

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

Project ID:	5688
Project Name:	UNEP-GEF Project for Sustainable Capacity Building for Effective Participation in the Biosafety Clearing House (BCH)
Countr(ies):	Global
Implementing Agency:	UNEP

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I. Overview

A. Description

Project name

UNEP-GEF Project for Sustainable Capacity Building for Effective Participation in the Biosafety Clearing House (BCH)

Country

Global

GEF ID

5688

Implementing Agency

UNEP

Executing Entity

UNEP-DELC and National

Executing Agencies

Trust Fund

GET

Project Type

FSP

PIR Submission

9/16/2025

Fiscal Year , PIR Number

FY 2025 , Final PIR

Objective

To provide support to eligible parties for GEF funding in order to sustain and build capacity for effective participation in the BCH in line with COP/MOP Decisions, specifically BS VI/5 para 2f.

B. Ratings and Disbursements

Implementation Progress

Satisfactory

Development Objective

Satisfactory

Overall risk

Moderate Risk

Project Financing

5,146,154.00

Cumulative Disbursement

4,619,523.00

C. Key Dates

CEO Endorsement/Approval

6/22/2016

Agency Approval

9/16/2016

Implementation Start

10/1/2016

First Disbursement

10/24/2016

Expected MTR 12/10/2019	Actual MTR 12/10/2019
Expected Completion 12/31/2025	Actual Completion 3/31/2025

II. PROGRESS STATUS AND ISSUES

A. Progress: Information on progress and outcomes of project implementation activities

The UNEP-GEF BCH III project has made substantial progress in building national and regional capacity for effective participation in the Biosafety Clearing-House (BCH), achieving or surpassing nearly all of its intended outputs and performance indicators. At the national level, the project delivered 137 national workshops across 44 countries, slightly exceeding the adjusted target of 133 workshops. These workshops focused on building technical and institutional capacities for the management, reporting, and dissemination of biosafety information. A total of 2,122 stakeholders were trained during the first and second rounds of national workshops, with over 78% of participants drawn from public institutions, and women representing 45% of participants—reflecting significant efforts toward gender and institutional inclusivity. Crucially, 41 countries successfully completed their national project activities and developed sustainability plans, demonstrating strong national ownership. Additionally, 40 countries established national procedures for gathering and submitting biosafety data in line with their National Biosafety Frameworks. As a result of these efforts, the number of national records reported on the BCH Central Portal increased by 187% since March 2015. Furthermore, 37 countries successfully developed or upgraded their national BCH portals, significantly enhancing transparency and access to biosafety-related information. To complement in-person training, the project developed a multilingual Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) accessible to all BCH countries and beyond. This platform hosted e-learning courses, webinars, and training videos in all six official UN languages, and supported over 2,300 users from 181 countries. Training materials were adapted and localized, and additional outreach products—including a social media toolkit, success story articles, and a high-quality introductory video—were produced to support broader dissemination and engagement. At the regional level, the project facilitated nine sub-regional workshops across six global regions. These sessions resulted in the development of nine regional roadmaps designed to promote harmonization, cross-border information exchange, and collaboration among countries facing similar biosafety challenges. The project also organized four regional Training-of-Trainers (ToT) workshops, which led to further national-level capacity-building activities in countries such as Bhutan and Jamaica. In terms of stakeholder engagement, the project successfully identified and engaged over 130 new stakeholders and experts to support national and regional implementation. It also supported the participation and certification of 19 Regional Advisors (RAs), who played a central role in delivering training and mentoring national focal points. These RAs were instrumental in developing regionally tailored materials and maintaining momentum throughout the project’s lifespan. Moreover, the project contributed to strengthening national biosafety governance by supporting policy and legal reforms. For instance, countries such as Kenya, Botswana, Maldives, and Nicaragua undertook specific actions to align their national policies and regulations with biosafety objectives. Uruguay updated its ministry website to improve public access to biosafety information, and Rwanda initiated regional training activities to promote biosafety awareness in East Africa. Finally, the migration of the VLE to UNEP’s institutional e-learning server ensured that the project’s learning resources would remain accessible and up-to-date beyond the project’s end date, safeguarding long-term impact and facilitating future capacity-building efforts. In summary, the BCH III project has delivered tangible and wide-reaching results at the national, regional, and global levels—significantly advancing biosafety capacity, enhancing the quality and quantity of

BCH-related data, and laying the foundation for continued progress through sustainable tools, procedures, and institutional networks.

B. Challenges: Information on challenges of project implementation activities

While the UNEP-GEF BCH III project was ultimately successful in achieving its intended outcomes, its implementation over nearly a decade was not without significant challenges. These challenges were encountered at various levels—strategic, operational, technical, and institutional—and required adaptive management, proactive coordination, and sustained stakeholder engagement to overcome.

