



Community Corner

Issue No. 5 (March 2021)

The Action Package Prevent-3 (APP3) on Biosafety & Biosecurity is a community of experts and leaders from countries and non-governmental organizations that seek to advance global biosafety and biosecurity capacity under the auspices of the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA), in support of various international instruments and agreements including the International Health Regulations, the Biological Weapons Convention, and United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540.

For more information about APP3, here is the Action Package 2-pager:

https://ghsagenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/ghsa_2pager_final_print-app3.pdf

APP3 Statement on Biosecurity and Biosafety during the COVID-19 Pandemic:

<https://ghsagenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/app3-statement-on-biosecurity-and-biosafety-final.pdf>

APP3 2021 Workplan Focus: Call for volunteers to work with the APP3 Secretariat to define specific actions to advance biosafety and biosecurity using regional approaches and improving visibility among national stakeholders. Email: wallacsa@carpha.org

Next meeting of the GHSA APP3 Working Group: March 25, 2021

For information on joining APP3, email the Chair at GHSA.APP3@gmail.com



WHO resources:

The 2021-2022 edition of the “WHO Guidance on regulations for the transport of infectious substances” is now available on the WHO website.

See more at <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240019720>

Upcoming Events

- Monthly APP3 Teleconference; March 25, 2021; Microsoft Teams link: [Click here to join the meeting](#)
- ABSA International 1st Biosecurity Virtual Symposium; April 21-22, 2021; Registration link: <https://biosecuritysymposium.org/>
- The International Working Group on Strengthening the Culture of Biosafety, Biosecurity, and Responsible Conduct in the Life Sciences is hosting a presentation on the National Academies’ Board on Life Sciences Approach to Biosecurity by Dr. Kavita Berger; April 8, 2021; Contact Dr. Dana Perkins (dana.perkins@hhs.gov) for more info

Africa Centres for Disease Control Completes Establishment of Regional Technical Working Groups and review of the Regional Biosafety and Biosecurity Legal Framework



The Africa Centres for Disease Control (Africa CDC) celebrated its 4th anniversary in February 2021, having been officially launched in January 2017, mandated to promote the prevention and control of diseases as well as promotion of partnership and collaboration among member states to address the emerging and endemic diseases and public health emergencies. Over the past 4 years, Africa CDC has developed and adopted a number of public health policies and reforms with a view to strengthening the capacity of public health institutions in Member States to enable them to respond adequately to epidemics and other health threats that could affect countries.

Recognizing the continued increase in threats and risks of catastrophic biological events, emergence and re-emergence of infectious diseases and other events of public health concerns related to rapid advances in technology, and creation and manipulation of pathogens with pandemic potential, Africa CDC launched the Biosafety and Biosecurity Initiative to strengthen the biosafety and biosecurity systems of African Union (AU) Member States (MS) to comply with the international requirements and regulations such as the International Health Regulations (IHR) (2005), the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), and United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1540. Among the key objectives of the initiative is the development of the Regional Biosafety and Biosecurity Legal Framework.

The legal framework is a tool that serves two purposes: first, it may be used by a Member State to guide review of existing legal instruments and amended as needed; second, it can be adopted and adapted into Member States legal documents. The legal framework will guide operations of human, animal and environmental laboratories and institutions handling high consequence pathogens and toxins, training institutions.

The process of developing the legal framework followed a multi-staged regional consultative approach. First, was the establishment of an expert group made up of Africa CDC and its partners to conduct a desk review and develop first draft. Second stage was the setting up of regional structures to provide a coordinated and efficient system to consult member states. Five multi-stakeholder and multi-expert Regional Biosafety and Biosecurity Technical Working Groups (RBB-TWG) governed by agreed terms of reference, for the Central, East, North, West and Southern Africa were constituted by officially nominated representatives from Member States. Membership and expertise included Public Health Institutes, laboratory, animal health, parliamentarians, universities, security, legal officers among others.

The three-day virtual consultative workshops gathered the opinions of stakeholders and member states to inform the scope and language of the legal framework. Forty-Four of the 55 (80%) African Union Member States participated in the 5 regional meetings. The updated legal framework was presented back to all 5 regions for adoption and then reviewed by a Regional Expert Group to ensure it aligns with existing regional and global legal documents.

