

Mexico-UNDP/GEF

Capacity Building Project for the Implementation of the National Biosafety Framework

Best Practices and Lessons Learned in Capacity-Building for Biosafety

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Background

- ☒ GEF funded México UNDP-GEF with US 1.4 million during 3 years
- ☒ Mexico has a biosafety focal point:
CIBIOGEM
Intersecretarial Committee on Biosafety and Genetically Modified Organisms
- ☒ Group of 6 Ministries to attend biosafety issues

CHALLENGES AND GOOD PRACTICES

Challenge: *The Biosafety Law has serious complications in its implementation*

Good Practices

Biosafety Project team participated in:

- ▶ **Advising Ministries in Congress sessions**
- ▶ **Planning scientific trips with congressmen to research centers and talk with biotechnologists**
- ▶ **Workshops with congressmen**
- ▶ **Advising congressmen from different political parties**
- ▶ **TV and radio interviews**

Good Practices

- ▶ Organized a international workshop to legal representatives of Mexican governmental agencies regarding with Liability and Redress with participants from UK, USA, Colombia, India, Belgium, Netherlands and Mexico (3 days).
- ▶ Workshop on gaps in the national legal framework after Biosafety Law is in force. It was aimed to Mexican governmental decision makers.
- ▶ Experts trained in the project meet to find solutions to specific troubles of the biosafety law, to enable their superiors to discuss the problems with their peers at other agencies.

Challenge: *Flow of transgenic genes to wild relatives in maize.*

Transgenic maize was released by accident in a small community in the state of Oaxaca, where only landraces are grown.

Good Practices: During three year, experts at the Environmental Ministry gave educational workshops to discourage farmers once more from using grain for food to plant. Another measure taken by the Mexican government was not to distribute maize coming from the United States, where the indigenous population is high. With these actions, the landrace transgenes were eliminated.

Challenge: *Public awareness program and communication strategies*

Good Practices

- ✓ 4 workshops on biosafety issues to 300 field technicians from the Ministries of Agriculture and Environment. (3 days each)

- ✓ 2 workshops to 100 agriculture teachers belonging to the Ministry of Education (one day and 4 days)

- ✓ An agreement with FAO and Ministry of Agriculture to do workshops on Biosafety and Biotechnology aimed to poor peasants from small villages who have relatives in USA as illegal workers. (so far Project has done 4 brief workshops)

Principal Achievements

These actions convinced representatives of the Ministry of Education to agree to:

- ↳ Introduce Biosafety and Biotechnology subjects in courses contents in formal education plans in agriculture schools (in progress)
- ↳ Train teachers who are in charge to teach through educational TV system (in progress).
- ↳ Elaboration of didactic material on Biosafety and Biotechnology subjects to provide them to school teachers (in progress).
- ↳ Agreement with the Ministry of Education to train bilingual community teachers to work in their own community. These courses will be spoken in traditional tongues, and aimed to children whose parents are illegal workers in USA (in progress).

Principal Achievements

↳ *Confirmation of a team of experts in biosafety*

The interaction of the representatives of the competent authorities in biosafety in the advancement of the UNDP-GEF project, both during and after the project, resulted in the consolidation of a team of experts in biosafety which is held in great confidence by federal authorities for their abilities.

↳ *Laboratories*

The project financed the equipment of two detection laboratories, one in the environment ministry and one in the agricultural ministry. Since two months ago, they are under national and international certification process.

Synergies

- ✓ *Project personnel have supported other GEF projects*

In the Central and South American regions Mexico has vast experience in risk assessment of LMO field releases. This is why the GEF projects of countries such as Guatemala, Nicaragua and Colombia have solicited collaboration with Mexico to provide training to their respective biosafety committees and key experts.

- ✓ *International organizations and companies*

During the lifetime of the project, there has been a strong interaction with the Rockefeller Foundation, UNIDO, FAO, UNEP, as well as the large biotechnology companies.

Sustainability

Biosafety Project has a strong support from CIBIOGEM to strengthen our activities, as:

- ⇒ Hired all personal trained during Biosafety Project period
- ⇒ Economical support to elaborate didactic material to feed teachers
- ⇒ Economical support to achieve plans with the Ministry of Education mentioned above
- ⇒ Project results were recognized by the Mexican government as important and useful. As such, federal authorities committed a further US\$1.4 million for 2005-2006 to continue with the project capability creation activities
- ⇒ Congress authorized to CIBIOGEM a budget of 2.5 million USD to spend in 2005

A photograph showing three farmers in a lush green field, likely corn, under a clear sky. The farmers are wearing white shirts and hats, and are using long wooden tools to work the land. The field extends to a distant horizon.

THANK YOU

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