



United Nations  
Environment Programme

## UNEP-GEF Project on

## Development of National Biosafety Frameworks



Global Environment  
Facility

### UNEP/GEF Biosafety Newsletter No. 1 – December 2001

*Dear Friends and Colleagues,*

*This is the first newsletter of the UNEP-GEF Global Project on the “**Development of National Biosafety Frameworks**”. Our intention is to use this newsletter to reach all those involved and/or interested in biosafety to provide updates on the Project.*

*This first issue of the newsletter includes a short description of the Project, regional updates on countries participating in the Project and on the forthcoming regional workshops. We also have a summary of the toolkit that we are preparing to assist countries in carrying out their national projects*

*We encourage you to help us in disseminating this newsletter, and to write us for any further information you may require on the Project. We hope that in the future, this newsletter will become a way to disseminate information on important events in biosafety and we would appreciate receiving relevant information, particularly on capacity building activities.*

*A Project web site is also available and contains basic information on the Project, as documents and presentations produced during this project. The website will be further developed in 2002 so as to give access to more documents at the country and global level. We are pleased to start this correspondence with you all, and we look forward to a closer collaboration and inter-exchange of information.*

*We wish you a very Happy New Year!*

*The Biosafety Team*

Project web site: <http://www.unep.ch/biosafety>  
Biosafety team e-mail: [biosafety@unep.ch](mailto:biosafety@unep.ch)

---

In order to facilitate the dissemination of this newsletter we are sending it in a simple text form as well in a better-refined PDF format file attached to this message. To read PDF documents you will need the Acrobat Reader, which is available free on the Internet at the following web address: <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep.html>.

---

#### **PROJECT SHORT DESCRIPTION**

The UNEP-GEF Global Project on the “Development of National Biosafety Frameworks is based on the GEF “Initial Strategy for assisting countries to prepare for the entry into force of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety”(GEF/C.16/4).

The Global Project is designed to:

- Assist up to 100 eligible countries to prepare their national biosafety frameworks. Using a country-driven process, the global project will help each participating country to set up a framework for management of LMOs at the national level, allowing them to meet the requirements of the Cartagena Protocol.

- Promote regional and sub-regional collaboration and exchange of experience on issues of relevance to the national biosafety frameworks. This will help to make efficient use of financial & human resources, establish regional and sub-regional networks, and promote harmonization of risk assessment procedures and regulatory instruments.

The Global Project started in June 2001 as planned. The main office of the Project is based at International Environment House in Geneva, Switzerland.

National Projects will be based on a model National Project Document that countries can adapt according to their needs, priorities and situation. The National Projects are supposed to start as soon as possible, and each national project will last a maximum 18 months.

#### ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

In order to participate in the Project, countries have to meet the following eligibility criteria:

?? The country is eligible to borrow from the World Bank, or to receive technical assistance grants from UNDP.

?? The country must be a signatory to, or intend to ratify the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety not later than the completion date of activities in their UNEP/GEF project.

?? The country has not received assistance previously from the UNEP-GEF Pilot Project on Biosafety.

?? The National GEF Focal Point formally expresses the country's interest in participating in the Project.

#### HOW TO JOIN?

To join the UNEP-GEF Project on Development of National Biosafety Framework, an eligible country has to express its interest in participating through a letter from the national GEF focal point to UNEP. In case of countries that have not yet ratified the Cartagena Protocol, an official letter is needed that complies with the GEF Council decision of September 24. The letter must be addressed to both the GEF and CBD

secretariats, and provide written assurance of the intention of the country to become a Party to the Protocol no later than when it has completed the national activities foreseen in the project and that concrete steps have been initiated for this purpose.

A regional coordinator is available within the Biosafety Team for each region and will provide advice and support to the countries throughout the implementation of the project.

#### Regional Coordinators:

- *Africa:*  
Charles Gbedemah,  
<mailto:charles.gbedemah@unep.org>
- *Asia-Pacific:*  
Nizar Mohamed  
<mailto:nizar.mohamed@unep.ch>
- *Central & Eastern Europe:*  
Christopher Briggs,  
<mailto:chris.briggs@unep.ch>
- *Latin America and Caribbean:*  
Giovanni Ferraiolo,  
<mailto:giovanni.ferraiolo@unep.ch>

#### REGIONAL UPDATES

According to the current GEF rules, there are a total of 141 countries potentially eligible to participate in the UNEP-GEF Biosafety Project. These can be divided into four different regions: 53 in Africa, 47 in Asia-Pacific, 25 in Central and Eastern Europe and 33 in Latin America and Caribbean.

Of these 141 countries, 66 have signed the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and 6 more have acceded or ratified it. The remaining 69 could be eligible to participate in the Project if they provide written assurance to the GEF and CBD Secretariats of their intention to ratify the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety on completing their UNEP/GEF project (see the section on eligibility criteria).

