



United Nations
Environment Programme

UNEP-GEF: National Biosafety Frameworks (NBF)



Global Environment
Facility

Biosafety Newsletter # 3 – August 2002

NBF Development project reaches target of 100 Countries!

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

This is the third newsletter of the UNEP-GEF projects on National Biosafety Frameworks. This edition of the newsletter provides progress reports on the global project on development of NBFs, and on the NBF implementation projects. The newsletter also gives updates on the forthcoming series of sub-regional training workshops, and includes a synthesis of the results of the first series of regional workshops.

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 future, this newsletter will become a way to disseminate information on important events in biosafety, and we would appreciate receiving any other relevant information, particularly on capacity building activities.

The Biosafety Team

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In order to facilitate the dissemination of this newsletter we are sending it in a simple text form as well as a PDF format. 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>.

NATIONAL UPDATES

Just over one year after its start in June 2001, The UNEP-GEF global project on the "Development of National Biosafety Frameworks" achieved its initial target of 100 participating countries. On the 1st of August, 2002, the Kingdom of Cambodia became the 100th country to join the project by expressing its formal intention to become a Party to the Protocol no later than when it has completed project activities.

The Table at the end of this section gives a country-by-country up-date on the current status of the 100 participating countries. In summary, their current status is as follows: 18 countries have started their NBF projects, another 47 projects have been approved and will begin shortly, 6 project documents are being finalised with countries, and another 28 countries have still to submit their draft NPD.

A further 29 countries remain that are eligible to join the project according to the eligibility criteria. When more countries express their interest in participating in the NBF development project, UNEP will be able to

request additional funding from GEF for these countries, as GEF Council agreed to fund as many countries as wished to join.

HOW CAN COUNTRIES JOIN THE NBF DEVELOPMENT PROJECT?

- ✓ A country that has signed, or is a Party to, the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety has to express its interest in participating through a letter from the national GEF focal point to UNEP;
- ✓ A country, that has not yet signed the Cartagena Protocol, must send an official letter from the official GEF Focal Point addressed to both the GEF and CBD secretariats, providing 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". This letter must also express the country's interest in participating in the NBF development project.

RESULTS OF REGIONAL WORKSHOPS

A first round of regional workshops on improving understanding of the issues involved in developing national biosafety frameworks amongst countries in the regions was completed in May 2002. A synthesis of the main conclusions and recommendations, as well as the lessons and best practices resulting from the discussions by participants is attached as an annex to this newsletter

TRAINING WORKSHOPS

Based on the results of the first round of awareness raising workshops at the regional level, the UNEP-GEF Biosafety project is planning two further rounds of training workshops. These workshops will aim to help participants learn about lessons and best practices so that they can facilitate the development of the national biosafety framework in their own countries.

Between November 2002 and April 2003, six sets of sub-regional workshops will be held:

- 1) Namibia (November 2002) for Anglophone Africa;
- 2) Mexico (December 2002) for Latin America;
- 3) Malaysia (January 2003) for Asia;
- 4) Fiji (February 2003) for SIDS;
- 5) Senegal (March 2003) for Francophone Africa;
- 6) Turkey (April 2003) for Central and Eastern Europe, and Central Asia.

Each set will consist of two simultaneous workshops on risk assessment and management, and on public participation. There will also be joint sessions for all participants as well as work in smaller groups throughout the workshops.

UNEP-GEF will sponsor four participants from each country participating in the global NBF development project. Two of these participants will take part in the workshop on Risk Assessment and Management while the other two will attend the workshop on Public Participation that will take place at the same time.

Letters of invitation calling for nominations from countries participating in the NBF development project countries will be sent out

at least two months before each workshop. These letters will help to specify the criteria that countries should use to select their nominees.

