

Bi-Annual BCH Project Status Report December 2007

1. The project received final approval in March 2004 and was assigned a start date of 1 May 2004 by UNEP. An add-on project was submitted and approved in May 2005 with a start date of 1 July 2005. To meet the objectives of the project, the following activities have been on-going in the year 2006 - 2007:

- A. Continued Development of Material for Training;
- B. Country-Level Participation; and
- C. Collaboration with Partners

2. These activities are explained in more detail in the following section.

A. Development of Material for Training;

3. In order to meet the first objective of training and developing core human resources, a training package in a form usable by countries for their own BCH national workshops, has been developed and is being delivered at a national level. The package has several different components, which include:

- Background material,
- Interactive modules,
- User-friendly computer based training manual,
- Database and website templates, and
- “Learning-by-doing” Case Studies.

4. The training package is designed as a series of modules and training tools that can be combined in different sets according to the training needs and interest of the users. As a guide, Model curricula are provided for the eight stakeholder groups listed below.

1. BCH National Focal Points, National Authorised Users and other people responsible for making national information available through the BCH;
2. Decision-Makers and members of national government organisations that will regularly use information in the BCH and generate information to be

- made available to it (e.g. Competent National Authorities; BCH Task Force; risk assessors);
3. Non-government organizations and civil society representatives who may participate in decision-making processes and use the BCH to network and share information;
 4. Industry groups needing to access information to apply for import and export of LMOs;
 5. Scientists, researchers, academic institutions and other biosafety organizations who need to share scientific, technical and capacity-building information;
 6. Customs officers and enforcement officials using the BCH to find data relating to border control;
 7. Media representatives using the BCH as a research tool;
 8. Members of the public who want to use the BCH to find information related to biosafety.
5. The training package includes the following material:

1. Training Modules:

- MOD 1 – Introduction to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety
- MOD 2 – Introduction to the Biosafety Clearing-House
- MOD 3 – Surfing the BCH Central Portal
- MOD 4 – Finding information in the BCH
- MOD 6A – Using the Management Centre
- MOD 6B – Registering National Data
- MOD 6C – Sharing Biosafety Information
- MOD 7 – Using the BCH Modules to meet Stakeholder Needs
- MOD 8 – Using the Case Studies
- MOD 9 – Ready Reference Library

2. Interactive Modules:

- IAM 1 – Introduction to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety
- IAM 2 – Introduction to the Biosafety Clearing-House

3. Case Studies:

- CS 1 – A trader wants to import cotton seed that may contain GMOs
- CS 2 – A regulator wants to inform border control about monitoring issues

- CS 3 – A BCH Focal Point creates National Authorized Users
- CS 4 – A National Authorized User and BCH Focal Point create a Core Contact Reference and a Competent National Authority
- CS 5 – A National Authorized User and BCH Focal Point register a new LMO and Decision on LMO
- CS 6 – A National Authorized User and BCH Focal Point register a risk assessment and a national law
- CS 7 – A customs officer receives documentation on transgenic maize import
- CS 8 – A researcher conducts experimental field trials of transgenic cotton
- CS 9 – A researcher imports transgenic cotton with a “stacked” event
- CS 10 – A Competent National Authority reports a decision on environmental release of transgenic cotton
- CS 11 – A researcher contacts a Competent National Authority to import knock-out mice for contained use
- CS 12 – A food company contacts a Competent National Authority to import transgenic corn for food use
- CS 13 – A development agency contacts a Competent National Authority for information about capacity-building programs
- CS 14 – A National Authorized User registers a risk assessment
- CS 15 – A member of the public looks for information about a genetically modified food product
- CS 16 – An organization registers a contact person
- CS 17 – An organization registers a biosafety newsletter
- CS 18 – A university lecturer registers a biosafety course and a workshop
- CS-19 – A journalist researches a story about a possible illegal/unintentional transboundary movement
- CS-20 – Obligations of a new party to the Cartagena Protocol
- CS-21 – A regulator in Japan imports potatoes from ROK
- CS-22 – A risk assessor in Ghana searches risk assessment information on import of insect resistant papaya

- CS-23 – A National Focal Point registers a Biosafety expert
- CS-24 – An inspection agent discovers illegal LMO
- CS-25 – A National Focal Point registers decision on risk assessment on GM cotton
- CS-26 – A National Focal Point registers laws

4. Ready Reference Guides

- RR 1 – BCH Quick Start
- RR 2 – Common acronyms
- RR 3 – A guide to BCH Record Types
- RR 4 – Overview of BCH icons
- RR 5 – Glossary
- RR 6 – Management Centre Quick Start
- RR 7 – Decisions and declarations
- RR 8 – Introduced traits
- RR 9 – People and organizations (contacts)
- RR 10 – Information resources
- RR 11 – Unique identification
- RR 12 – Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety party checklist
- RR 13 – Timeframe for posting information

5. Discussion Points with Answer Key

- There are 8 discussion points available with answer keys for trainers to highlight certain aspects of the BCH and can be used all through the training workshops.

