

MCP-ICLT LESOTHO REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (CPB) to the Convention on Biological Diversity is an international agreement that was put in place to guide the safe use, handling and transboundary movement of any living modified organisms (LMOs) arising from modern biotechnologies, that may have adverse effects on biodiversity and human health. SADC countries are party to the CPB and are to domesticate and implement its provisions. Adopted on 29 January 2000, the Protocol entered into force on 11 September 2003. The CPB defines an LMO as any living organism that possesses a novel combination of genetic material obtained through the use of modern biotechnology. By international convention, modern biotechnology refers to techniques for the manipulation of genetic material and the fusion of cells beyond normal breeding barriers. The CPB facilitates the cooperation of countries towards the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms. The safe transfer, handling and use of GMOs is loosely termed biosafety.

Lesotho, as a Party to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, is among the six southern African countries that received funding from Global Environment Facility (GEF) towards implementation of the *Multi-Country Project to Strengthen Institutional Capacities on LMO Testing in Support of National Decision Making* (MCP-ICLT). The other project partners are Angola, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Madagascar, Malawi and Mozambique. The Regional Agricultural and Environmental Innovations Network-Africa (RAEIN-Africa) is the Lead Executing Agency (LEA). RAEIN-Africa is a regional non-governmental organisation that works on science, technology and society with biosafety capacity building being one of the focus areas.

THE MCP-ICLT PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The Project purpose is to ensure that environmental governance at country, regional and global levels is strengthened to address agreed priorities. The main objective of the MCP-ICLT is to build and strengthen institutional and human capacities in LMO testing in support of national decision making in the selected partner countries. To implement the provisions of the CPB efficiently and abide by the protocol; thus ensure safe handling, transport, and use of LMOs which may pose risks on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, also taking into account risks to human health and specifically focusing on transboundary movements, countries need to have capacity for LMO detection. Hence, all countries should have the basic infrastructure and technical capacity, including; equipment, tools and practical know-how to identify and quantify LMOs to fulfil their obligations. The four key outputs of this Project are;

- i. Establishment of laboratories that are designed and adequately equipped for LMO testing,
- ii. Achievement of minimum level of competence in the LMO testing laboratories,
- iii. Creation of opportunities for sharing resources, expertise and information on LMO detection,
- iv. Support the establishment of biosafety systems to assist in LMO detection in support of national decision making processes.

MCP-ICLT IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS UP-TO-DATE

The Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Culture as the National Executing Authority (NEA) has appointed Mr Maboi Mahula as the National Project Coordinator (NPC). The Department of Biology, National University of Lesotho (NUL), and the Department of Agricultural Research (DAR) were identified as the participating laboratories to be capacitated to Level 1 (quantitative real-time PCR) for LMO testing in support of national decision-making processes. Some equipment and reagents have been procured through another UNEP-GEF funded project. Additional equipment will be procured through the MCP-ICLT, to ensure laboratories are fully capacitated for LMO testing.

Regional activities

The MCP-ICLT was launched on 24 October 2017 during an inception workshop that involved;

- Creating a common understanding on project implementation among the partners and various stakeholders,
- Sensitization of the various stakeholders on the project purpose and encouraging cooperation and collaboration,
- Planning for the first year of implementation,
- The first sitting of the regional project steering committee to deliberate on and approve the work plans,

In November 2017, RAEIN-Africa organised and facilitated a workshop on soft skills for effective project implementation. Lesotho was represented by NPC and a representative from the NUL laboratory. RAEIN-Africa utilizes the Training of Trainers (ToT) concept. Thus, the delegates were capacitated to train their own in-country teams on soft skills for development.

National project activities

National Soft Skills Training Workshops

Lesotho held three-day National Soft-Skills Training Workshop from 12 to 14 June 2018 at Blue Mountain Inn Hotel in Teyateyaneng, Berea. Nine participants from the Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Culture (MTEC) (The National Project Coordinator - The NPC's Assistant, Procurement Unit, Information Unit, Planning Unit, Education and Outreach, Finance, NPC, and representatives from the Department of Biology, National University of

Lesotho, and Department of Agricultural Research, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, were trained soft skills for effective project implementation. The NPC, Mr Mahula, and the NUL lab representative, Dr Matsepo Taole, were the trainers, with support from the RAEIN-Africa Team, Ms Doreen Mnyulwa and Dr Maredza.



The Lesotho National Soft-Skills Training Workshop, 12 to 14 June 2018 Blue Mountain Inn, Teyateyaneng, Berea, Lesotho.

MCP-ICLT National Project Launch

The Lesotho MCP-ICLT was officially launched by the Minister of Tourism, Environment and Culture on the 15th June 2018 at the Manthabiseng National Convention Centre in Maseru. The Director of Environment Mr Stanley Damane, the National Project Coordinator Mr Maboi Mahula and a representative from RAEIN-Africa Ms Doreen Mnyulwa led the discussions at the event. Participants were invited from the different ministries, the National University of Lesotho and several NGOs, local seed suppliers, Lesotho Television, various local radio stations and local newspaper houses.



MCP-ICLT National Project Launch, 15th June 2018, ‘Manthabiseng Convention Center, Maseru