IMPLEMENTATION PROJECTS

The 8 country-based demonstration projects aiming at assisting in the implementation of National Biosafety Frameworks were approved by GEF Council in November 2001 and endorsed by GEF Chief Executive Officer in July 2002. The projects, involving Bulgaria, Cameroon, China, Cuba, Kenya, Namibia, Poland and Uganda, will start on the 1st September 2002. The projects will be carried out over a three-year period. The project activities for the implementation of the NBFs in these countries will cover the following areas:

- finalisation of the legislative/administrative framework needed to finalise the biosafety regulatory system,
- strengthening capacity through training activities;
- strengthening national facilities;
- strengthening the biosafety information system within the scope of the BCH;
- enhancing public awareness and public participation.

Best practices and lessons learned will be disseminated to guide future implementation activities.

STAFF MOVEMENTS

Ms Andrea Gondova has recently joined the UNEP-GEF Biosafety team to work with the Central and Eastern European countries. Andrea is from Slovakia, has a strong background in biosafety, and is a fluent Russian speaker.

Ms Nelly Opiyo also recently joined the team to assist Regional Coordinators with administration of projects and workshops. Nelly is from Kenya and has been working in project management with the UN in post-conflict programmes.

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TABLE OF COUNTRIES AND STATUS OF PARTICIPATION IN GEF/UNEP PROJECT

Africa	Asia - Pacific	Central and Eastern Europe	Latin America and Caribbean
Algeria ^c	Bangladesh ^c	Albania ^c	Antigua and Barbuda ^c
Benin ^c	Cambodia ^a	Armenia ^b	Argentina ^c
Botswana ^c	Cook Islands ^a	Belarus ^b	Bahamas ^c
Burkina Faso ^c	Fiji ^a	Croatia ^b	Barbados ^a
Central African Republic ^a	Indonesia ^c	Czech Republic ^c	Chile ^b
Comoros ^c	Iran, Islamic Republic of ^a	Estonia ^c	Costa Rica ^b
Congo ^c	Jordan ^c	Georgia ^c	Dominican Republic ^a
Côte d'Ivoire ^b	Kazakhstan ^c	Lithuania ^a	Ecuador ^b
Djibouti ^a	Kiribati ^b	Macedonia, The former Yugoslav Republic of ^c	El Salvador ^b
Ethiopia ^c	Korea, DPR ^c	Republic of ^c	Grenada ^c
Gambia ^c	Korea, Republic of ^c	Republic of ^c	Guatemala ^b
Ghana ^c	Kyrgyz Republic ^a	Moldova ^b	Guyana ^a
Guinea ^b	Lao PDR ^c	Romania ^a	Haiti ^a
Guinea Bissau ^a	Lebanon ^c	Slovakia ^b	Honduras ^b
Lesotho ^c	Maldives ^a	Slovenia ^b	Jamaica ^c
Liberia ^c	Marshall Islands, Republic of ^a	Turkey ^c	Nicaragua ^b
Madagascar ^c	Micronesia, Federated States of ^a	Ukraine ^b	Panama ^b
Mali ^a	Mongolia ^a		Paraguay ^b
Mozambique ^c	Myanmar ^a		Peru ^a
Niger ^c	Nauru ^a		Saint Kitts and Nevis ^b
Nigeria ^c	Nepal ^b		Trinidad & Tobago ^a
Rwanda ^a	Niue ^b		Uruguay ^b
Senegal ^c	Palau ^c		Venezuela ^a
Seychelles ^a	Papua New Guinea ^a		
Swaziland ^a	Philippines ^c		
Sudan ^a	Samoa ^c		
Tanzania ^c	Solomon Islands ^b		
Togo ^c	Sri Lanka ^b		
Zimbabwe ^c	Syrian Arab Republic ^a		
	Tajikistan ^c		
	Tonga ^c		
	Vanuatu ^a		
	Viet Nam ^c		

Note:

- Group a Participating countries currently drafting their NPD
- Group b Participating countries currently negotiating their NPD with the UNEP-GEF team
- Group c Participating countries beginning their projects.