Next, the framework will be submitted to the AU Specialized Technical Committee (STCC) on Health, Population and Drug Control, STCC on Justice and Legal Affairs, until the AU Heads of States Summit for endorsement. Concurrently, Africa CDC will coordinate development of a regional and country specific implementation plan for domesticating the legal framework.



Women in Biosecurity

A recent [UNIDIR report](#) notes that two decades after the landmark Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS), UN Member States' representatives and other stakeholders are increasingly calling for the equal, full and effective participation of women not only in peacemaking, but in all decision-making processes related to arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament. While the trend is increasing compared to previous years, the report notes that it will take two decades to reach gender parity and almost 5 decades (until 2065) before gender balance among the heads of the delegations will be achieved. Also discussed is the fact that the proportion of women tends to decline as the importance of the

position increases, while the proportion of men grows linearly as one moves from regular diplomatic personnel to UN ambassadors, to foreign ministers and, lastly, to heads of State or Government.

Historically, women participate in meetings of the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) only at a rate of about 33%. It is promising that in 2020, per the "gender perspectives" newly introduced in the [BWC Newsletter](#), women participated almost equally with men (43% to 51%) with the highest number of women panelists in MX2- Review of developments in the field of science & technology.

The international public health crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic underscored the world vulnerability to nature- or man-made biological weapons. Women are at the forefront of the fight against COVID-19 as the majority in the global health and social sectors and having socially-ascribed caretaking roles. The pandemic also increased the risk of gender-based violence, particularly intimate partner violence, with women and girls particularly at risk. While women are more vulnerable to the negative effects of disasters, but they may also act as critical players in mobilizing communities to respond to disasters and increase communities' resilience.

The disproportionate adverse impact of COVID-19 on women is an impetus to rally their increased participation in global efforts to stave off the worst-case scenarios of effects caused by biological weapons while also addressing the underlying gender inequalities and gender-based discrimination and vulnerability.

Empowering women nationally and globally to participate in the design and implementation biological weapons non-proliferation and biosecurity efforts is not about parity in numbers or denying men's rights but about ensuring that the decision-making processes are representative and effective and that women have the opportunity to contribute their perspectives and talents for the benefit of the whole world.

To this end, the APP3 Working Group will highlight in future issues of its Community Corner newsletter initiatives, data, and profiles of individuals leading change in this field. Send your contributions to Dr. Dana Perkins at dana.perkins@hhs.gov.

We are also kindly asking that APP3 members respond by 02 April to the [IFBA Equity-Focused Coordinating Committee's survey](#) on the trends and challenges in meeting diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in global biosafety and biosecurity.

Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction Newsletter #3

Subscribe to receive email updates on the efforts of Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction (GP) to reduce global threats from chemical, biological, and radiological and nuclear weapons [here](#).

In this month's issue, there was a message from the United Kingdom, the 2021 GP President (2021): In the two decades since its establishment at the 2002 Kananaskis Summit, the G7-led Global Partnership has been the primary international mechanism for coordinating WMD threat reduction programmes. The GP continues to address the serious challenges, regionally and globally, from chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons. The G7 group rotates its chair annually. In 2021, the UK will chair the G7 and the Global Partnership... [read more about UK plans and priorities for 2021](#).

Biosecurity risks associated with vaccine platform technologies

A new article in Vaccine, co-authored by Jonas Sandbrink, University of Oxford, and Dr. Gregory Koblenz, George Mason University, discusses the biosecurity risks surrounding vaccine platform technologies. Vaccine platforms have been critical for accelerating the timeline of COVID-19 vaccine development. Further investment into the development of these important technologies should consider the dual-use potential of such research, the risk for such research to inform or enable pathogen engineering by malicious actors. Research on virally vectored vaccines exhibits relatively high dual-use potential through (1) generating insights on circumventing pre-existing immune responses, and (2) increasing the number of individuals capable of engineering viruses of particular concern, including variola virus, through work on related viruses. The biosecurity risk associated with platform advancement may be minimised by focusing preferentially on circumventing anti-vector immunity with non-genetic rather than genetic modifications, using vectors that are not based on viruses pathogenic to humans, and preferential investment into promising low dual-use risk RNA-based vaccine approaches. The full article can be found [here](#).



