report, please consult our website: <http://www.unep.ch/biosafety/development/devdocuments/Midtermreview.pdf>

The third series of sub-regional training workshops for the Development project

Between October 2001 and May 2002, the Development team hosted a series of regional workshops in countries in Africa, Central and Eastern Europe, Asia-Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean. During the course of the workshops, the Biosafety team assisted countries in these regions to improve their understanding of the issues involved in developing their national biosafety frameworks (NBFs) and encouraged them to share related experiences.

Based upon the feedback from participating countries, the Biosafety team carried out a further round of sub-regional training workshops between November 2002 and May 2003. The workshops focused on offering countries guidance on options for drafting and structuring risk management and public participation in developing their NBFs.

The third round of sub-regional training workshops started in October 2003 and will be completed in May 2004.

Through these workshops, the Biosafety team has assisted countries to acquire a better understanding of the options involved in including a regulatory regime and administrative systems in their NBF, as well as the legal and administrative requirements of the Protocol. The knowledge gained from the workshops should enable countries to make informed choices and meet national requirements consistent with the Biosafety Protocol and other international instruments.

The second and third series of training workshops were carried out in Asia, Anglophone and Francophone Africa, Latin America and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), Central and Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia.

Toolkit module for Phase 3 of the Development project

Part of the advice and support that the Development project offers participating countries includes a modular toolkit. The toolkit provides countries with ideas, guidelines and other information on how to go about developing an NBF, allowing them to choose the tools and ideas most useful to them. Modules for Phases 0 to 2 of the Toolkit are available and can be found at:

<http://www.unep.ch/biosafety/devdocuments.htm>

From 3rd to 4th February 2004, the Biosafety Team held a brainstorm session to discuss what needed to be in the module for Phase 3 of the toolkit. The participants included administrators of the Biosafety system and lawyers with experience in Biosafety. The Phase 3 toolkit module, which deals with drafting a national biosafety framework (NBF), is now in the process of being prepared and will be available in the coming months.

2. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NATIONAL BIOSAFETY FRAMEWORKS PROJECTS

Activities in January-November 2003

After an intensive set of activities between January and November 2003, the implementation team finalized a work plan including specific targets to be reached within the project period.

The national coordinators of UNEP-GEF Implementation Projects began 2004 with a series of meetings, held between 19 and 30 January 2004. The meetings started with a study tour in a number of European countries where biosafety frameworks have been in place for many years and provided insight into their day-to-day practices.

The tour was followed by a week of training in the UNEP offices in Geneva. This gave national coordinators the opportunity to exchange updates and experiences on the progress of the projects and consult available experts on topics for which they had requested assistance.

For more information on the Implementation Team and its activities, please refer to: <http://www.unep.ch/biosafety/implementation.htm>

New Implementation Publication

A new brochure on execution of the Implementation projects has been published, covering a range of topics and addressing a number of questions posed by those interested in the Projects. The brochure offers information about how UNEP-GEF demonstration Projects on Implementation of National Biosafety Frameworks are carried out and highlights on how UNEP can assist other countries that are interested in such projects.

3. THE BIOSAFETY CLEARING HOUSE PROJECT

The Biosafety Clearing House (BCH) was established under Article 20 of the Cartagena Protocol to assist countries in the exchange of scientific, technical, environmental and legal information and experiences on living modified organisms; and to implement the Protocol.

The GEF Council in November 2003 approved the UNEP-GEF project “Building Capacity for the Effective Participation in the Biosafety Clearing House (BCH)” to develop core human resources and establish an appropriate national BCH infrastructure so as to enable eligible countries to fully participate and benefit from the BCH.

Currently 61 countries are eligible to participate in the project. To be 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) and not be a beneficiary of a GEF demonstration project in support of implementation of National Biosafety Frameworks.

A workshop on “Development of Training Materials For the BCH Capacity-Building Project” will be held in Geneva from 3-4 May 2004.

4. THE FIRST MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES SERVING AS THE MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE PROTOCOL

The Biosafety team attended the first meeting of the COP-MOP, which was held from 23 to 27 February 2004 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The Biosafety team had a booth where they displayed project material and were available to provide further information to those interested in the Development and Implementation projects.

The Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol (COP-MOP) is the governing body of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, which regularly reviews the implementation of the Protocol and ensures that it is being implemented efficiently.

The meeting addressed a number of issues which the Protocol specifically stipulates must be considered at the first meeting of the COP-MOP, matters which are central to the implementation of the Protocol, such as Handling, transport, packaging and identification (Article 18), Capacity-building (Article 22), Guidance to the financial mechanism (Article 28) and Monitoring and reporting (Article 33).

The final report on COP/MOP can be viewed at:

<http://www.biodiv.org/doc/meetings/bs/mop-01/official/mop-01-15-en.pdf>

5. OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Our website has been revised and updated and is now online with complete information on the Projects, documents and contact details.

Staff movements

Liina Eek-Piirsoo joined the Biosafety team in July 2003 and has been working as Assistant Regional Coordinator for Central and Eastern Europe for the Development Project. Liina has a PhD in Biology and has previously worked with the Ministry of Environment in Estonia.

Jyoti Mathur-Filipp was appointed as Task Manager for the Biosafety Clearing House (BCH) in November 2003 and has an MBA in Marketing and Masters in Urban Policy and Urban Environment. Before joining the UNEP-GEF Biosafety Project Team, Jyoti was employed by the Secretariat

for United Framework Convention on Climate Change on Capacity Building issues.

Sharon Oseku joined the Biosafety Implementation team as an intern. With her background in Communication studies, Sharon has offered the team invaluable help in compiling material on public information.

Mallory Smuts joined the team as Information Officer in November 2003 and building on her experience gained by working for the UNDP for the Energy and Environment section, will be responsible for the UNEP-GEF Projects website as well as dissemination and collection of project-related information and managing the information strategy.

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