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SYNTHESIS REPORT OF REGIONAL BIOSAFETY WORKSHOPS – 2002

Background

The UNEP-GEF global project on the development of National Biosafety Frameworks began in June 2001. This three-year project is designed to assist up to 100 eligible countries to prepare their National Biosafety Frameworks so that they can comply with the obligations of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

Using a country-driven process, the global project will help each participating country to set up a framework for management of living modified organisms (LMOs) at the national level. This will help to make efficient use of financial and human resources, establish regional and sub-regional networks, and promote harmonization of risk assessment procedures and regulatory instruments. The project will also promote regional and sub-regional collaboration and exchange of experience on issues of relevance to the National Biosafety Frameworks.

The UNEP-GEF Biosafety Project recommends that participating countries develop their National Biosafety Frameworks in three different phases:

- Phase 1 - surveys and inventories of different areas related to biosafety and biotechnology within the country, including entering this information into national databases.
- Phase 2 - 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 - drafting of an NBF including consultation with stakeholders for their endorsement.

Introduction to the Regional Workshops

In the first half of 2002, the UNEP/GEF Biosafety Project on the "Development of National Biosafety Frameworks" carried out four regional workshops as part of its regional capacity building activities. The workshops brought together participants from eligible countries from each of the four regions: Africa (in Nairobi), Central and Eastern Europe (in Nitra, Slovakia), Asia-Pacific (in Beijing, China) and Latin America and the Caribbean (in Buenos Aires, Argentina). The purpose of these workshops was to increase participants' awareness and understanding of the process and elements of developing their country's National Biosafety Frameworks (NBF).

This synthesis report brings together the discussions and conclusions from these four regional workshops, summarised according to the format of the workshops. These results provide an insight into the critical elements of NBF as seen from the perspective of the participants from each of the regions, and highlight the issues that are a common concern to all countries participating in the global project on development of NBFs. The synthesis brings together both the discussions in plenary sessions in each of the four workshops, as well as the main issues raised during small group discussions.

Key Elements of National Biosafety Frameworks

Participants in each of the four workshops were asked to look at a number of questions that they would need to answer as they begin the process of developing their National Biosafety Frameworks (NBF).

Why do we need an NBF?

This was the first question to be addressed by participants, who identified that both external and internal pressures existed for the development of NBFs. Their discussions focussed on the following issues:

- **International issues** – were considered by participants in all four regions to be important, particularly the need for countries to comply with international obligations, including those under the Cartagena Protocol. Some participants also considered that participation by countries in the UNEP-GEF project would help to facilitate ratification of the Cartagena Protocol by these countries. The development of an NBF would also make it easier to harmonise a national legislative base with international obligations under the Cartagena Protocol and other instruments.
- **National issues** - the development of an NBF would enable countries to take a co-ordinated and systematic approach to ensure the safe use of modern biotechnology by developing an appropriate legislative base and institutional framework for the management of LMOs. Participants highlighted the fact that although many countries have existing pieces of legislation that cover aspects of the movement and use of flora and fauna in the country, these were usually sectoral, and did not adequately address the issue of biosafety. An NBF would empower a country to make informed decisions on the importation and use of LMOs, and would help facilitate the safe and effective introduction of modern biotechnology into a country. In particular, countries that were either importing or exporting LMOs, and were receiving applications for commercial or research use, needed to develop an NBF as soon as possible. The NBF would need to include standards for the management of LMOs, particularly with regard to import and export. The countries needed both the necessary laws, as well as the strengthened capacity to apply the laws, and to carry out risk assessments. The development of an NBF would also help a country to deal with public pressure and concern over LMOs, especially where it promoted stakeholders participation in decision-making

How would you start the NBF process?