Summary of the 6th International Biosafety and Biocontainment Symposium

The 6th International Biosafety and Biocontainment Symposium, presented by the US Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service (USDA ARS), brought together experts from government, academia, and industry to discuss emerging biorisk challenges in agriculture. Speakers highlighted how the convergence of food, agricultural, and natural resource challenges require coordination and intensification of food safety, nutrition, and food security efforts to mitigate risks. A full summary of the conferences can be found in the Pandora Report [here](#).



BioGib / Merrick & Company Survey

BioGib (Grupo Iberoamericano de Bioseguridad/ Ibero-American Biosafety Group) and Merrick & Company are looking for feedback on topics of interest and meeting format for the 2021 BioGib Symposium to be held December 13-14, 2021 in Lima, Peru. The survey should only take 5 minutes, and your responses are completely anonymous.

The survey is available in English, Spanish, or Portuguese and can be accessed using any one of the following links:

English: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SLZ7QSY>

Spanish: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SDDXZN3>

Portuguese: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SDZWR5W>



NextGen Opening Applications to 2021 Mentor Program

The Next Generation Global Health Security Network is opening applications for their 2021 mentorship program. The program aims to pair early and mid-career professionals with more senior professionals to conduct research and better the field of Global Health Security. The program lasts approximately 8 months and there is a great deal of flexibility for mentors to work with their mentees.

If interested in becoming a mentor, please use this link to sign-up: [Mentor Sign-Up Link](#)

Invitation to join IFBA's Initiative on Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

On behalf of the International Federation of Biosafety Associations' (IFBA) Board of Directors, we are kindly requesting our IFBA Member Biosafety Associations to gather data on the trends and challenges in meeting diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), including age and gender. The survey has been developed by the IFBA's Equity-Focused Coordinating Committee (ECC) and can be accessed at the following link [ECC Survey](#). The survey is anonymous and should take no more than 10 minutes to complete. Data from this survey will enable the ECC to recommend priority DEI initiatives and policies for our global biosafety community.



Call for volunteers: The International Working Group on Strengthening the Culture of Biosafety, Biosecurity, and Responsible Conduct in the Life Sciences

The International Working Group on Strengthening the Culture of Biosafety, Biosecurity, and Responsible Conduct in the Life Sciences is developing a 2021 version of their 2019 *Guide to Training and Information Resources on the Culture of Biosafety, Biosecurity, and Responsible Conduct in the Life Sciences* (https://absa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/CULTURE_TRAINING_CATALOGUE.pdf).



This is a community of practice comprised of representatives of governments, academia, industry, and professional and international organizations, using crowdsourcing to develop guiding principles and educational/training resources to support and promote a culture of global biosafety, biosecurity, ethical, and responsible conduct in the life sciences, based on the culture model and assessment methodology developed by IAEA for the nuclear safety and security culture.

The Group conducts periodic webinars on the culture of biosafety, biosecurity, and responsible conduct; outreach at conferences, workshops, training events; and shares information and associated materials on members' websites and in their training and educational activities. The group supports and promotes, globally, a culture of biosafety, biosecurity, and responsible conduct in the life sciences, promotes effective oversight globally of dual-use research, encourages engagement among the health, scientific, biotechnology, enthusiast, and security communities in the United States, and with international partners, to reduce the risk of misuse.

The International Working Group on Strengthening the Culture of Biosafety, Biosecurity, and Responsible Conduct in the Life Sciences also collectively developed in 2020 a *Culture of Biosafety, Biosecurity, and Responsible Conduct in the Life Sciences -- (Self) Assessment Framework* (available at: https://absa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Culture_of_Biosafety-Biosecurity_Self-Assessment_Framework.pdf)— and an accompanying data collection tool (https://absa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Culture_of_Biosafety-Biosecurity_Self-Assessment_Framework-Template.xlsx). This framework provides a measure of the organizational culture of biosafety, biosecurity, and responsible conduct to aid in the process of enhancing such culture at the local level through baseline and periodic assessments.

Those interested in joining this Group are encouraged to contact Dr. Dana Perkins, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, at dana.perkins@hhs.gov.