

Biological Risks Management in Low Income Countries

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Extraordinary advances being made in biotechnology bring enormous benefits to society and strengthen the defense against biological risks regardless of their origin. But such advances also bring potential for accidents, sabotage or misuse.

In order for the full humanitarian and economic benefits of biotechnological advances to be realized, it is essential that these risks are properly identified, understood and mitigated through effective risk management in the form of comprehensive biosafety and biosecurity strategies, supported with a full complement of legislative, regulatory, human and physical infrastructure.

While it is impossible to eliminate biological risks entirely, there is much that can be done to manage and considerably reduce them through proper training of scientists and workers in the biotechnology field, and through the promotion and observance of best practices in academia, industry and government.

In countries with low income, the biological risks assessment and management is a real challenge because people cannot stop using biotechnology every now and then but at the same time safety measures would not be met due to high cost of such processes. In such countries, biosafety and biosecurity would not be a priority because available resources usually spent in security issues and development projects. As it is well known biological hazards can be spread across the borders of the countries so regional and interregional cooperation can play a very important role in biological hazards management.

One of the excellent examples of the regional organization is the Biosafety and Biosecurity International Conference (BBIC) Process which is a mechanism aims to enable the countries of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region to identify the biological risks to which their communities are exposed and mitigate them through the development of national and regional biosafety and biosecurity strategies underpinned by legislative, human and physical infrastructure. But such an initiative cannot cover all biosafety and biosecurity issues in the region, more regional and international organizations should work together to better utilization of the available resources and to maximize the benefits of the international assistance given to poor countries.

Also National and Regional Biosafety Associations can play very important role, especially in awareness rising among scientific communities about the importance of biosafety and biosecurity culture also can help a lot in the development of guidelines and regulations for better biosafety and biosecurity measure. Biosafety Associations can also organize seminars, workshops and conferences with the assistance of the international community to highlight the importance of safe and secure use of biotechnology and at the same time to attract governmental officials to pay more attention for the importance of safety measures and secure more resources to improve the physical infrastructure.

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Received October 28, 2013; **Accepted** October 28, 2013; **Published** October 31, 2013

Citation: Ali E (2013) Biological Risks Management in Low Income Countries. Biosafety 2: e141. doi:[10.4172/2167-0331.1000e141](https://doi.org/10.4172/2167-0331.1000e141)

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