



United Nations
Environment Programme

UNEP-GEF Biosafety Projects on Implementation of National Biosafety Frameworks

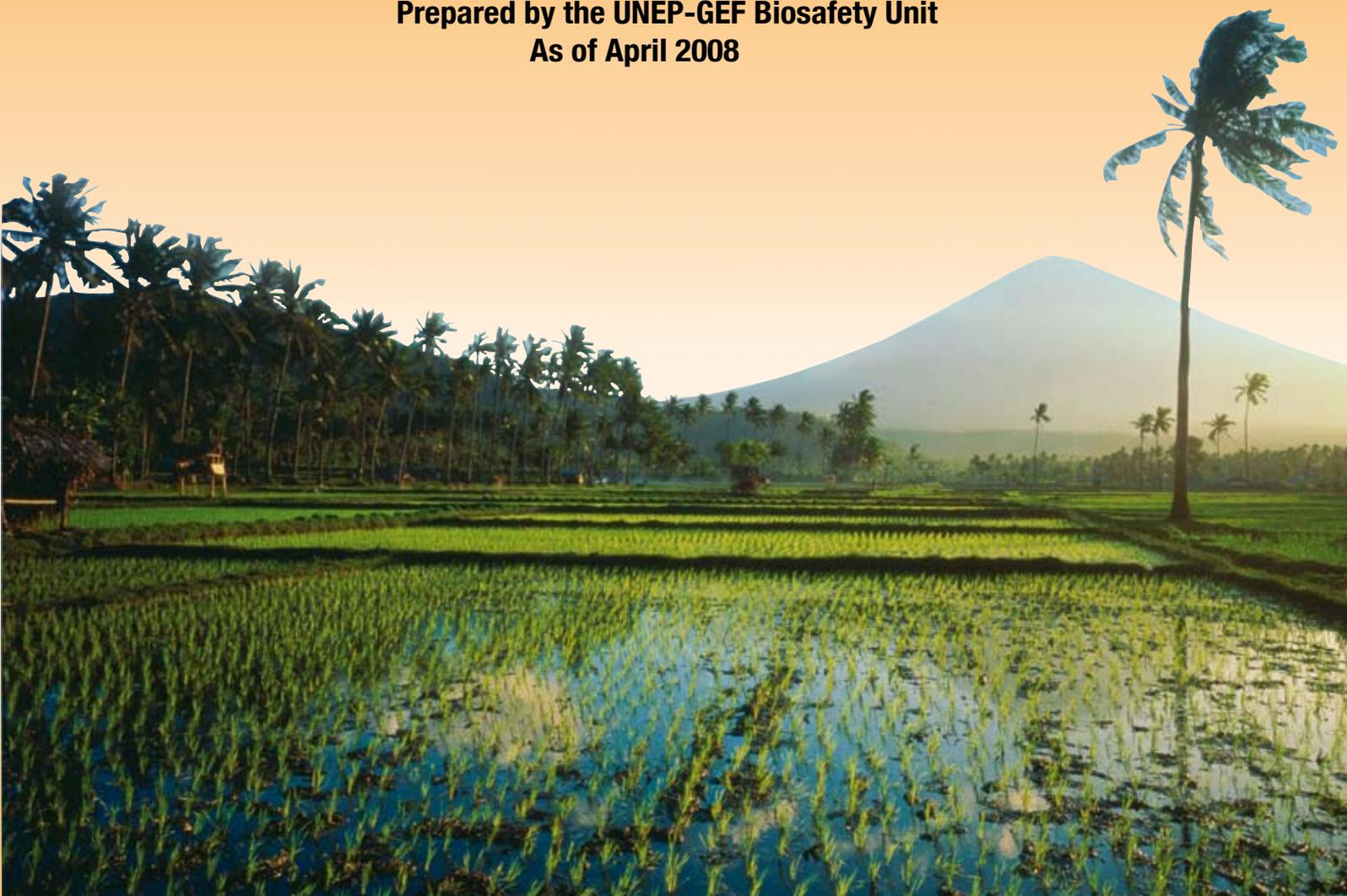


Global Environment
Facility



The Global UNEP-GEF BCH Capacity Building Project Learning from Experience

Prepared by the UNEP-GEF Biosafety Unit
As of April 2008



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UNEP-GEF Biosafety Unit Job No. BIO/003

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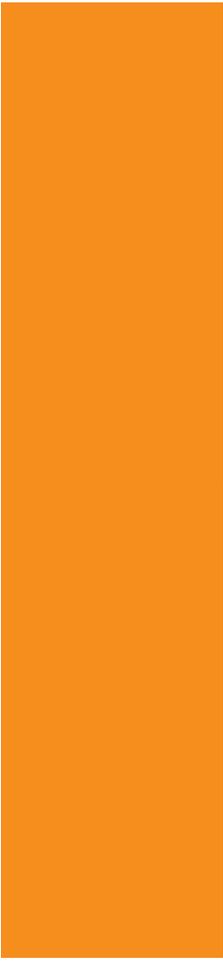
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This publication is printed on chlorine- and acid-free paper from sustainable forests.

Printed at UNON, DCS, Publishing Services Section, Nairobi, April 2008



Learning from Experience

The Global UNEP-GEF BCH Capacity
Building Project



Acknowledgements

The UNEP-GEF BCH project team acknowledges the financial support provided by the Global Environment Facility which enabled UNEP to assist countries to develop and implement their national participation in the Biosafety Clearing House (BCH), and also to national teams in more than 120 countries and stakeholders whose hard work we hope we have reflected, at least partially, in this document.