6. Quiz Questions with Answer Key

- There are 8 quiz questions available that provide quick interaction with participants and an easy way to gauge understanding of different uses of the BCH and may be used throughout the training. It also includes an interactive BCH 'scavenger hunt' game.

6. The training package can be found on the website at:
<http://www.unep.org/biosafety/> and can be downloaded at any time by anyone

in the world. It is also accessible through Moodle.unep.ch with a guest login password, and through the Central Portal of the BCH at bch.biodiv.org.

7. Information from the training package can also be found all through the central portal of the BCH on bch.cbd.int.
8. In attempt to share knowledge among the Regional Advisors and participating countries, MOODLE - an open-source knowledge sharing platform - has been set-up by the BCH team. MOODLE is a course management system (CMS) - a free, [Open Source](#) software package designed using sound [pedagogical principles](#), to help educators create effective online learning communities. It can be downloaded and used on any computer that is handy (including web-hosts), yet it can scale from a single-teacher site to a 40,000-student University. A large community of developers and users are part of the project.
9. The UNEP-GEF BCH project access for MOODLE is moodle.unep.ch and anyone can sign in as a guest and access information.
10. Access to the private site is password protected and two sets of forums have been developed one for the participating countries where they can share their experience regionally, across regions and globally; the second for the Regional Advisors to share their knowledge and experience with different aspects of providing advise and support to countries. Both sets of forums on MOODLE are managed and moderated by the Regional Advisors.
11. The topics covered by the forums range from the different types of options available to countries to participate in the BCH, the different donor applications being offered through this project, experiences of Regional Advisors in country with the BCH Task Forces, training and giving advise and assistance to develop national participation in the BCH; and most importantly the experiences of training at a national level.
12. In addition, the MOODLE site is also a repository of mission reports and other related information that the Regional Advisors may wish to share with each other relating to their work with the UNEP-GEF BCH project. It is hoped that this repository can, at the end of the project, be used to put together some useful practices and lessons from this project.
13. Regional Advisors and trainers for the BCH have access to another extremely useful pedagogical tool called NETOP School. NETOP School is a teaching and management software for the networked classroom. NetOp School puts teachers, lab instructors and corporate trainers centre stage in networked classrooms or Internet-based virtual classrooms. This newest generation of

classroom management software facilitates the seamless transition, from teaching to groups to interactive one-on-one instruction, and ensures that the teacher is in full control of classroom technology at all times.

14. The UNEP-GEF BCH team has bought 30 licences that allow Regional Advisors to use this extremely useful tool on 30 computers simultaneously while conducting training courses. This tool has now been used in most of the national, regional and global workshops (and has proved to be a constructive, helpful and practical tool for both trainers and those being trained).

B. Country-Level Participation

15. 139 countries are potentially eligible to participate in the BCH project (as of May 2005). All these countries had been informed of their eligibility; and 124 countries have already responded (as of 31 December 2007), informing us of their strong interest in participating.

16. Annex A is a list of the countries that have sent endorsement letters indicating their wish to participate in the project. Annex C is a list of the 15 countries that have still not sent endorsement letters to join the project.

17. The project has benefited greatly from the synergies with the UNEP-GEF project for Development of National Biosafety Frameworks and the UNEP-GEF demonstration projects for the Implementation of the National Biosafety frameworks. The BCH project has sought to work with the contacts and networks of the Development project and through the National Executing Agencies and the National Coordinating Committees for the development of the NBFS. This has meant that the project has been able to take advantage of the existing knowledge in the NEA regarding Biosafety issues and the need for, especially Parties to the CPB, to participate in the BCH. The project has been able to save valuable time and has managed a quick start-up at a country-level because of the relationships that have been developed during the development project phase. In addition, the project has learnt and benefited from the experiences of the demonstration projects in implementing their national BCH.