This was the second question addressed in the workshops, and discussions focussed on a number of key areas, including:

- **National priorities** - participants considered that the NBF should be based on a national vision or national development plan, and should be developed with the context of a national development agenda and process.
- **The approach** - should be step-by-step, identifying key elements and setting priorities with due account being taken of a country's legal system, its existing administrative structures and national economic, social and cultural conditions. It was necessary to involve stakeholders and ensure an adequate flow of information to all of them, so that it was possible to have the endorsement of key stakeholders for the NBF. One group identified the key steps in the process of developing an NBF as a series of consultation and drafting exercises:
 - (1) first draft NBF prepared;
 - (2) consultations with stakeholders;
 - (3) summary and analysis of stakeholders' comments on the first draft;
 - (4) second draft NBF with due account of comments received from stakeholders;
 - (5) consultations with stakeholders regarding the second draft.

In this way, stakeholders would be fully involved in the preparation of the NBF, which would help to ensure an optimal result. This would help a country to set up an NBF that contains the requisite **key elements**, including risk assessment, monitoring and management systems; a legal instrument and policy; an administrative system (institutional arrangement); systems for public participation; and an implementation strategy, including monitoring and evaluation, as well as clear decision-making procedures and training. On the basis of this analysis, a

schedule of activities should be drawn up to set out the details of *who would do what, when, and how*. The importance of planning was indicated as crucial, given the present need to ratify the Cartagena Protocol as soon as possible, and the time constraints of the UNEP-GEF Global Project that sets an average of 18 months for the National Project to draft a NBF.

- **Institutional structures** - including a “core” group to coordinate the NBF development process. In the UNEP-GEF project, these could include: an overall coordinating structure such as a national biosafety coordinating committee (NCC), a national executing agency (NEA) that would have the responsibility for the national project, and a national project coordinator (NPC). This would be a full time position for the duration of each national biosafety Project. The groups discussed the criteria for establishing the various institutional structures. For example, the criteria for the NEA included strong technical and human resource capabilities (although many governmental agencies do not have both); a strong political mandate; an ability to coordinate within government; strong commitment; and sustainability. The criteria for the National Coordinating Committee (NCC) included a multidisciplinary and multi-sectoral composition; necessary time commitment; clearly defined roles and responsibilities; good coordination with NEA. The composition of the NCC needs to be well balanced so that it can co-ordinate the activities of national institutes and agencies with government endorsement. For the National Project Coordinator (NPC) these included a background in biosafety; good working relations with UNEP and GEF; good communication skills; and experience on similar projects, if possible. A fully functional biosafety framework also requires having the right institutions and creating a hierarchy with proper resources. The groups proposed that governments establish a model involving all elements of biosafety. Agreement and common objectives could be reached in phases, leading to the appointment of the NEA, NCC, and NPC. The focal point could be one or more governmental agencies.

Who should be involved?

Participants in all four workshops also addressed the questions of *who* are the stakeholders, *why* they should be involved in the NBF and *how* they should be involved:

- **The stakeholders** - At each of the workshops, participants came up with comprehensive lists of those that they considered to be stakeholders in the development of the NBF in their countries. A striking feature was the similarity between these lists, which included:
 - ◆ Government - relevant government agencies, policy makers, judiciary, executive, legislature, security agency, ministers;
 - ◆ Civil society, consumer organizations; non-governmental organizations, public opinion leaders, professional associations, trade unions; religious groups and leaders; women’s groups, and traditional leaders;
 - ◆ Private sector; industry, private research establishments; distributors;
 - ◆ Universities; research institutions, national, regional and international academic institutions;
 - ◆ Farmers and farmers organizations (distinguish between commercial farmers, who were often large-scale and grew for profit, and poor subsistence farmers);
 - ◆ Mass media;
 - ◆ Donors, development partners, international organizations.
- **Why involve stakeholders?** - The group discussions highlighted a number of reasons for involvement of stakeholders, including the general public, in the process of developing a country's NBF. One of the key reasons was that involvement at an early stage created a sense of ownership, which helped to reduce conflicts later. This would also tend to avoid misinformation and misinterpretation. The right of the public to information and the responsibility of government to involve the public in decision-making were also important reasons given by many groups. Related issues included transparency and accountability of the decision-making process, which was seen differently amongst the different regions. For

example the CEE workshop concluded that the need to balance public rights on access to environmental information, and the need to ensure transparency of the process implied that the draft NBF should be made available for public consideration. However, this was not an established practice in some countries. The solution for these countries could be to consult the public at a later stage of the NBF development.