Foreword

The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety of the Convention on Biological Diversity has played a critical role in advancing the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms that come from modern biotechnology. However, the ultimate success of this international agreement depends on the capacity of the Parties to fully implement this landmark agreement. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CPB), adopted in 2000, entered into force on September 11 2003. Since then, a total of 147 countries have either ratified or acceded to the CPB. The speed of its ratification bears testimony to the importance countries attach to this legal instrument.

The Global Environment Facility (GEF), as the financial mechanism to both the Convention on Biological Diversity and its Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, has played an important role in building the necessary capacity in biosafety since the adoption of the Protocol. The GEF, together with UNEP, UNDP and the World Bank, assists countries in developing and implementing national biosafety frameworks (NBFs), and participating in the Biosafety Clearing House (BCH).

The UNEP-GEF project for Capacity Building for Effective Participation in the Biosafety Clearing-House has been enabling countries to successfully meet their obligations as Parties to the Protocol by building capacity and helping to set-up national systems for BCH participation since 2004.

Lessons from Experience: The Global UNEP-GEF BCH Capacity Building Project captures lessons from this project which has helped 123 countries effectively participate in the Biosafety Clearing House through a network of trained regional advisors and a peer-reviewed modular training package.

This document captures early lessons from the implementation of the BCH project. One of these has been the value of establishing a Regional Advisors system, since this has led to better acceptance of advice from experts by Encouraging language and cultural compatibility, similar work ethics and work styles. Another lesson has been the importance of developing peer-reviewed training tools that can be combined in multiple ways, depending upon the workshop objective and participants, in order to create dynamic and targeted training possibilities.

Three biosafety publications are being launched at the fourth Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties in Bonn, Germany in May 2008. We hope that countries will find these lessons useful as they build their capacity to implement the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety for the better protection of biological diversity now and into the future.



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The Global UNEP-GEF BCH Capacity Building Project: Learning from Experience

A four-year project to build capacity in developing and transition countries to participate effectively in the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH) has resulted in a well-trained and effective team of BCH Regional Advisors (RAs), an extensive and continually improving body of training materials, and a growing number of participating countries. Throughout the project, the training and the materials have incorporated lessons learned along the way, thus improving both the process and the product.

Background

When the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety entered into force in September 2003, Article 20 of the Protocol established the Biosafety Clearing-House as a repository of up-to-date information on living modified organisms and their transboundary movement. The BCH is an Internet-based tool that allows anyone to search domestic and international biosafety information.

Because Parties to the Protocol are required to participate in the Clearing-House, and to enter and manage their own data, it is essential that they have the capacity – including the equipment, tools, and know-how – to do so. Entitled *Building Capacity for Effective Participation in the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH) of the Cartagena Protocol*, the BCH Capacity Building Project was created to help countries fulfil their obligations to the Cartagena Protocol with respect to the BCH, as well as take advantage of its benefits, by providing advice, training, and equipment. The objective is to ensure that countries, civil society private sector and other stakeholders have the capacity to access, utilize, and manage the scientific, technical, environmental, and legal information available through the Biosafety Clearing-House – in other words, that countries have the capacity to participate in the BCH.

In the four years since the BCH Capacity Building Project was initiated, it has developed an extensive body of training materials, trained a core group of Regional Advisors, conducted workshops (at global, regional, and sub-regional levels), and drawn on a wide body of experience. From the outset, the Project was designed to build on prior biosafety work and to incorporate improvements and lessons learned along the way. At each step, the BCH Project has benefited from the participation and input of regional and technical experts. The design of both the materials and the process has been iterative; improvements have been made continually based on both country experiences and expert review. The Project has also yielded lessons that can be applied in future capacity building projects.

Project Start-Up

The BCH Project was initially approved for 50 countries, but was soon expanded to be available to all developing and transition countries that either are, or demonstrate clear commitment to becoming, Parties to the Cartagena Protocol. As of January 2008, 139 countries were eligible to participate, of which 123 had expressed interest. Nearly 110 had already taken initial steps.



From the start, the BCH Project has had the active involvement of key partners. It built on two ongoing UNEP-GEF biosafety activities: the Development Project, which assists some 120 countries in developing National Biosafety Frameworks, and the Implementation Projects, which support nineteen demonstration countries in implementing their Frameworks. These projects identified that many countries need to develop technical and financial capacity in order to meet their obligations under the Protocol. The BCH Project was developed in response to this need in close collaboration with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (SCBD) and has received key support from a number of donor governments (Box 1).

The initial concept was to train three individuals from each participating country in a series of regional workshops. But at a meeting of experts—consisting of training experts, key individuals who had been involved in establishing their countries' national biosafety clearing-houses, and participants in the negotiations to establish the international BCH—held early in the project (May 2004), it was decided to take a different approach. Recognizing that a week of basic training would be insufficient to create the level of national expertise needed to address the range of biosafety issues that each country could face relating to its obligations to the BCH, it was decided to focus instead on developing a core group of intensively and extensively trained regional advisors who would then deliver training, advice, and assistance to countries during the life of the project and afterwards. This early shift in project design proved to be a key element in creating an effective, dynamic, and sustainable training system.

Lessons

Broad-based advice from a wide range of training and biosafety experts early in the project was significant in developing a training methodology that ensured both immediate effectiveness and longer-term sustainability.

Building on the synergies with existing projects, and drawing on the experience and contacts gained through those projects, helped the BCH Project to save valuable time and manage quick start-ups at the country level.

A System of Regional Advisors

Once the training methodology was determined, the BCH Project team moved quickly to recruit individuals to be trained as Regional Advisors. Advertising in international, regional, and sub-regional publications and websites, the

With little more than a week's notice, two Regional Advisors, one from India, the other

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