18. As of 31 December 2007, 119 countries (attached as Annex B) have completed their Memorandum of Understanding¹ (MOU) negotiations with the biosafety team and therefore have completed an analysis of their existing situation and have made decisions on their national participation in the BCH,

¹ The MOU is the instrument for countries to participate in the BCH project and is an extremely detailed document.

with considerations already made for their equipment needs vis-à-vis the BCH and related training needs.

19. The following is a detailed description of the activities that are on going to assist countries to participate in the project and to meet the objectives of the project.

Regional Advisors

20. As reported in 2005, a meeting of experts in May 2004 met to discuss the project methodology and concluded that a better design of training delivery would involve the increased use of regional experts or advisers to provide advice, support and training where needed. Therefore, it was decided that the project would provide for intensive and extensive training of a number of Regional Advisors who would then deliver training, advice and assistance to countries during the project life and afterwards.

21. A major focus, therefore, has been to find a number of appropriate regional IT experts and regional experts familiar with the Cartagena Protocol, in consultation with the SCBD and then train them to become effective BCH Regional Advisors. In 2004 the BCH Team developed terms of reference for Regional Advisors in and these were extensively reviewed and commented on by the SCBD and the panel of experts that had attended the meeting in May 2004. This was followed by a world-wide call in the four regions that the project is working in through journals, newspapers and websites. Approximately 400 applications were received and a selection panel (consisting of SCBD, ITU, STAP and UNEP-GEF Biosafety Unit) reviewed and selected a number of experts to be called for the training.

22. As of 31 December 2007, four training of Regional Advisors workshops have been conducted with up to 60 people trained. Currently, the number of Regional Advisors stands at 46. A number have been lost, as they have found new jobs that do not allow for part-time consultancy. Annex D is a short biography of the regional Advisors.

23. Based on the recommendations of the experts in May 2004, the role of the Regional Advisors has been envisioned to 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.

24. The Regional Advisory system became fully operational in December of 2005. Since then, 339 national visits have been undertaken by 46 Regional Advisors to assist 91 countries with both national-training workshops and visits to assist countries to decide on their national BCH participation. Additionally, 14 global missions have been conducted by 18 Regional Advisors to develop more training material, train at the margins of COP/MOP, train new Regional Advisors or test new applications. Approximately, 507 RA days have been used to conduct these missions.

25. Countries participating in the demonstration implementation projects from both UNEP and World Bank have also accessed the BCH Regional Advisors. Additionally, Colombia is now collaborating with the BCH project to help other countries use the application developed by Colombia to participate in the project. The programmer of this application was invited to the first Regional Advisors meeting in New Delhi in April 2007 to share her experiences in developing the application as a Party to the Protocol with the Regional Advisors.

26. An important lesson from the use of Regional Advisors in the BCH project has been that countries are comfortable using the services of Regional Advisors, who reside in, and belong to that region. This is not just because of language compatibility or similar culture and work ethics or social and economic realities; it is also that their advice is more readily accepted and that they represent a more sustainable source of advice for the countries.

27. The first workshop for Regional Advisors to share experiences and lessons was held in April 2007 in New Delhi. This was the first time the Advisors met to discuss their experiences in helping countries to participate in the BCH and emerging lessons were discussed regionally and globally amongst them. The report can be downloaded from http://www.unep.ch/biosafety/BCH/files/RAM1rep/First_BCH_RA_meeting_report_April_2007.pdf.

28. For this workshop, 5 countries that have almost completed their BCH project were also invited: Peru, Antigua and Barbuda, Moldova, Tajikistan and Tanzania. Colombia, which has an implementation project through the World Bank, was also invited since they have a wealth of information to share in setting up an interoperable website with the central portal of the BCH. The interventions

of the countries was extremely useful and helped the Regional Advisors to understand certain issues and situations that countries face when making decisions and implementing their participation in the BCH. The Regional Advisors were also aided by the participation of the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, since they were able to clarify many technical, legal and policy issues that the RAs face when in-country.

Memorandum of Understanding and Operational Handbook

29. The instrument for countries to participate in the BCH project will be a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Countries must, at the time of the signature of the MOU, have (i) set-up a BCH Task Force, (ii) already decided upon their choice of national BCH participation in the BCH, (iii) have conducted a thorough analysis of their country situation and sustainability of the BCH long-term and (iv) have decided upon a training plan for the BCH project.

30. Countries can access the assistance of the BCH Regional Advisors at any time during this process to help advice on setting up the agreements for the MOU. Upon signature of the MOU, 75% of the agreed budget will be released to the country to carry out project activities. Upon completion of the activities and submission of the lists of inventory for equipment, the training workshop report and a BCH operational test report, the additional 25% of the project money will be released to the country and the project for that country will be closed.