- 1. Country Engagement and Delayed Start-up** One of the early and recurring challenges of the project was the lower-than-expected rate of country uptake during the initial years. Although 76 countries were eligible to participate in the project, only 44 ultimately moved forward with national-level implementation. This discrepancy necessitated an adjustment in project targets and timelines. Delays in finalizing Small-Scale Funding Agreements (SSFAs) with national governments further hampered early momentum. The process of formalizing agreements and establishing national execution arrangements was slower than anticipated, particularly in countries with limited institutional capacity or bureaucratic constraints. This led to a staggered start in project activities, which in turn impacted the synchronization of regional and global activities.
- 2. Capacity Constraints and High Turnover of Focal Points** A key challenge throughout the project was the variation in national institutional capacity. In several countries, National Focal Points (NFPs) and Competent National Authorities (CNAs) lacked sufficient technical background or familiarity with the BCH, which hindered initial progress. Moreover, high turnover of staff within partner ministries and implementing agencies resulted in a loss of institutional memory. This required retraining and re-engagement, often leading to delays and inefficiencies in the execution of workshops and follow-up activities. The continuity of institutional support proved critical—countries with stable focal points and committed leadership demonstrated markedly better results.
- 3. Uneven Internet Access and Digital Literacy** Despite the successful deployment of the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and digital learning tools, technical limitations in several participating countries posed challenges. In low-bandwidth environments or remote areas, stakeholders reported difficulties in accessing webinars, e-learning modules, and other virtual content. Furthermore, some participants lacked the digital literacy needed to navigate online platforms effectively. These challenges necessitated additional support measures, such as printed guidance materials, live technical assistance, and user-friendly interfaces. While the migration of the VLE to the UNEP standard server improved stability, addressing user capacity remained a critical issue throughout the project.
- 4. Logistical and Administrative Constraints** Organizing in-person national and regional workshops required significant logistical coordination, particularly in countries with complex administrative procedures or limited venues equipped for technical training. The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated these constraints by forcing the postponement or virtualization of many events. While the project adapted well through the VLE, the transition required rapid digital upskilling, schedule revisions, and time zone coordination for participants and facilitators spread across multiple regions. Additionally, in some cases, delays in fund disbursement through partner UN agencies (e.g., UNDP) due to administrative bottlenecks created confusion or interrupted planned activities.
- 5. Challenges in Achieving Full Gender Parity and Stakeholder Representation** Although the project achieved 45% female participation in national workshops—a commendable figure—reaching the 50% gender parity target remained a challenge in many contexts. Sociocultural barriers, professional imbalances, and limited outreach to women professionals in biosafety-related roles contributed to this gap. Similarly, while the project engaged over 2,100 stakeholders, ensuring broad representation across sectors (e.g., academia, private sector, local communities) was not uniformly successful across all countries. In some cases, participation was skewed toward a narrow set of public-sector stakeholders, potentially limiting the inclusiveness and impact of national dialogues.
- 6. Regional Node Establishment and Coordination** The project aimed to establish four

regional BCH nodes to promote cross-country collaboration and information exchange. However, only three nodes were successfully established—for Central and Eastern Europe, the Caribbean, and Asia. Efforts to establish a node in the Africa region were unsuccessful, despite outreach to the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI). This reflects ongoing challenges in securing host institutions willing and able to provide the technical and financial commitment required for sustained regional leadership. Strengthening regional cooperation remains a priority, and future efforts may need stronger incentives or more flexible models of collaboration.⁷ Policy and Legal Integration Challenges Another area of difficulty was translating capacity-building efforts into concrete policy and legal reforms. While countries like Kenya, Botswana, Nicaragua, and Uruguay made progress in integrating BCH-related improvements into their national frameworks, others faced institutional or political barriers. For instance, competing national priorities, limited legal drafting capacity, or lack of high-level political support delayed or diluted the translation of technical knowledge into legislative or regulatory action. This challenge highlights the importance of embedding capacity-building within broader governance and policy dialogues from the outset of a project.⁸ Limited Use of Regional Experts and Centers of Excellence Post-Identification While the project identified over 100 Centers of Excellence and 130 regional stakeholders for future engagement, translating these connections into sustained action has been a slower process. There is often a gap between identification and operational collaboration. More strategic follow-up, including clear mandates, resourcing mechanisms, or formal agreements, may be needed in future phases to activate these networks effectively and ensure their continued contribution beyond project closure.

C. Stakeholder Engagement

There was no project steering committee meeting held during the reporting period But continued to be guided by the BCH Informal Advisory Group to which the UNEP Task Manager serves

D. Gender Equality

Gender was a cross-cutting consideration throughout the UNEP-GEF BCH III project, with concerted efforts made to promote gender balance and ensure the meaningful participation of women in biosafety capacity-building activities. The project set a target for at least 50% female participation in national workshops and achieved a strong outcome of 45.05%, representing a significant step toward gender parity in a technically specialized and traditionally male-dominated field. Women participated actively as national focal points, trainers, and workshop attendees, contributing to discussions on biosafety governance, policy development, and public engagement. The project also integrated gender considerations into its outreach materials, training content, and monitoring frameworks. While the target was not fully met, the high level of female engagement demonstrates both progress and the need for continued, proactive measures—such as targeted outreach, flexible training schedules, and inclusive facilitation methods—to ensure women’s full and equitable participation in future biosafety and environmental governance initiatives.