- **How to involve different stakeholders?** - These questions elicited a number of creative and useful ways for involving stakeholders and to target information to meet their particular requirements. The mechanisms and approaches included:
 - ◆ Mass media, print, electronic, radio, television; newsletters, brochures, “open door” days, presentations, seminars and leaflets in local and in key languages in order to educate stakeholders;
 - ◆ Workshops for different stakeholder groups including active working groups with involvement of stakeholders and to invite them to discuss documents specially prepared by technical experts, including for a to analyse information;
 - ◆ Meetings with local people and opinion leaders, and with farmers and farmers’ organisations and extension agencies to reach and educate the widest public;
 - ◆ Organising public discussions of new laws and regulations on biosafety;
 - ◆ The establishment and publicising of a website and list servers, including linkage with a national database, and the Biosafety Clearing House (BCH) for certain technical and governmental groups;
 - ◆ Consultations with politicians to gain governmental support, awareness-raising campaigns targeted at politicians were necessary to secure and maintain political support and commitment.

Information for the NBF

As information is the cornerstone of an NBF, participants at the workshop were asked to look at the issues concerning information for the development of the NBF. The UNEP-GEF Project proposes that the first phase of each country project includes national surveys to assess the resources available in different fields related to biosafety. The first question about information discussed by participants was to look at why the collection of information was important. The participants then looked at what types of information were needed for the NBF, and how this information could be made accessible to all stakeholders.

- **"Why"** - the participants came up with some practical and useful reasons why the collection of information was so important for the development of an NBF. These included the need to identify existing capacities, stakeholders, resources and programmes, as well as any gaps, needs and resource requirements to strengthen national capacities for the development and implementation of a NBF, and to link these with existing national development programmes and priorities. Up-to-date information on the status of releases of LMOs and public perceptions of biotechnology and biosafety would help to inform politicians and the public, and identify future needs for monitoring and enforcement. The baseline data on existing research activities and databases in biotechnology and biosafety within the country would help the preparation of rosters of experts. National surveys would also provide information on relevant laws and regulations, helping to harmonise data at the national and regional levels, and to set up an appropriate national framework.
- **"What"** - Countries would need information on field releases of LMOs within the country, as well as outside the country in its immediate vicinity. At the national level, countries needed information on what products were manufactured, used, exported and imported by industry. They also needed to assess national capacities for risk assessment and risk management; and to assess the state of research, who carries it out, and its impact. At the sub-regional and regional level, information was needed on existing capacities for biotechnology and biosafety, on legislative frameworks and institutional structures, and on the known impacts of different

products. This would help to broaden regional cooperation. Information on regional and sub regional arrangements and activities in biosafety would also be useful for regional harmonisation. Information on existing websites, sources of information, experts and expert groups (including those in the roster of experts of the Convention on Biological Diversity). Some groups also identified the need for lists of LMOs and products containing LMOs used in their region, and elsewhere in the world. Some groups wanted information on companies that export LMOs to the region, as well as a survey of trading partners in relation to their use of LMOs and an examination of LMO-related trade policies. Some groups stressed the need for the exchange of information regarding other countries' experiences, and for an analysis of the different methodologies being used in different countries in risk assessment and management.

- **"How"** - A number of participants identified the important role of the Biosafety Clearing House (BCH) in the sharing of information at all levels. At the national level, they identified a number of ways to disseminate information: the mass media, print, electronic media, television and radio; newsletters, brochures, leaflets, in both local and key languages; workshops; meetings with local people and opinion leaders, with farmers and with farmers' organisations; the establishment of a stakeholders' network; the creation of a link with national databases; publicising of websites and emails; and the training of trainers to incorporate biotechnology and biosafety issues into national training programmes and curricula. They stressed the importance of the use of local languages in disseminating information.