As of 21st December 2001, 57 eligible countries have already expressed, through their GEF focal points, their interest in participating in the UNEP-GEF Biosafety Project and are presently in the process of negotiating their Project Document or awaiting technical clearance to start it. These, divided by region, are as follows:

- *Africa (17 countries)*: Algeria, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Congo, Ethiopia, Gambia, Guinea, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, Togo.

- *Asia-Pacific (14 countries)*: Bangladesh, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iran, Islamic Republic of, Jordan, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Republic of Korea, People's Democratic Republic of Lao, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Myanmar, Palau, Philippines, Sri Lanka.

- *Central and Eastern Europe (11 countries)*: Armenia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Macedonia, The former Yugoslav Republic of, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, Turkey

- *Latin America and Caribbean (15 countries)*: Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Bahamas, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Grenada, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Peru, Uruguay.

Of the above countries:

- 8 in Africa,
- 4 in Asia-Pacific
- 1 in Central and Eastern Europe and
- 1 in Latin America and Caribbean

have finished negotiating their National Project Documents, and are awaiting technical clearance to start implementing their projects in the first months of 2002. The remaining countries are in the process of negotiating their project documents.

## REGIONAL WORKSHOPS

In parallel to our work with countries, we are planning a series of Regional Workshops, which will help the countries get to grips with, and share experiences on developing their NBFs in an interactive environment.

These workshops will be targeted at National Project Coordinators (NPC) of participating countries or potential NPCs of countries that

are yet to come on board. The workshops are aimed at creating awareness on issues related to the development of National Biosafety Frameworks. Each workshop will look at what the Cartagena Protocol means for a country, and then work through the process and the materials for the four phases of preparation of the NBF with the countries. We will be mostly working in plenary and in focus groups at a sub-regional level.

Summaries of the results of the workshops will be given on the project website.

The workshops are planned for the following dates, and invitations are already being sent out for the meetings in Nairobi and Nitra:

- Regional workshop for *Africa*: Jan 16 to 19, 2002, Nairobi, Kenya.

- Regional workshop for *Central and Eastern Europe and CIS*: Feb 5 to 9, 2002, Nitra, Slovakia.

- Regional workshop for *Asia – Pacific*: Mar 4 to 8, 2002, Beijing, China.

- Regional workshop for *Latin America and the Caribbean*: date and venue to be finalized.

For the workshops in Africa, Central and Eastern Europe and CIS and Asia – Pacific, we are combining forces with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity to increase the reach of the training to countries and get more people to attend the regional workshops. The Secretariat will be able to run training meetings on the Biosafety Clearing House back-to-back with our workshops.

## THE NBF DEVELOPMENT TOOLKIT

The UNEP-GEF Biosafety team is developing a toolkit to provide a practical “how-to” guide for countries to assist them in carrying out their national projects. The toolkit is intended to complement the National Project Document (NPD) that is prepared by each country participating in the global project on the “Development of National Biosafety Frameworks”. It is primarily intended for use

by those institutions and staff responsible for designing and carrying out national projects namely:

- National Executing Agency (NEA),
- National Project Coordinator (NPC),
- National Coordinating Committee (NCC).

The toolkit will also provide practical advice for other stakeholders involved in the preparation of the NBF. It will be prepared in a flexible and responsive manner so that it can be tailored to meet the diverse needs of different countries, allowing them to select those tools and ideas that are most useful to their situation. It will also be developed in response to particular needs identified during the development of NBFs, and relevant amendments and additions will be made as a result of experience and feedback from countries. The toolkit will provide answers to the sort of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) that we have received in order to provide guidance to countries on tackling problems and constraints that they encounter in designing and implementing their national projects.

The toolkit will utilize experiences and expertise from a diversity of sources – the UNEP/GEF Biosafety team, international and national experts, UNEP/GEF pilot Biosafety project experience, etc. It is intended as an evolving document that will be continuously reviewed and revised in light of experiences

of countries participating in the Global NBF project.

The toolkit will be divided into four modules, each addressing one of the phases listed in the national project document:

- Phase 0 - the vision (or rationale) of the project design, its guiding principles, and the establishment of institutional and management structures.
- Phase 1 - the surveys and inventories of different areas related to biosafety and biotechnology within the country, including entering this information into national databases.
- Phase 2 - the identification of stakeholders, and the consultation, analysis, and training activities needed to identify the priorities and parameters for the drafting of the National Biosafety Framework (NBF).
- Phase 3 - the drafting of the NBF including consultation with stakeholders for their endorsement.

*The toolkit module 'Phase 0' will be soon available on the Project web site, and is currently being sent out directly to all participating countries.*

*You may contact us at:*

**UNEP-GEF Biosafety Unit**

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

Tel. +41 22 9178410 – Fax +41 22 9178070

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

e-mail: [biosafety@unep.ch](mailto:biosafety@unep.ch)