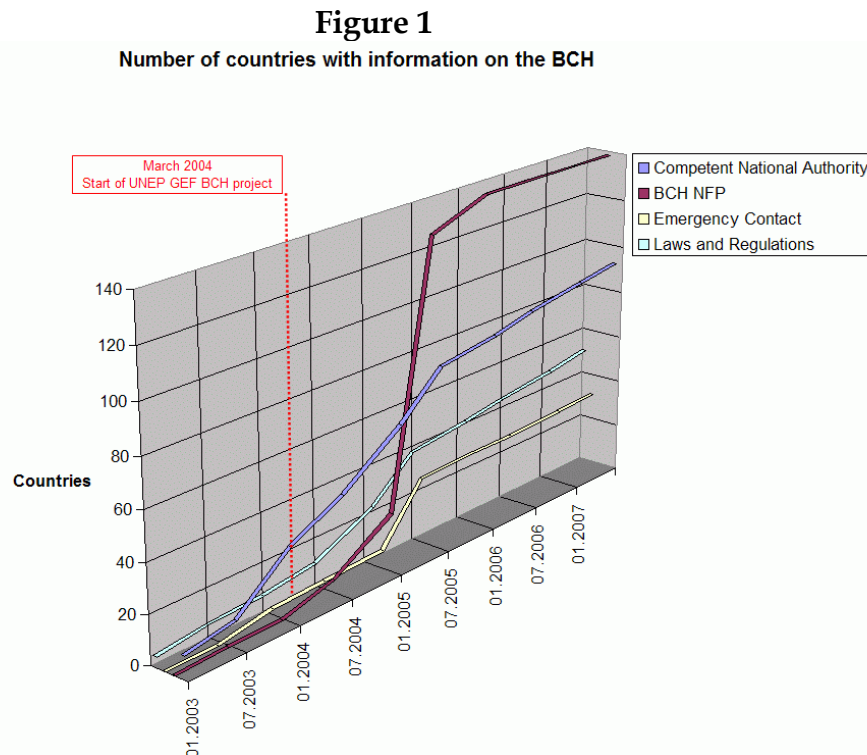
31. An "Operational Handbook" for countries to participate in the BCH project has been developed and forwarded to all countries that are participating in the project. In addition; a sample MOU has been prepared by the UNEP-GEF Biosafety Unit and forwarded to all countries too. The "Operational Handbook" can be downloaded through our website www.unep.org/biosafety.

32. As of 31 December 2007, 119 MOUs had been signed with countries and the first cash advance of 75% sent to them. Another 6 MOUs are under process of negotiation and are expected to be signed by early 2008.

33. A problem that the BCH team initially encountered was the lack of one person being assigned to carry out BCH activities at a national level since the project does not pay for a national project coordinator to handle and manage all the issues at a country level. However, this could have led, in the long-run, to what we see as the eventual success of the project and more sustained capacity and long-term use of the BCH in a country after the closure of the project.

C. Information on the Central Portal of the BCH

34. Figure 1 is an analysis of four categories of the quantity of information available through the central portal of the BCH from inception through till January 2007 for all 139 countries that could participate in the project. The start of the initial BCH project is indicated by a red line.



35. The jump in number of BCH Focal Points in December 2004 is due to a decision taken by the SCBD to declare that the CPB focal points are also the BCH focal points, for the countries that have not submitted BCH focal points.

36. The target for a series of workshops that took place this year, as well as those scheduled for 2008 will be to bring countries together and point out the missing information in the central portal and assist, as needed, with the entry of this information.

D. Collaboration with Partners

37. 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.

Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity

38. This project has been developed in collaboration between the UNEP-GEF Biosafety Unit and the SCBD. In line with the recommendations of the above-mentioned expert workshop in the first week of May, the SCBD have been involved in reviewing the training modules related directly to the Cartagena Protocol and the central portal. The training modules, once finalised, will replace the toolkit found on the central portal.

39. The SCBD has also collaborated in reviewing the terms of reference for the Regional Advisors and were also requested to participate in the selection panel. In addition, representatives of the SCBD have participated in the two regional consultations organised by the Biosafety Team in May and December 2004, and have also participated in the Training of Regional Advisors workshop held in January-February 2005.

40. The training package that has been developed under this project will be fully integrated into the central portal of the Biosafety Clearing-House hosted and managed by the Secretariat.

41. The SCBD has also continued to collaborate with the development of new training material, case studies and in the selection and training of new Regional Advisors.