E. Knowledge Management

During this reporting period, the training materials were updated, translated into all 6 UN languages, and missing ones inserted on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) to include all protocol articles related to the BCH as well as to new relevant COP-MOP decisions with information-sharing requirements. Training manuals were updated ensuring that they reflected the new revamped version of the Biosafety Clearing House platform and are aligned with the project's objectives. The updated training materials included: a) Stakeholder curricula: e.g. National Data Entry (CC01), NGOs and Civil Society (CC03), Industry Group (CC04), Scientists, Academics, Biosafety Organizations (CC05), Customs and border control (CC06) etc. New categories of training materials e.g. videos/webinars and banners were updated and included in the new version for ease identification. b) Training manuals: An Introduction to CPB (MO01), Introduction to BCH

(MO02), Surfing the BCH Central Portal' (MO03), Registering Information in the BCH Central Portal (MO06), Information-sharing Obligations on Becoming a Party to the Protocol (MO10) etc.

Furthermore, to ensure the long term sustainability of the BCH Virtual learning environment beyond the project's completion, the VLE was migrated to the standard UNEP e-learning server to ensure use post project and for sustainability (See <https://elearning.unep.org/?redirect=0>). The migration will assist in addressing the recurring technical issues and bugs frequently reported by the BCH regional advisors and other stakeholders since the standard UNEP e-learning servicer is regularly maintained.

III: Minor Amendments

CONTEXT	
Result Framework	
Components and Cost	
Institutional And Implementation Arrangements	There was a change in the Law Division project Manager during the reporting period. There was also a request to extend the project duration by 3 months to accommodate delays as a result of the staffing changes and to finalize some outstanding activities that were on hold while the new project manager was under recruitment.
Financial Management	
Implementation Schedule	
Executing Entity	
Executing Entity Category	
Minor Project Objective Change	
Safeguards	
Risk Analysis	
Increase of GEF Financing up to 5%	
Co-Financing	
Location of Project Activity	
others	

IV: Geographic Coordinates of Project Activities

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
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1. Centre d'information et de documentation économique (CIDE), Doula, Cameroun	4.04827	9.70428	
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Location Description:

Centre d'information et de documentation économique (CIDE), Rue de la Chambre de commerce, Bonanjo, Doula, Cameroun

Activity Description:

Cameroon's 2nd national workshop, 15-16 December 2022

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
2. University of West Indies Cave Hill Campus	13.1373	-59.6306	

Location Description:

The University of the West Indies, Sagicor Building Cave Hill School Campus (Computer Laboratory 6), Bridgetown, Barbados

Activity Description:

Barbados' 2nd national workshop, 2-4 March 2022

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
3. Hotel Grand Resort Jermuk, Jermuk, Armenia	39.8393	45.6662	

Location Description:

Hotel Grand Resort Jermuk, 7/5 Shahumyan Street, 3701 Jermuk, Armenia

Activity Description:

Armenia's 2nd national workshop, 16-17 March 2022

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
4. Institut Léon Mba, Libreville, Gabon	0.3644	9.4662	

Location Description:

Institut Léon Mba, 365 rue Bonaventure Aworet, Libreville, Gabon

Activity Description:

Gabon 's 2nd national workshop, 20-21 April 2022

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
5. La Palme Hotel Musanze, Ruhengeri, Rwanda	-1.4996	29.6309	

Location Description:

La Palme Hotel, GJ2J+495, Ruhengeri-Gisenyi Rd, Ruhengeri, Rwanda

Activity Description:

Rwanda's 2nd national workshop, 26-27 April 2022

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
6. Rixon Hotel, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan	42.8519	74.6204	

Location Description:

Rixon Hotel, 71 Mederova St, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

Activity Description:

Kyrgyzstan's 3rd national workshop, 17-18 April 2022

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	GeoName ID
7. Santa Maria Nkomati Park, Maputo, Mozambique	-25.7393	32.6743	

Location Description:

- Santa Maria NNkomati Park, Barrio Zintava, Marracuene, Mozambique

Activity Description:

Mozambique's 1st national workshop, 6-7 June 2022

V. ANNEX

Uploaded Document

Document Category M and E Document	Title Invitation to CBD's CoE_13MAR25_IUCN Mediterranean (1)
Document Category M and E Document	Title CC01
Document Category M and E Document	Title CC01

Document Category M and E Document	Title BCH_nationalwebsites_nextSteps_26march2025_clean (1)
Document Category M and E Document	Title Survey report (1)
Document Category M and E Document	Title 5688-PIR-UNEP-2025-Global BCH III-FSP (1)