The role of the NCC in analysing data and information was also stressed, particularly the use of smaller working groups to analyse and channel data to this body. Some groups saw the need to define categories of necessary data and information, and to appoint bodies to take charge of data management, as well as the dissemination of results to different groups. A gaps analysis would identify needs, providing a checklist for an action plan

What further help do you need for your NBF?

In response to this question, most workshop participants highlighted the need for additional support in terms of financial and technical assistance, as well as political support. The need for capacity building was stressed in all workshops. The areas for additional capacity building including risk assessment, as well as access to know-how and modern technologies. Countries also identified the need for assistance from countries that had already drafted their own NBFs. They also asked for experts in international law, trade regulations and risk assessment methodologies, to help them develop their NBF. The support of international experts would be particularly needed for improvement and harmonisation of legislation; ratification and implementation of the Cartagena Protocol, as well as assessment of economic and social implications of the introduction of biotechnology. Assistance would also be needed in the preparation of administrative and legal documents, procedures for risk assessment and management, as well as transit and trans-boundary movement of LMOs.

Key Issues

In addition to the discussions on key elements of an NBF, a number other important issues were raised during the workshops that impact on the development of NBF. These include:

- **Sustainability** - an issue raised by participants at all four workshops. The main areas of concern included the lack of continued funding for countries to implement their NBF after the completion of the UNEP-GEF development project, and the risks of failure of continued financial and political support from national governments. The sustainability of institutions to implement the NBF effectively was also perceived as a risk, particularly the need for having a person in place who was able to continue working on biosafety after the completion of the UNEP-GEF project. The short time-frame for the UNEP-GEF project was also seen by some participants as a threat to sustainability of the NBF. The failure to integrate biosafety into national development strategies was also seen as a risk by some participants, as was the need to balance individual country needs and international obligations.

- **National issues** - the major constraints at the national level included:
 - Lack of capacity at the national level to work with the Protocol, and the need for hands-on training;
 - Lack of awareness and the need to build awareness about biosafety in countries;
 - The fact that an NBF is more than a legal framework and includes the setting up of a stakeholder-driven system for decision making on Biosafety;
 - A lack of access to information was a major constraint, particularly when a lack of technology prevented a country from having access to the BCH;
 - Public Participation, particularly the difficulties in identifying the stakeholders in biosafety and ensuring that the participation process is inclusive;
 - Difficulties in getting the necessary political support to ratify the Cartagena Protocol at the end of the project.
- **Sub-regional and Regional issues** - these focussed both on harmonisation, and sharing of information at the sub-regional level. The issues raised ranged from the benefits of sub-regional models of regulation that could be useful to countries in the sub-region, to suggestions for the harmonisation of legislation within the sub-region on LMOs. One group at the Latin America workshop also raised the possibility of developing unified biosafety legislation for the sub-region. Another issue was how sub-regional organisations would provide support for national frameworks, and the nature of this support. Some concern was also expressed about the effect of sub-regional efforts on individual countries. Other issues raised included the development of linkages and networks between national biosafety projects within the region, including a roster of experts and more meetings between countries within a region to discuss biosafety issues.
- **Global issues** - these included the need to balance food security and biosafety priorities, the consequences of ratification of the Cartagena Protocol, and the relationship between trade and biosafety issues.
 - **Cartagena Protocol** - participants raised a number of issues in relation to the Cartagena Protocol during the workshop discussions on the development of NBFs. These included: advance informed agreement; capacity-building; information-sharing; socio-economic aspects; liability and redress; identification and labeling; risk assessment and risk management; administrative and institutional arrangements; focal points and national competent authorities; transit and contained use; deliberate release of LMOs; LMOs for food, feed and processing; financial mechanisms; compliance, exemptions for pharmaceuticals; and LMOs in transit. Some participants also raised the question of those issues not covered by the Protocol, and what a country could do to cover itself.