42. In addition, two training workshops at the margins of MOP2 and MOP3 were held in collaboration with the secretariat.

43. The SCBD has attended all the Regional Advisors training workshops and also the first workshop for sharing of experiences of Regional Advisors in April 2007.

44. A member of the BCH team is also an observer in the BCH-IAC, which is set-up to give advice to the Executive Secretary of the SCBD on the direction of the BCH. The meeting in October 2007 was attended by the Project Manager.

Donor Governments

45. 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.

Canada

46. Environment Canada has confirmed US\$420,000 collaboration with the BCH project to assist countries in the South Pacific and the Caribbean to set-up regional BCHs. A workshop to examine the initial needs of the 14 countries and to identify the best way forward to set-up the regional BCH, was held in collaboration with Environment Canada, SPREP and the UNEP-GEF Biosafety Unit in Apia, Samoa 2-5 November 2004, and a follow-up workshop was conducted in November 2005. A similar initial workshop was also held, in collaboration with Environment Canada, for the Caribbean Island countries in December 2005 in Barbados.

Germany

47. As part of collaboration with the German government, InWent, the German training agency, has collaborated with the BCH team to develop a curriculum and pedagogical methodology for the "Training of Trainers" (creating Regional Advisors). They have also agreed to participate in the "training of trainers" workshops

Switzerland

48. The Swiss Government will be providing, for any requesting country, access to their fully-developed and operational BCH website and database under two options: (i) The first option will allow any country to use the application that has been developed by the Swiss government, for free, and will provide one-time training, help and user manuals that a country may choose to access: (2) In the second option, in addition to the offer in the first option, if the country chooses to host their website, for free, on the Swiss Environment server, the country will, for the duration of the hosting, be provided updates for the website and training, as needed.

United States of America

49. The US Geological Survey's National Biodiversity Information Infrastructure (NBII), has developed database and website templates, based on a template made by SCBD. These templates are now made freely available for developing countries and are designed to make it simple to start work on the 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. The BCH application that is being developed by the United States Geological survey's NBII is completed and is ready for countries to access and use since the beginning of December 2004. This tool is based on Microsoft

Access and it has dual-language capability as well as being easy to install and use.

50. In collaboration with the UNEP-GEF Implementation projects and NBII, the BCH team has organised a mission to China (which currently has an Implementation project) in February 2005 to enable the Chinese government to access information and technical expertise from the designers of the US templates and tools.

51. The US tool can now be accessed in four UN languages and has multiple-language support.

European Union

52. Early this year, the Project manager for the BCH project and the Task manager for CEE were invited to attend the EU BCH Focal Points meeting held in Berlin. There was further collaboration between the EU and the project since the project was requested to conduct training on the BCH on an at-cost basis for all the 25 EU BCH focal points. This took place in Ljubljana, Slovenia along-side a national workshop in September.

Other Stakeholders

53. In keeping with the commitment of the Development project to include as many stakeholders as possible, the BCH Team has also attempted to include both the NGO and Industry groups. The former through collaboration with the Third World Network (TWN), and the latter through collaboration with the Global industry Coalition (GIC).

54. Representatives of NGOs have attended the two expert consultations organised for the development and review of the training package and comments from their experts have been incorporated into the training modules. The terms of reference for the Regional Advisors were also forwarded to the TWN for peer review before being finalised. In addition, a representative of the TWN also attended the Training of Regional Advisors workshop in Kuala Lumpur in January 2005. In addition, they were invited, but were unable to attend the Training for Regional Advisors workshop in Bangkok and Geneva, as well as, the first meeting of the Regional Advisors in April 2007.

55. The GIC were also invited to the two expert consultations organised for the development and review of the training package. A representative of the GIC attended the first meeting organised in May 2004 but the GIC was unable to attend the second meeting organised in December 2004 to review the training

package. However, the GIC did forward extensive comments on the curriculum for the training of the Regional Advisors and the training modules. These comments have been incorporated into the respective documents. The GIC was also requested to peer review the terms of reference of Regional Advisors and their comments were also incorporated. They were invited to, but were unable to attend, the Training for Regional Advisors workshop in Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok and Geneva, as well as, the first meeting of the Regional Advisors in April 2007. GIC have always been involved in peer-reviewing the content of the training programme for the BCH.

United Nations Training and Research (UNITAR)

56. The BCH Team has entered into collaboration with UNITAR to assist in the development of training material taking into account adult-learning techniques and provide a pedagogical approach to the overall training package.