



# Global Environment Facility

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Agenda Item 15

## MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO: EVALUATION OF THE GEF SUPPORT TO BIOSAFETY

**(Prepared by the Secretariat and Implementing Agencies)**

## INTRODUCTION

1. The document, *Evaluation of GEF support for biosafety*, is an important analytical review of the biosafety activities financed under the GEF's Initial Strategy for Assisting Countries to Prepare for the Entry into Force of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CPB). It also identifies opportunities for the GEF to improve and adapt its support to better build the capacity in countries to implement the CPB.

2. The evaluation is particularly timely considering the recent entry into force of the CPB, the growing number of Parties, and the need to fully implement its provisions. A revised *GEF Strategy for Financing Biosafety Activities*, that fully incorporates all the recommendations made in the evaluation, has been prepared and is before Council for its review and approval.

## FINDINGS

### **GEF support has been consistent with the Cartagena Protocol**

3. We fully agree with the finding that GEF support has been consistent with the CPB. The three Implementing Agencies involved in the Initial Strategy have proven their ability to remain neutral in this polemic field and in line with the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety.

*The GEF has contributed to speeding up ratification and has promoted implementation processes of the Cartagena Protocol*

4. The evaluation finds that the GEF has promoted ratification and has contributed, as well, to considerable progress toward implementation of the Protocol by enhancing capacity on scientific, administrative, legal, and information management matters, as well as promoting cross-sectoral collaboration and cooperation between the public and private sectors as well as the civil society. This is an important finding and we will continue using successful tools and approaches in those areas that are essential for the effective implementation of the CPB.

*The NBF development project was not adequately designed and funded to fully take the complexities of national conditions and needs into account*

5. The evaluation finds that the NBF development project had over-optimistic objectives and insufficient resources to achieve these objectives. The evaluation noted that the "umbrella approach" of the project design is perhaps not the best way to provide support to a large number of countries who demonstrate a very wide range of initial capacity in biosafety issues. This has been fully taken into account in the proposed GEF biosafety Strategy and future support to countries will be tailored to demonstrated country needs.

*Awareness-raising and participation efforts by different stake-holders have not been as broad as required by the Cartagena Protocol and advised by the GEF project documents. Support for capacity building under the Biosafety Clearing-House has increased general access to information, even if the data-sharing obligations have not been fully met.*

6. Public participation on decision making and public awareness, although promoted by the projects funded, can be improved in further GEF efforts. The GEF proposed Strategy foresees the incorporation, into future projects, of activities that raise awareness, provide education on biosafety, and increase access to information and public participation.

7. Development of human and technical resources at national level for the countries' participation in the Biosafety Clearing-House will be further promoted in the proposed Strategy as an effective way to assist countries to readily access scientific, technical, environmental, and legal information on Living Modified Organisms (LMOs) to ensure adequate awareness and participation by stake-holders.

*Capacity development in risk assessment (RA) and risk management (RM) has primarily been of a general and introductory nature. Few countries have as yet effectively integrated biosafety matters with other existing relevant risk management structures.*

8. As stated in the evaluation, the GEF support in the development project was not intended to build the capacity to undertake subsequent implementation of risk assessment systems; this will be a priority during the subsequent GEF support to capacity building for CPB implementation phase. We agree on the need to further build RA/RM capacity and improve the long-term sustainability of capacity built. For this purpose, a set of indicators to demonstrate ways in which participating countries will promote the continuation of activities to implement the CPB after the end of the GEF support, have been included in the proposed Strategy.

9. The integration of biosafety matters with other RM/RA structures, such as those for customs and trade, will be explored by the GEF Secretariat in consultation with STAP.

*Subregional cooperation with the objective of information sharing has been satisfactory, but no sub-regional harmonization of scientific, legal, and regulatory instruments has taken place, except in the European Union accession countries.*

10. We agree with this important finding and regional and subregional harmonization of biosafety frameworks activities, where appropriate, will be promoted as country driven activities in regional and subregional projects as well as issue-specific regional projects.