How do you know when you have done a good job?

At the workshops, participants were asked to suggest some "Indicators of Success" that would enable them to determine if their country had done a good job in developing its NBF. Their answers provide a list of criteria of success that go across all regions. These include:

1. Government (particularly Cabinet) approval of the Framework, and the country's ratification of the Protocol, as well as compliance with international obligations, and harmony with other regional and international NBFs. Continued funding by Government would be an indicator of political support for the NBF.
2. The degree of acceptance, endorsement and ownership at the national level by all stakeholders. This may include short-term voluntary compliance before the requisite legislation is in place, and national consensus on the way ahead amongst the different stakeholders.

3. Stakeholders have assured access to information on biosafety.
4. The laws and regulations are developed in a flexible manner allowing for amendments when necessary.
5. An action plan is adopted and implemented so that everything is ready for the implementation phase, and the country is able to attract funding for implementation of its NBF.
6. Increased capacity within the country, including increased awareness of biosafety and biotechnology, leading to informed debate amongst stakeholders.
7. Strengthened scientific expertise for decision making on risk assessment and management
8. A process of continuous monitoring, as well as feedback from stakeholders, would help to show that the different elements of the NBF were functioning in a coordinating manner.
9. An independent review by international and national experts would also help determine if the country had done a good job.

Workshop Evaluations by Participants

An evaluation of each of the regional workshops by participants provided an assessment of how far the workshops had been able to achieve their stated objectives. The overall results for all workshops were good, indicating that participants had benefited from the workshops and found that the workshop sessions had increased their knowledge and understanding of the Cartagena Protocol and the process of developing their NBF.

The workshop participants gave an overall rating of 71% (range 67-78) for the part of the workshop on improved understanding of the Cartagena Protocol - a rating that indicates that they found these sessions useful.

A similar rating was also given to the sessions on identifying regional and sub-regional resources - an average of 71% (range 65-76), indicating that these sessions were also found by participants to be useful.

The core of the workshops, on deepening participants' understanding of the process of developing NBFs was given a higher rating in all regional workshops - an average of 77% (range 71-83%), indicating that participants found that these sessions were very useful in deepening their understanding of the NBF process.

The organisation of the work programme for each workshop around the phases of the UNEP-GEF project process, was also given a high rating - 78% (range 73-83), indicating that participants found the explanation of the NBF process to be very useful.

The highest rating was given at all the workshops to the way in which the workshops were organised, and particularly the way in which they allowed interactive discussions by participants. The overall rating was 80% (range of 75-82), indicating that the interactive format and the way in which the workshops were organised were found to be extremely useful by the participants in all regional workshops.

The written comments by participants were mostly positive and constructive, with special emphasis on the interactive nature of the discussions, and the opportunity for all participants to contribute in the small group discussions. Improvements were suggested in a number of areas, including:

- A large majority of the participants suggested that workshop materials should be sent in advance so that they could be better prepared for the training workshop. This would be particularly useful in the organisation of future workshops, which will focus more on training.
- A number of comments called for "better facilitation of small groups" - again a useful reminder that in future workshop, facilitators should be given some prior training and/or guidance.

- Participants also called for more case studies from countries with an NBF, that identified lessons learned, constraints and challenges.
- Promote networking and help ensure sharing of information on resources by bringing together people in regional and sub-regional workshops.

Conclusions

The workshop discussions showed that participants had a good understanding of the basic elements of an NBF. These elements were common to all countries, but each country would naturally express these elements differently in developing its NBF. This expression would depend on the country's own political, social, legislative, environmental, cultural and economic context. Thus it was not possible to be prescriptive about how a NBF should look or even to provide models that could be copied. Each country needed an understanding of the critical elements of an NBF, but equally a unique, national way of developing an NBF was crucial.