*The umbrella modality for the NBF development project has been effective in countries with prior biosafety experience and some level of existing competence, but not as satisfactory in countries with less prior experience and competence.*

11. As stated in the evaluation, the umbrella approach has been a useful tool to deliver assistance expeditiously under a single project to one hundred countries, although it showed that this approach was much more efficient in high baseline than low baseline countries. This has been taken into account and further GEF support to countries will be designed based on a previous stock-taking assessment of each country needs and priorities to better fit their needs.

*Consultation and coordination by the GEF Secretariat at the global level have been weak. Little consideration has been given to whether biosafety could be better linked to related aspects of the GEF's biodiversity portfolio.*

12. The GEF Secretariat will support and promote the coordination of efforts at international level through further participation in the Coordination Mechanism for the Implementation of the Action Plan for Building Capacities for the Effective Implementation of the CPB.

13. In addition, the proposed strategy has paid attention to the need of coordination of efforts supported by the GEF Secretariat and the Implementing and Executing Agencies themselves. It will be enhanced through the establishment of a steering committee, chaired by the GEF Secretariat and composed of the relevant Implementing and Executing Agencies and the CBD Secretariat.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

14. The evaluation identifies five main recommendations that have been very useful starting points for the GEF to develop the proposed GEF Strategy for Financing Biosafety Activities.

*Recommendation 1: Future assistance should be better planned and customized to each participating country.*

15. We agree with this recommendation. A stock taking-assessment of the biosafety capacity in participating countries, as a first step in project design, has been proposed. The analysis will include an independent identification and analysis of the necessary aspects to tailor the support to identified needs at country level and at regional and subregional level resulting in targets that are measurable and clearly defined. Regional approaches will have flexibility in terms of issues addressed to target specific needs of countries within a region.

16. In addition, we recognize that a thematic approach can be the best way to support a group of countries lacking competence in a particular field. The proposed strategy will promote issue-specific projects based on a previous assessment of needs in countries.

*Recommendation 2: The GEF should consider providing longer term training for building and sustaining specialist capacity in risk assessment and risk management.*

17. We agree with this recommendation. Under the proposed Strategy, project activities will implement the Updated Action Plan for Building Capacities for the Effective Implementation of the CPB, where RA and RM capacity building have been prioritized.

18. Project sustainability, reflected in the sustainability indicators included in the proposed Strategy, will favor the continuation of activities in countries after the end of GEF support.

*Recommendation 3: The GEF should continue to emphasize awareness-raising and public participation issues, including support to the Biosafety Clearing-House.*

19. This recommendation has been taken into account in the proposed Strategy and activities such as awareness raising, education on biosafety, access to information and public participation on decision making will be fully incorporated in project design.

20. Activities to improve countries participation in the BCH, identified in the stock-taking analysis, will form part of project design.

*Recommendation 4: The GEF should work toward a higher degree of donor collaboration and other cost-sharing schemes at the global and national levels.*

21. We agree with this recommendation. Coordination of efforts at the international level will be enhanced through the exchange of information, collaboration, and work through the Coordination Mechanism for the Implementation of the Action Plan for Building Capacities for the Effective Implementation of the CPB. Complementarity of activities, with other existing biosafety capacity building initiatives, at bilateral and multilateral level, will be stressed.

22. At national level, the definition of the role of a national coordination mechanism, that includes the promotion of synchronized and synergistic implementation of capacity building activities and the harmonized use of donor's assistance will be included in project design.

*Recommendation 5: The GEF should seek advice from its Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel and other scientists as to whether and how biosafety could be better integrated strategically and programmatically into the GEF biodiversity portfolio.*

23. This recommendation has been taken into account and the GEF Secretariat, in consultation with STAP, will explore how national capacities under RA and RM existing systems, such as those for customs and trade, can be extended to support RA and RM for LMO's.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

24. The evaluation provides very useful insights into the design of further GEF support to countries for the implementation of the Cartagena Protocol. Its findings and recommendations have been taken into account and incorporated in the proposed GEF Strategy for Financing Biosafety Activities.